Hostile Knowledge Performances

Jared T. Jensen

The University of Texas at Austin

Shelbey R. Call

Phoenix Pointe Psychiatry

Joshua B. Barbour

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Jared T. Jensen (ORCID 0000-0003-3602-6854) is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Shelbey R. Call (ORCID 0000-0001-9944-6368) is Clinical Operations Manager at Phoenix Pointe Psychiatry. Joshua B. Barbour (ORCID 0000-0001-8384-7175) is a professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jared T. Jensen, Department of Communication Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 2504A Whitis Ave. (A1105), Austin, TX 78712-0115, 512-471-5251, jaredtjensen@utexas.edu.

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Abstract

Struggles over meaning are inherent to knowledge performances—the communicative accomplishment of knowledge. This study analyzes an interdisciplinary, interorganizational team's communication as they attempted to design and implement a novel information technology. It focuses on *hostile knowledge performances*, which are comprised of behaviors that steer group knowing by dominating communication. That communication included flooding the interactive space with monologues and interminable emails; correcting and directing, including telling people what to think; and stifling others by interrupting, patronizing, and stonewalling. This study contributes to communication theory and practice by building an account of hostile knowledge performances defined by specific communication behaviors that reflect domination in the communicative accomplishment of knowledge. In practical terms, this research makes clear the difficulties collaborators face responding to hostility without reproducing it and reveals more and less adaptive responses.

Keywords: knowledge performances, knowledge accomplishment, discursive closure, performance theory, expertise, hostility, group communication

Hostile Knowledge Performances

Solnit's (2008) germinal blog post, *Men Explain Things to Me: Facts Didn't Get in Their Way,* described a form of conversation hijacking later termed "mansplaining." In "mansplaining," male voices seize conversational space and talk at rather than with others. The post resonated in public discourse, and variations of the term emerged, including white-splaining, straight-splaining, and thin-splaining to name a few (see Johnson et al., 2021). The resonance of Solnit's post and the speedy diffusion of the term points to the ubiquity of communication phenomena today that are as frustrating and problematic as they are widespread: Communication that involves dominating rather than engaging others. A speaker who "splains" presents their knowledge as incontrovertible and prescribes what others should or ought to know. They rely on often unacknowledged social privilege, the assumed authority of particular voices, and the objectification of listeners through condescension, interruption, bluster, and monologue.

The term also evokes important enduring questions in communication scholarship about expertise, knowledge, information sharing, and power. For example, Kuhn and Jackson's (2008) model of knowledge accomplishment argued that knowledge emerges as an ongoing response to organizational problem-solving. Communication scholars have focused on knowledge as it is accomplished through performances of expertise (Treem, 2012), social and cultural positioning (Harris, 2017), and the performance of institutionalized roles such as pupil and professor (Kuhn & Jackson, 2008). These studies describe processes in which certain kinds of knowing gain legitimacy over others, akin to what occurs in "splaining." Yet, most research on the communicative accomplishment of knowledge involves knowing that is accomplished by surfacing and integrating the right mix of information among communicators at the right time, or by positioning communicators as experts. In contrast, phenomena such as "splaining" involves knowing that is accomplished by overwhelming communicators through force. As we examined

the communicative accomplishment of knowledge, we documented a set of forceful behaviors

that together comprised what we termed *hostile knowledge performances.*

Hostile knowledge performances merit study for at least two key reasons: First, as is clear

in the discourse surrounding "splaining," they are an all too common and consequential

communication phenomena. Studying hostile knowledge performances can shed light on related

issues such as the incivility and violence that characterizes many of our conversations in public

and in private (Gottman & Silver, 2015; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012; Rosenberg, 2015).

Second, hostile knowledge performances provide a rich opportunity to theorize how force is

exercised in specific communication behaviors. For example, Deetz (1992) conceptualized

"discursive closures" as communication moves that diminish conversation, limit meaningful

dialogue, and stymie group and organizational problem solving and policymaking. A focus on

observable communication behaviors that comprise hostile knowledge performances can

elucidate moments of discursive closure relevant to the group dynamics of knowledge

accomplishment as theorized by Kuhn and Jackson (2008). Those dynamics shape who gets to

steer and direct what we know.

To investigate hostile knowledge performances, this study draws on ethnographic

observations of team meetings that occurred over a year and a half with a group called "Portal"

(pseudonym). This interdisciplinary, interorganizational team sought to develop and deploy a

novel information communication technology. In Portal's meetings, we observed behaviors such

as flooding the interactive space, correcting and directing others, and stifling others'

perspectives. Collaborators took over interaction to advance their interests and shut down

alternatives, and most but not all responses tended to reproduce and exacerbate hostility.

This study makes two main contributions to communication theory and practice: First, we

conceptualize hostile knowledge performances by (a) identifying the specific behaviors that

comprise them and (b) articulating how these behaviors accumulate over time to obscure problems rather than solve them. Hostile knowledge performances build on Deetz's (1992) concept of discursive closure by focusing on how communicators may close off conversation through force even when (paradoxically) the interaction itself continues. This insight has practical as well as theoretical value in that it can help identify and intervene in problematic communication behaviors that might otherwise be overlooked. Second, the study advances understandings of how knowledge is negotiated in groups by theorizing the communicative accomplishment of knowledge through domination. In doing so, the findings demonstrate the need for research to expand beyond a focus on information behaviors, knowledge integration, and expertise to encompass problematic but nonetheless consequential behaviors of experts. To make clear the value of these contributions and situate our analysis, we turn now to a review of scholarship on knowledge performances.

Theoretical Background

Knowledge Performances

Knowledge has been theorized as commodity, resource, and cognitive phenomena (Barley et al., 2018). Communication scholars have emphasized alternatives that conceptualize knowing as a relational process (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Treem, 2012). Kuhn and Jackson (2008) conceptualized knowledge as taking form in practice, emerging in response to problem-solving, and being negotiated and understood through social interaction. As such, knowledge involves the "capacity to act" (p. 461). Viewed through this lens, "knowledge" or knowing is always in flux, never finished, and produced and reproduced through action (Harris, 2017). Information may be shared, deployed, sought, and avoided in response to a problem, but knowing—"the active and ongoing accomplishment of problem solving"—is generated as individuals interact (Kuhn & Jackson, 2008, p. 455). To "accomplish" knowledge is to communicate and negotiate what is

"known." Kuhn and Jackson's model takes knowledge accomplishment *episodes* as the unit of

analysis, and knowledge accomplishment *activities* or, "segments of episodes in which

discursive moves apply and/or generate knowledge in an attempt to realize a capacity to act," as

the variety of behaviors that constitute episodes (p. 461). Treem (2012) built on this work by

identifying knowledge performances as a category of activities that are central to deciding what

is known and who participates in knowing.

Sharing knowledge is a crucial aspect of group processes and team and organizational

development (Larson & Egan, 2018). In experimental studies, group members tend to share

information they have in common with others rather than information that is unique to them

(Stasser & Titus, 2003). This pattern suggests that groups find it difficult to access divergent

information, which is problematic because solutions to problems may depend on integrating

information with which the collective is less familiar. Scholars have argued that this insight is

especially important for teamwork because when group members are aware of each other's

knowledge, their decision-making and coordination processes may improve (Barley & Weickum,

2017). However, research has tended to focus on knowledge integration as driving outcomes

rather than specific communication behaviors through which knowing is accomplished (Barley et

al., 2018). Similarly, studies concerned with information sharing have tended to investigate how

groups can better access and integrate distinctive information and how more or different

information can improve problem solving (Larson & Egan, 2018). Wittenbaum et al. (2004)

made a case for the study of *how* team members communicate in knowing because they do not

just convey information; they frame information in ways that help them achieve a preferred

outcome. A focus on the dynamic nature of knowing and the communication practices inherent

to it can "aid in overcoming the conception of knowledge as a commodity that can travel easily

from place to place and, once received in the desired location, will produce frictionless action"

(Barley et al., 2018, p. 295).

A focus on knowledge performances can elucidate how knowledge is shared and group members' responses to that sharing. Performance theory provides a useful framing for knowledge performances in that it draws on dramaturgical approaches to define performances as distinct communicative acts that are (a) observable and (b) occur in the presence of and for others (Schechner, 2003). This conceptualization underscores that part of performing knowledge is about making what one knows visible to others. Furthermore, it posits a performer-audience dynamic as central to understanding knowledge accomplishment as power-laden. For example, Treem (2012) conceptualized expertise as defined by knowledge performances in which individuals make their work practices visible to gain legitimacy from others. Treem found that experts (a) transcend established procedures, (b) create opportunities to specialize, (c) handle large quantities of information, and (d) share unsolicited information. Witnessing these behaviors let observers "differentiate individuals with superior skills and abilities from others" (p. 33). In other words, knowledge performances involve communication that is intended to influence audiences who might accept or reject attributions of expertise. In line with this theory and research, we defined knowledge performances as knowledge accomplishing activities that are (a) visible, (b) undertaken in view of and for others, and (c) involve efforts to influence others. Our analysis uncovered knowledge performances marked by efforts to influence others through dominating communication.

Theorizing Dominating and Hostile Communication

Struggles over meaning are inherent to knowledge performances. Knowledge accomplishing episodes involve negotiating what knowledge, which knowers, and what sorts of knowing will guide action (Deetz, 1992; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008). When actors position their knowledge as more legitimate than alternatives, they gain leverage in that struggle. In addition to

Treem's (2012) findings regarding visibility and influence in knowledge performances, he made

a case for future research to examine the idea that "visible performances of knowledge can be

viewed as performances of organizational power" (p. 44). Kuhn and Jackson (2008) noted that

problem-solving processes are a key site of power-laden knowledge accomplishment because

actors who hold the authority to decide what knowing counts may do so in ways that preference

their own interests and obscure others.

Scholars have documented norms that value competitiveness, control, and hierarchy and

their prevalence in Western workplaces (Buzzanell, 1994; Rice, 2021). In these settings, louder

voices occupy the most conversational space and tend to be perceived as the most knowledgeable

(Winking et al., 2019). "Splaining," the concept that led this manuscript, provides a ready

example (Johnson et al., 2021). Likewise, norms and social status matter in knowledge

performances because communicators may wield them to decide what knowing counts, or in the

case of hostile knowledge performances, force their knowledge on others.

This sort of communication is consistent with what Deetz (1992) referred to as

"discursive closure" or communicative moves that limit, remove, or deny alternatives by

obstructing conversation so that a particular view of reality is preserved. Discursive closures are

not necessarily overtly hostile. They can be "quiet, repetitive practices," but they do "function to

maintain normalized, conflict-free experience and social relations" (p. 189). Discursive closures

end talk. They disqualify, neutralize, or pacify others, and communicate that certain topics are

off limits. Researchers have investigated the role discursive closure plays in conflict in corporate

mergers (Leonardi & Jackson, 2004), information sharing in urban planning (Woo et al., 2021),

and efforts to change safety practices (Thackaberry, 2004). A key insight in these studies is that

discursive closures remove alternatives and undermine dialogue.

For instance, Sprain et al. (2014) examined deliberative dialogue in groups and found that

experts may perform and thus obtain authoritative roles by positioning themselves as sages rather than collaborators or facilitators. In one instance, an expert derailed dialogue when he imposed specialized knowledge by speaking without being invited to do so and framing his contribution as unquestionable by others. Despite approaching the conversation with social niceties such as "If I may," the example demonstrated how knowledge performances may disrupt dialogue rather than generate it (p. 158). In Kuhn and Jackson's (2008) analysis of call centers, they found that professor-student power dynamics impeded problem-solving conversations. In one instance, they observed a student help desk operator assisting a professor. The professor dismissed and criticized the student, arguing at one point that the student's information was "bogus" (p. 469). These examples show that if knowledge is the "capacity to act within a situation" (Kuhn & Jackson, 2008, p. 455), then knowledge performances may be understood as relational attempts to determine what others know and how they behave. In this sense, expressions of what should be known, what is worth knowing, or what should be ignored may involve domination in that they may close discussion, obstructing what *might* be known.

Leonardi and Jackson (2004) argued that key to discursive closure practices is that they are difficult to notice. Indeed, Woo and colleagues (2021) found that discursive closures may emerge in subtle ways. In a study of urban planning, they found that civil engineers routinely cut off lines of conversation by sharing specialized information relevant to technical problems that their regional planner colleagues were not equipped to critique. They used less accessible terminology and cast collaborators' ideas as infeasible or too narrowly focused. Civil engineers wielded information that directed knowledge accomplishment for the group and closed discourse. These findings problematize ideas in the information sharing literature that suggest group members tend to preference collectively held information in their communication over unique information (Larson & Egan, 2018). Woo and colleagues' (2021) findings suggest that

communicators may indeed share unique information in an effort to silence others. Their study and the retrospective accounts of their participants underscored the need for research focused on the behaviors that bolster these efforts as they occur in groups.

Multiple lines of communication scholarship have theorized the overtly dominating communication behaviors of interest here. For example, Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) documented bullying behaviors such as rude and abusive language, persistent criticism, and outbursts like yelling, screaming, and swearing. Gottman and Silver (2015) accounted for what they viewed as toxic relationship behaviors included eye-rolling, name-calling, and injurious sarcasm, each of which signaled dismissiveness or disdain for others. Rosenberg's (2015) theory of nonviolent communication also posited violent communication behaviors such as blaming, insulting, labeling, and demanding. A common thread in these lines of research is that it is not necessarily the content of the communication, but how people communicate—specifically the persistence, repetition, or intensity of such behaviors—that makes them bullying, toxic or violent when aggregated over time. A single outburst during conflict may not constitute bullying, but repeated instances do not (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012).

To extend Kuhn and Jackson's (2008) theory of knowledge accomplishment and account for hostile knowledge performances, we took an approach focused on the repetition, persistence, and manner of dominating communication behaviors. We first asked, *what, if any, dominating communication behaviors do group members enact in their knowledge performances (RQ1)?* Building on that question, we next asked, *how do group members respond to domination in knowledge performances (RQ2)?* These questions focused our analysis on the exercise of power through force in the communicative accomplishment of knowledge.

Methods

Site and Participants

Portal was a team of individuals who gathered to design and implement a novel information technology, Project Connect. The team included stakeholders from private and non-profit sectors and experts on the work being automated and the technologies used in the project. Portal's goal was to create and implement a proof-of-concept automation technology to enhance the visibility of government recommendations that were otherwise difficult to access and buried in documentation online. Project Connect would render government requirements and recommendations in workflow software to help practitioners make informed decisions. The team recruited a pilot site and multiple partner organizations to design and implement Project Connect.

Portal consisted of six core team members. They included Angela, the project leader and point-person, and Cole, a data architect and industry specialist. The relationship and interactions between these two participants became central to our analysis. Angela recruited all members of the core team including Cole. She also managed and executed logistical tasks for Portal outside of meetings. Cole attended meetings and acted as a consultant, available for advice and guidance. The other Portal team members included Ian, a technologist with expertise in the information systems and partners involved; Gary, a researcher focused on change management and technology implementation for the project; Victoria, the project manager who also had expertise as a practitioner in the industry; and Jamie, a project research assistant. The first and third authors were members of the core team, but we have obscured the roles of the core members and authors and the nature of their work to protect participant and site confidentiality. Given their centrality to the analysis we do need to highlight that the authors were not Cole or Angela.

Portal had regular meetings to discuss the status of the project and troubleshoot problems. A few meetings occurred in person but most were remote to accommodate the COVID-19

pandemic. Portal held weekly core team meetings and less frequent partner meetings for a broader community of project stakeholders. Core meetings included the six primary Portal team members; they occurred weekly but also included irregular debriefs and preparatory discussions depending on the needs of the team at the time. For instance, the team might schedule an additional core meeting to discuss talking points for an upcoming partner recruitment effort or a meeting among all project partners. Portal's partner meetings generally included all core team members and involved representatives from other organizations that played a role in the project. During the partner meetings, core members provided updates on the project progress. They addressed project and task concerns and solved technology issues. Partner meetings involved as little as 8 to as many as 30 people at a time depending on the purpose of the meeting and the extent to which all stakeholders needed to be present.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval in 2019, data collection with Portal began in 2020 and continued through 2021. Because the first and third author also participated in Project Connect, we made Portal members aware of our intention to simultaneously investigate and document the communication difficulties groups encounter as they implement novel technologies. The first author joined all meetings during active data collection and focused on observing and note taking. He made few verbal contributions during meetings, undertaking more of a "complete witness" stance (Tracy, 2020, p. 384). Following ethnographic conventions, the first author developed the fieldnotes and layered memos into rich descriptions of important interactions that captured emerging lines of inquiry (Emerson et al., 1995). He composed "aesthetic presentations," narratives that evoked feelings and reactions (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). Fieldnotes captured impressions, key events, and participant language, behavior, and reactions.

At first, data collection focused in general on communication, problem solving, and

moments that seemed important to participants. Over time, as the first and third authors noticed meetings commonly featured numerous instances of conflict, the emphasis adjusted to include a focus on these moments of conflict. This approach aimed to cultivate introspection, including capturing and reflecting on the researcher's emotions and embodiment (Ellis, 1991). Note taking sought to include participant language and behavior and the first author's thoughts about the scene. Describing and examining the authors' experiences of ongoing conflicts helped capture the complexity of the group's interactions (Van Maanen, 1988). The data used for this study included notes from 63 core meetings for a total of 112.75 observation hours, and 76 partner meetings for a total of 99 hours of observation. The total 211.75 hours of observation generated 528 pages of single-spaced fieldnotes (111,219 words).

The third author participated in all meetings during active data collection. He did not take fieldnotes, taking a stance that emphasized participation over witnessing (cf., "complete participant" Tracy, 2020, p. 276). The second author did not witness or participate in Portal meetings but did debrief with the first and third authors weekly to discuss data collection. These weekly conversations focused on sharing stories from the field, but the team tried to avoid moving to interpretation in their conversations until principal fieldwork concluded and the first author undertook a first-round of open coding.

As fieldwork concluded, the first author also conducted interviews with core Portal team members (n=3, 50%). Interviews typically lasted 49 minutes (range = 45-55 minutes; 63 transcribed, single-spaced pages). Although not specifically the focus of the analysis reported here, the interview data provided valuable accounts of participants' perspectives on Portal's meetings. Interviews helped clarify the analysis of the observational data and participants' actions that were difficult to interpret based on observation alone. For instance, Victoria's interview clarified how she made sense of communication during the meetings and her

responses, which was important because she spoke less often than others. The analysis that we report here focused on the interaction patterns observed, not the accounts of participants, but their accounts helped us understand communication behaviors in their terms.

Within the first few months of observation, recurring conflicts marked by dismissive and condescending comments prompted the first author to focus on domination in Portal's communication. Recurring arguments and frustrations among members were palpable, and tense meetings increased over time as certain members dominated conversations. Portal encountered a variety of problems. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the work of the group, moved meetings online, and limited access to the worksite. The pandemic made getting buy-in from key partners difficult and delayed the project. Portal members frequently voiced concerns about being behind schedule and running out of resources. Investigating and describing the strategies of domination helped make sense of their struggles to move the project forward. We experienced our own frustrations, and we sought to weave emotions into the data gathering and analysis processes rather than trying to distance ourselves.

Data Analysis

We took an iterative approach to data analysis that moved back and forth between data gathering, reviewing relevant literature, and analyzing notes. Although issues of domination emerged early and remained the central focus throughout the analysis, the research questions emerged through engaging with the data and relevant theory over time. The first author coded the data using open, then focused coding and constant comparison methods, going line-by-line through fieldnotes, flagging recurrent behaviors and distinct moments of interest. This process underscored relationships between dominant behaviors and knowledge performances.

The analysis unfolded in three phases. The first phase occurred in Fall 2020 and produced preliminary findings. The first author highlighted specific communication behaviors and

moments in which members shared information to find potential knowledge performances. Open

codes included phrases such as "describing partner relationships" and "describing what to do."

The first author reviewed the open coding for forceful, recurrent, and repetitive behaviors

(Owen, 1984), collapsed them into categories, and then produced detailed descriptions of

categories (examples are available in Supplementary Tables A1 and A2). The first author also

drew on literature that described dominating behaviors (Gottman & Silver, 2015; Lutgen-

Sandvik & Tracy, 2012; Rosenberg, 2015). Codes that became relevant included "interrupting,"

"telling people what to think," and "criticism." Portal also recorded a few meetings when all

participants could not be present. The first author drew on those recordings to supplement notes

and transcribe a particularly conflictual episode captured in the first vignette (reproduced in

Table 1). The second vignette (reproduced in Table 2) relied only on notes.

The second phase involved more engagement among the authors, and it began

approximately ten months into fieldwork. With a deepening awareness of Portal's dynamics, we

started to use the term "toxic knowledge performances" and later "hostile knowledge

performances" to refer to the behaviors observed in the aggregate. The first author presented

preliminary findings during team meetings. The team asked questions, offered alternative

interpretations, and recommended relevant theory. The third author also shared stories from the

field that affirmed, modified, challenged, and added to emerging accounts.

As a group, we undertook negative case analyses to surface alternative accounts of the

behaviors observed. This analysis centered on key questions such as what would separate a

hostile knowledge performance from stylistic communication differences. Lutgen-Sandvik and

Tracy's (2012) work helped us distinguish hostile knowledge performances in terms of repetition,

persistence, and the manner aggregated over time. The negative case analysis also prompted the

second and third coding phases to make sure to consider the behaviors of all team members. That

is, Cole's behavior was most salient in the first phase of data analysis, so most initial examples

focused on him. During the second phase, the first author repeated the open coding process, but

focused on the entire group to look for similar if less striking behaviors. Later discussions

focused on how examples fit the conceptualization of hostile knowledge performances.

Fieldwork continued for eight more months. When principal fieldwork concluded, the

first author undertook a final round of coding focused on identifying moments (knowledge

accomplishing episodes) that involved knowledge performances (knowledge accomplishing

activities). Those moments were coded for behaviors that reflected overt and subtle dominating

communication behaviors (RQ1) and responses by group members (RQ2). Throughout this

phase, we continued to meet to discuss the emerging theoretical account of hostile knowledge

performances and the communication behaviors involved.

Findings

Before reviewing the findings, we recommend reading the brief vignettes in Tables 1 and

2 in their entirety. These vignettes are excerpts from fieldnotes, annotated with communication

behaviors important for the analysis. It is difficult to categorize a specific snapshot of a

communication behavior in a single quote as contributing to hostile knowledge performances

because it was the multiple, repetitive instances and force that marked them. Just as Lutgen-

Sandvik and Tracy (2012) described bullying as "intensity, persistence, and power-disparity

between targets and perpetrators" (p. 17) that are best recognized by examining examples in the

aggregate, our vignettes aim to illustrate that vantage for hostility.

In the findings section that follows, we first focus on dominating communication

behaviors observed during Portal meetings (RQ1). In sum, we found that communication

behaviors related to flooding the interactive space, correcting and directing, and stifling others

comprised hostile knowledge performances. Second, we describe behaviors common in

responses to hostile knowledge performances (RQ2). In brief, we found that participants tended

to remain silent or deferred to the dominating communicator. Group members also pushed back

with their own hostility or asked disarming questions. Overall, our findings suggest that hostile

knowledge performances reflected a group dynamic as much as, or more than, the clusters of

communication behaviors attributable to any one team member. Put another way, whereas the

findings ascribe dominating communication behaviors to individuals, the analysis revealed that

hostile knowledge performances were the outcome of both individual behaviors and team

processes working together.

Hostile Knowledge Performances (RQ1)

Our analysis found multiple dominating communication behaviors that comprised hostile

knowledge performances (see Table 3). We identified three forms, including (a) *flooding the

interactive space*, referring to behaviors such as monologuing and excessive email; (b)

correcting and directing, which involved telling people what to do and think, and (c) *stifling*,

involving behaviors such as interrupting, patronizing others, and stonewalling. Each behavior

emerged more often in core meetings, where the group was smaller, than in the partner meetings.

They varied in their effect on continuing engagement in interactions between members, but all

moved toward discursive closure. We also noted that these knowledge performances tended to

draw more on information that participants had by virtue of their past experiences or education

than project-specific information, which limited pushback by referring to information

unavailable to all communicators.

Flooding the Interactive Space

Flooding the interactive space involved two communication behaviors: (a) *monologues,*

moments in which participants spoke uninterrupted at length about topics, and (b) *excessive

email,* instances when participants inundated others with inconsumable amounts of information

throughout the day via repeated emails. These behaviors tended to be one-sided in that actors

emphasized their own knowledge by interjecting it in extensive talk without regard for listeners'

interest, attention, or capacity to engage. Flooding interactions objectified listeners in that actors

communicated "without consciousness of what [others] are feeling, needing, or requesting"

(Rosenberg, 2015, p. 122). Although each of these communication behaviors may be present in

any group, our analysis found members normalized flooding the interactive space by repeatedly

remaining silent and acquiescing to the practice.

Monologuing often included long explanations and descriptions of technologies, stories,

and relationships (akin to "splaining"). Cole monologued often in core meetings. He monologued

less in partner meetings; although, when asked to explain a particular problem or technology, we

observed him monologue in those meetings as well. His monologues focused on his previous

professional experiences with similar projects, including detailed descriptions of how projects

like this one worked in other contexts or the broad politics of who may or may not adopt the new

technology. At times, Cole's speeches included so much detail that the first author had difficulty

taking fieldnotes. On most occasions, Portal members did not interrupt Cole or follow up to ask

about the applicability of his comments. Instead, the group frequently ceded conversational space

until Cole finished talking before moving on without engaging his comments. In many instances,

Cole interrupted core meetings with a monologue. Angela often transitioned by thanking Cole

for his comments and then reiterated the last thought before his interruption. Examples of Cole's

monologuing are included in the vignettes such as his explanation of the cloud (Table 1, lines 16-

25) and his description of data pathways between organizations (Table 1, lines 45-50).

Other examples we observed included an early stakeholder pitch meeting where Cole

explained Portal's proposed technology in extensive detail to a room of stakeholders without

interruption. After the meeting, Gary commented to Jamie that he thought Cole was "too in the

weeds" but that he looked around the room and saw stakeholders following along. Although it was unclear if stakeholders followed or not, their lack of responses demonstrated deference to monologuing. No one interjected, and that silence ceded conversational space to Cole.

Flooding the interactive space was also apparent in Angela's email practices. Emails to members, partners, and stakeholders included multiple pages of information interspersed with highlighted and bolded language of key points, often copied to participants regardless of the relevance of the topic to their part of the project. On active days, participants received five or six such emails. This practice emerged as a form of flooding the interactive space in the sense that they were long and frequent, and because Angela made it clear in meetings that she thought members and stakeholders should be reading her emails in their entirety by referring to them and asking questions about specific information in them. Members' inability to engage with this volume of communication was reflected in the frequent necessity for information to be reiterated in meetings. Diagrams needed to be resent. Technical details needed to be reintroduced. In one meeting, Angela shared that a stakeholder sent her a message to say that "There are so many emails floating around! Can we just have a meeting?" Rather than treating email as a space to communicate *with* stakeholders about the project, Angela dispersed massive quantities of information via email *at* stakeholders who did not have the capacity to engage with it. In doing so, she controlled and amplified the flow of information she regarded as important. Flooding contributed to knowledge accomplishment, not because the information within it became more salient or useful, but rather because it crowded out other contributions.

Correcting and Directing

Correcting and directing constituted a hostile knowledge performance when members used them to change group processes and others' thinking through communicative force. Examples included forceful phrasing such as "have to," "never," or "need to," to frame a

perspective as definitive: "You have to go one by one to figure out the date," Cole argued in

vignette two, directing the preparation of a timeline for the team's data (Table 2, lines 06-09). He

used phrases like "I would," "we should," or "you should" when interjecting. "I would say

through. Pass data *through*," Cole corrected in the first vignette after Angela typed "Pass data to"

(Table 1, lines 70-71). Cole performed his technical knowhow in totalizing ways, and the team

often ceded to his opinion without deliberation.

Cole also demanded others stop a given behavior or change their way of thinking: "Just

stop," he once told Jamie, who was adjusting data on a spreadsheet in a core meeting. "We need

to go line by line. That's the only way to do [this]." In another core meeting, Cole admonished

Angela as she typed what Cole was saying. "Don't type," he interjected. "Just listen first." Cole

directed core team members with phrases such as, "Don't put that anchor in your mind," or

"Don't wrap your head around that part." He told Angela to "Remove any physical location out

of your mind," when he explained the cloud to her (Table 1, lines 17-18). In one core meeting,

Cole argued that each member needed to "manage [their] expectations" about an organization's

decision to sign with Project Connect. "Just because [they are] ready to go, doesn't mean we're

ready to go," Cole scolded the group. What is important about these examples is not that Cole

argued for a particular approach, but the typically unsolicited and dominating framing of his

comments. Cole scolded team members and camouflaged his own worries about the future of the

project by demanding other teammates temper their enthusiasm.

Stifling

Stifling hostile knowledge performance behaviors included interrupting, patronizing, and

stonewalling. For instance, when a speaker challenged Cole's perspective, he interrupted and

paused, only to interrupt again and assert control over the conversation (Table 2, lines 14-28).

Patronizing criticism included statements like, "These slides are too much," or "This diagram is

virtually unreadable." In vignette one, Cole argued that it was important Angela feel comfortable with the team's diagram, but in a way that cut her down: "We can't have you uncomfortable with this because then you're going to stumble all over it," Cole chided (Table 1, lines 74-76). A more discreet form of patronizing involved tone, wherein Cole delivered information by slowing his speech, emphasizing words as though others were intellectually beneath him.

Examples of stonewalling, or refusing to respond to others (Gottman & Silver, 2015), also recurred in Portal meetings. In vignette two, Cole stonewalled when Victoria and Angela refuted Cole's argument that partners keep data that is more than ten years old (Table 2, line 53-68). Here, Victoria and Angela disagreed with Cole, and in response, Cole simply went silent. In doing so, he refused to entertain their input. Interrupting, patronizing, and stonewalling produced hostile knowledge performances that prioritized a particular perspective and invalidated others.

Responses to Hostile Knowledge Performances (RQ2)

Our second research question asked how group members responded to dominating communication behaviors in hostile knowledge performances. An important aspect of our findings involved the difference between Cole's behavior in core Portal meetings versus his behavior in larger partner meetings. Cole monologued in all settings, but instances of correcting and directing as well as stifling did not emerge in partner meetings. What this suggests is that something about Portal core meetings gave Cole the latitude to behave in more hostile ways. We found that the group norms, developed collectively, provided Cole the opportunity for rude behavior that increased in severity over time. Portal's norms constrained some behavior and facilitated other behavior that then reinforced and modified those norms (Poole et al., 1996).

We therefore focused on group members' responses in core team meetings and found two categories of response—behaviors that (a) exacerbated hostility, including silence and deference, and those that (b) mitigated hostility, including pushback and questioning (Table 3). We also

observed that participants perceived Cole's knowledge as central to the success of the technology development. Cole was the only core team member who shared the same professional background as the highest status members of the Project Connect project site. This distinctive background and status complicated Portal members' responses because the group saw his contributions as unreplaceable. Furthermore, because the COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person contact, members communicated in remote video conferences where it was easy to remain silent and hide discomfort with their cameras turned off. These dynamics may have differed in person. Perceptions of the necessity of Cole's expertise and the nature of remote meetings may help explain variation in exacerbating and remediating responses.

Exacerbating Hostile Knowledge Performances

The group's most common responses to hostile knowledge performances involved silence and deference. Simple examples occurred during core and partner meetings when Cole monologued, and members did not interject. During these monologues, it was unclear if participants listened or ignored them and waited. The first vignette includes a common response to monologuing: Cole explained at Angela and the group; Angela reiterated her view with a question; and Cole explained further while other participants remained silent and did not engage Cole's comments. In vignette one, Angela attempted to match a diagram with a description and engaged in a back-and-forth with Cole (Table 1, lines 06-50). During exchanges like these, other members disengaged unless Angela or Cole called on them directly. The tension in these moments was palpable and confirmed in interviews. Silence let dominating communication persist by exacerbating hostile knowledge performances.

Deference involved an over-reliance on a speaker's perspective while ignoring the hostility of their communication. We observed deference as a frequent response to hostility. For example, in vignette two, Cole interrupts Angela several times and she simply responds by

saying, "Well, that sounds good to me Cole" (Table 2, line 31). In another core meeting, the

project manager, Victoria, proposed sharing some documents in the next stakeholder meeting. To

demonstrate, she shared them first with Portal members and Angela started to read the

documents aloud when they appeared on-screen. Cole cut in to correct and direct Angela. "No,

don't do that…Even if you put [hypotheticals] in Latin, they'll do what Angela did and try to

read it," he said. "That's good input Cole," Angela responded. "Thank you." In this moment,

Angela deferred to Cole's suggestion and ignored his condescending tenor. These examples

demonstrate that deference to Cole's knowledge also included deference to his behavior. He

framed his advice as incontrovertible, and in doing so, directed the group.

Over time, we found that Cole became the focal point for Portal group decision-making.

In partner meetings, Angela typically asked Cole if he had anything to add to the conversation.

Cole regularly responded with a gruff "no." Members also deferred to Cole to make decisions

even when he was not present. During one core meeting that Cole did not attend, Angela

suggested "Let's see what Cole thinks" to Gary when they deliberated about the limits of the

decisions Portal members could make for partners. Despite knowing those limits fell outside

Cole's expertise, Angela and Gary still deferred to Cole's voice to move their work forward.

Although seeking input is an inclusive, collaborative choice in isolation, in the aggregate, it

illustrates the subtle ways the group centralized Cole's perspective.

Mitigating Hostile Knowledge Performances

Although group members' most common reactions to hostile knowledge performances

involved silence and deference, they also tried to mitigate it by pushing back. At times, Angela

told Cole he was wrong: "I was encouraged that Star Labs wanted a weekly meeting," she once

said to the core team when they debriefed after a stakeholder meeting. "He didn't say weekly,"

Cole responded. "Don't put that anchor in your mind." Angela shot back, "Yes, he did. He said

weekly, so that we'd have a regular cadence." Here, Angela stood her ground. Other times, Angela responded to Cole's interjections by interrupting him in return, which may have contributed to the ongoing competition for communicative space. During a stakeholder meeting, Gary pushed back on one of Cole's monologues, redirecting the group conversation toward explicit meeting aims. "We've got about 25 minutes left in the call," Gary cut in, "So, Cole, point well-taken, but let's focus on these bullet points so that we can get through them." Here, Gary countered Cole's monologuing and refocused the group.

Instances of pushback also exemplified features of hostile knowledge performances. Angela's comment above was a way of correcting, and Gary's comment dismissed Cole's perspective to direct group efforts and get on with what he saw as more relevant. At times, the pushback strategies used to challenge hostility aligned with correcting and directing behaviors. In this sense, hostile knowledge performances involved competing struggles for discursive closure. Furthermore, these efforts demonstrate the complexity of different responses. Gary may have felt empowered to speak up because of the presence of other stakeholders. Hostile knowledge performances proliferated in the core Portal team but subsided in larger groups.

Another response involved asking questions: For example, Gary translated or reframed Angela's questions for Cole to target his expertise specifically. In one core meeting, Angela asked Cole about different data standards and which one he thought should be shared. Cole suggested Angela ask the partner which one they would prefer.

Angela: That's not my question. We've got two [standards]. Which one is best?

Cole: I'll say it again, and I'll say it very clearly. Ask him if [data] is okay or not okay.

Angela: So, from your perspective, it doesn't matter which one?

Cole: I'm saying ask him.

Gary: Which is more general? The generic [standard]?

Cole: I know nothing about how he does his work. I say show him [this]. He will tell us.

In this exchange, Gary cut in to ask a question that targeted Cole's knowledge to surface the answer Angela was seeking. Rather than asking for Cole's opinion, Gary probed for specifics about the differences between the standards.

Discussion

In sum, portal team members engaged in hostile knowledge performances to make their aims and perspectives central to group efforts through dominating communication. These hostile knowledge performances took multiple forms, including flooding the interactional space, correcting and directing group members, and stifling others. Though the analysis focused on specific moments to illustrate them, hostility emerged in the aggregate over time. Indeed, a key difficulty of addressing hostile knowledge performances is that they present as communication patterns that may be easily missed. Even as we looked at examples in isolation, they did not strike us as necessarily hostile out of context. It was the aggregated, repeated behaviors that objectified others and centralized one speaker's knowledge at the exclusion of others that constituted hostility. Over time, hostile knowledge performances dictated the interactional norms for the team and stymied teamwork.

This study makes two important contributions to the theory and practice of communicating knowledge. First, it forwards a theoretical conceptualization of hostile knowledge performances and the specific communication behaviors that comprise them. Second, this study advances theories of communicative knowledge accomplishment by focusing on issues of domination and showing how knowledge may gain legitimacy through force. The following sections describe the theoretical and practical implications of these findings in detail.

Hostile Knowledge Performances

The conceptualization of hostile knowledge performances advanced here makes a few

key ideas clear: First, conceptualizing them as performances highlights their dynamic, aggregate, interactive nature rather than ascribing them to discrete messages or behaviors. This insight echoes Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy's (2012) conceptualization of bullying, which they described as indicated in communicative forms and features. Forms of bullying include rude language, criticism, and yelling. Features include more obscure characteristics such as the duration, repetition, or persistence of behaviors. Like hostility, bullying does not occur in isolation but in the aggregate. Specific communication behaviors comprise hostile knowledge performances, and it is the dynamic of dominance and acquiescence over time that defined them. Focusing only on specific dominating behaviors may miss the dynamics that give rise to them.

Second, by grounding our conception of hostility in specific communication behaviors, our analysis emphasizes that the struggle for meaning in information sharing is also a struggle for who gets to share. Our conceptualization holds that hostile knowledge performances are problematic because they lead to a form of discursive closure that silences others rather than producing shared agreement and understanding. This point has important implications for the study of groups. Hostile knowledge performances emerged most prominently as members grew more familiar with each other. In larger groups with less familiarity, they occurred less.

Third, building on this observation, hostile knowledge performances may be more likely to draw on particular kinds of information such as distinctive information that is unavailable to all team members (e.g., based on training or past experiences). Yet, they are still defined by dominating communication. The content and form of information sharing mattered (Wittenbaum et al., 2004). Moreover, differences in form had different implications for the interaction as a whole. Hostile knowledge performance behaviors differed in the extent they enabled continued engagement (Table 3). Flooding the interactive space continued the interaction and produced more talk, not less. Correcting and directing interrupted the flow of interaction, middling the

extent of engagement. Both demonstrate that discursive closure is not only marked by silence. Stifling did stop talk and produced the greatest degree of disengagement in interaction.

In sum, hostile knowledge performances involve a performer-audience dynamic that hijacks conversations, objectifies listeners, and controls group knowing. This account of hostile knowledge performances expands our understanding of dominating communication and discursive closure. Highlighting specific communication behaviors and how they sediment in group processes over time helps makes sense of phenomena like "splaining" and widespread Western communication norms that privilege dominating voices. This conceptualization has value for theorizing power in collaboration and discursive closure.

Power in Collaboration

The conceptualization of hostile knowledge performances forwarded contributes an account of power constituted in communication that is inflected by, but not defined by, role and social status (Harris, 2017; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Treem, 2012). For instance, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) described role and social status as resources of power from which actors draw. In Portal, the core team understood themselves to be equals, but their status and power differences were complex. These findings emphasize the importance of examining dominating communication behaviors that exert force through communication itself: In struggles to know, it may be the information shared, the efficacy for problem solving, the visibility of expert status, and also the force through which people communicate that accomplishes knowledge.

For Portal, the pervasiveness of hostile knowledge performances and the group's acceptance of norms of domination were intertwined with role and status differences just as "splaining" relies on and reifies masculine norms for interaction. Though we focused on specific communication behaviors and knowledge performances more so than communicators' identities, it should not be overlooked that the principal practitioner of dominating communication

behaviors presented as masculine and his behaviors reflected masculine norms. These findings

may be clarified by Rice's (2021) study of gendered tensions in professional discourses about

interorganizational collaboration. Her feminist analysis highlighted gendered descriptors for

professional identities like "shrinking violets that are second-guessing themselves" (p. 538) and

"take charge" persons willing to take necessary action regardless of others' "big egos" (pp. 538-

539). The professional discourse tended to reify institutionalized, competitive, masculine norms,

but participants, and especially participants presenting as female, tended to acquiesce to

masculine norms instead of challenging them. However, doing so helped them achieve the

outcomes they sought. Similarly, Portal members may have remained silent, not because they

were helpless or passive, but because it worked—they could wait the bluster out—and because,

as Rice argued, not all management approaches are available to all participants in the same way.

 These findings underscore the value of the meso-level perspective on power in

collaboration advocated for by Rice (2021). Future research on the communicative

accomplishment of knowledge, and hostile knowledge performances in particular, should be

grounded in specific behaviors and mindful of their anchors in macro-level discourses about

what those behaviors mean and how they are interpreted. For Portal, behaviors like taking over,

interrupting, and patronizing exemplified "masculinity contests," practices that reflect consistent

antagonism for whose knowledge prevails (Berdahl et al., 2018, p. 422) and "violent"

communication that involves criticism, defensiveness, and speaking without listening

(Rosenberg, 2015, p. 3). Widespread, yet subtle forms of competition related to masculinity and

Western cultural norms may have contributed to the acceptance of hostility.

Discursive Closure

 The conceptualization of hostile knowledge performances also extends theoretical

understandings of discursive closure. It aligns with Deetz's (1992) assertion that discursive

closure can be observed in everyday practices that suppress insight and careful discussion and complicates how future research might make sense of communication that is likely to suppress or silence others. Deetz (1992) explained that one way actors close discourse and suppress alternative views is by positioning information as incontrovertible. We observed that same certainty in dominating communication behaviors. Just as Woo et al., (2021) found that civil engineers relied on inaccessible quantification and mathematical models to close conversation, we found that dominating communication drew on information unavailable to others. However, it also produced discursive closure just as much through force as through information positioning. A key puzzle for communication research will be sorting out (a) the impulse to encourage the sharing of unique information because group members tend to avoid doing so to the detriment of group processes (Larson & Egan, 2018), and (b) the reality that sharing unique information may also coincide with discursive closure that undermines group processes (Sprain et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2021). Force can overshadow and obscure content. Solving this puzzle may depend on identifying the specific behaviors that comprise hostile knowledge performances over time. This finding aligns with research that posits a paradoxical relationship between communication visibility and transparency in that "a flood of information" may render that information "meaningless or confusing and opaque" (Stohl et al., 2016, p. 133). In Portal, collaborators routinely responded to hostile knowledge performances with overwhelmed silence, which may have hidden useful information not by leaving it unstated but by drowning out.

Knowledge Performance and the Communicative Accomplishment of Knowledge

The second major focus of the contributions of this research provide insights for future research on the communicative accomplishment of knowledge. Experts and specific types of knowing gain legitimacy through knowledge performances. This study underscores that the legitimacy of knowledge is entangled with the amount of conversational space it occupies. It is

not just that participants would judge such knowledge as more appropriate or effective, but dominating communication behaviors crowd out alternatives.

In an isolated moment, a hostile knowledge performance may seem banal. A single monologue or verbose email may not accomplish much nor erode productive communication norms. Zooming out and describing the cumulative pattern of knowledge performances provides a lens with which seemingly inconsequential events develop into larger patterns of power-laden knowledge accomplishment (Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012). These findings advance theory of the communicative accomplishment of knowledge by showing how individuals exercise communication dominance and stifle competing alternatives in how they share information, not just in what information they share, and how those behaviors accrue.

As such, we aim to advance future research on the communicative accomplishment of knowledge in two ways. First, hostile knowledge performances problematize notions of knowledge legitimization by describing communication strategies that accomplish knowledge through force. Kuhn and Jackson's (2008) model of knowledge accomplishment argued that it is the "cash value" of the knowledge delivered that is the difference between knowledge that is legitimized and adopted and knowledge that is not (p. 461). Treem's (2012) theory of expertise conceptualized knowledge performances as gaining legitimacy as observers associated behaviors with experts and competence. In Portal, the "cash value" of knowledge depended on domination. The most forceful voice in the room contributed the most to knowledge accomplishment. Hostile knowledge performances did not need to be deemed credible by observers per se. Instead, they took up space, wore others down, confused issues, and crowded out dissent. Even when others debated or contested specific ideas, dominating communication eliminated further discourse.

Second, theorizing knowledge legitimization through domination has implications for research that investigates how experts communicate, embody, and position themselves in

organizations and teams. Woo and Leonardi's (2018) work on relational expertise positioning

argued that getting to participate in a collaboration depended on communicators successfully

positioning their expertise as valuable without alienating potential collaborators in the pre-

collaboration stage. Angela recruited Cole because of his expertise but also his certifications,

which she often highlighted when introducing him to others. They had also worked together

successfully on smaller, shorter-term projects. His hostility intensified over time and in core

meetings more than partner meetings. Avoiding hostile knowledge performances may be more

difficult in the pre-collaboration stage highlighted by Woo and Leonardi. Future research could

usefully examine the presence of dominating communication in relational expertise positioning

as well as strategies for intervening in hostile knowledge performances once the collaboration

has begun and removing a collaborator is more difficult.

Implications for Practice

Our analysis highlights a difficult balance between communication that facilitates the

expression of relevant knowledge and apprehends problematic behaviors. From a practical

standpoint, members could choose to call out these behaviors, ignore them, challenge them

indirectly, or try to remediate them. What appeared to make stopping hostile knowledge

performances difficult was in part that they did not seem so egregious or inflammatory in

isolation. Indeed, the behaviors could be viewed as momentary annoyances, normal group

conflict, or stylistic differences. However, examining the behaviors together, and as they

developed and increased over time, helped illuminate a troublesome whole. The findings

demonstrate that discursive closure practices can be difficult to address in the moment and

because, unaddressed, problematic norms can ossify, limiting the potential for dialogue and

meaningful change (Deetz, 1992).

These findings have practical value because they elucidate a tension inherent to

interdisciplinary work that is particularly relevant for the future of work. For example, designing and using intelligent machines effectively and ethically necessitates many diverse knowledge domains working together (Bailey & Barley, 2020). Teams charged with developing and implementing complex technologies rely on diverse relational, technological, and domain experts to accomplish their goals (Woo et al., 2021). Barley et al. (2018) argued that societal and technology change increasingly means that sharing and accessing information may have less importance relative to deciding what knowledge counts or "managing the firehose" (p. 299): "[The important questions] shift from getting everything you can to *evaluating which* knowledge is *worthy* of inclusion" (p. 299). That "firehose" may also not be a benign, overwhelming flow of information but an effort to flood the interaction, correct or direct, or stifle others.

The value of Portal as a case study of knowledge performances also speaks to problems of social privilege. Returning to "splaining," it would be a mistake to ignore the gender norms relevant to their collaboration and the gender presentations of the communicators. Cole's and Angela's knowledge performances reflected societal gender norms. Cole splained. Angela asked questions to advocate her position that comported with misogynistic workplace expectations that feminine communicators contribute and make requests nonassertively. The popular uptake of the term mansplaining emerged precisely because it resonated with the experiences of many and brought attention to the pervasiveness of condescending knowledge performances. Interventions that ignore gender ignore the insight that not all strategies are available to all communicators in the same ways (Rice, 2021).

Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations and caveats that are important to note. First, and perhaps most importantly, our findings are only one case of hostile behaviors. These behaviors may look different in different groups where hostility arises and may include other actions.

Second, most of the data for this study was collected remotely during the pandemic. Being online likely interacted with the processes under study in ways that we did not emphasize. For example, it may have been easier to remain silent especially on a video conference where communicators could turn off their cameras. However, because the collaborators lived far apart, the likelihood is that Portal meetings would have been mediated even without the pandemic. Nonetheless, increases in remote work may exacerbate the prevalence of hostile knowledge performances.

This study also focused on interaction without much attention to the importance of identity in hostile knowledge performances. What one "knows" is conveyed through, and inseparable from, identity. For example, professionalization shapes workers' identities as what they "know" becomes observable in their communication and work practices (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Identity issues fell outside the scope of our analysis, but conceptualizing knowledge performances as activities that require an audience makes clear that knowledge is embodied and inseparable from identity. These findings do point to identity as an important factor in responses to hostile knowledge performances, which should be a priority for future research.

Conclusion

Communication that dominates accomplishes knowledge as much as claims to expert status, powerful identities, and formal authority do. Knowledge as a struggle for meaning is also a struggle for who commands communicative space. The repetitive aspect of the communicative forms involved are key because dominating communication behaviors may be more manageable when they are isolated and infrequent. When they are persistent, they can normalize problematic behavior in ways that keep people from resisting them or encourage them to resist in hostile ways, exacerbating the discursive closure produced by hostile knowledge performances.

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Table 1

Vignette One – The Diagram (Notes from a core team meeting)

	Thick Description	* = Hostile Behaviors # = Responses
01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15	Angela shares her screen so that each member on the remote meeting can view her workstation. She pulls up a detailed document of Project Connect's purpose, goals, partners, and a diagram of the data pathway. The diagram looks like a prototypical workflow, specifying when partners receive, filter, or pass data through their servers. Angela makes it clear that the diagram should match the description below it. She argues that right now it does not. She asks for help from the team to clear up the discrepancy. Angela admits that the technology aspect of the project is not entirely her area. Still, she presses on to clarify the document. She wonders aloud about a particular pathway, when it reaches the cloud versus when the data is optimized. Cole explains the process, tries to address Angela's questions. Angela wonders aloud if either of them can explain it and suggests asking the partner directly.	
16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26	Cole sighs over her misunderstanding of the cloud. Then he tries to explain, "Physically, it doesn't matter where they are, so remove any physical location out of your mind." He slows his speech for emphasis. "Even if they were doing if from an office in Phoenix, that cloud could be in Utah, Wyoming, San Antonio. It could be anywhere. These are just *paths*. When we're talking right now, we have no idea all the different hops that this has made. Physically. This has nothing to do with physical location. These are all virtual locations. That's what the cloud is. Yes, there is a physical server somewhere with redundancy..."	*Telling others how to think *Patronizing *Monologuing
27 28 29 30	After a beat, Angela responds, "But there is a sequence…and I'm not clear on the sequence. And I'm not clear why you think that's happening in that way."	
31 32 33	"Because that's what we talked to him about *twice*," Cole raises his voice. "That [C] doing this replaces these [connections]." He pauses.	
34 35 36	"Okay. Well, let me just clarify with-" Angela begins, but before she finishes, Cole continues.	
37 38	"-and, that's why, if you just scroll down to the *words*…" Cole pauses again. After a few seconds, Angela scrolls down from the diagram to	*Interrupting *Patronizing

39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76	the description, and once she gets there Cole adds "…the words are not inconsistent with that." Another pause. "Okay, I thought they were in-," Angela begins, but Cole interrupts again. "You go [organization B] to [C]," he describes the sequence. "[C], who are using a connection through the portal, does its thing in the lower right box instead of [D] doing the [transformation] in the lower right box, goes back through and [transfers] to [B]. [B] to [A]. That's why these rules are completely consistent with that picture if we just swap [D] with [C]." Another pause. An especially long one. Angela's meditation fountain trickles in the background. Finally, she breaks the silence. "Okay, I just didn't read it that way," she says. She explains again that it's important for her to understand what's happening, how the data travels, the process that occurs. Cole continues, stressing that the data is simply moving through partners and offers an analogy. "It's like, I can hand a package to you and you can hand a package back to me, and then-" he starts, but Angela cuts him off this time. "No, I understand but I need to hear it from [the partner]," she says. This line of conversation continues for another 15 minutes. "This is just a *channel*," Cole says at one point, "A *passthrough*." He emphasizes as though it is self-evident. Angela suggests changing the language in the document. She types "pass data to," and Cole corrects her. "I would say *through*. Pass data *through*." She types "through." They continue on and make changes to the language. I notice that no one else has contributed to this session for about twenty minutes. Cole presses Angela to add another box to the diagram, adding "if that helps you with all of this. We can't have you uncomfortable with this because then you're gonna stumble over it talking about it."	 *Interrupting #Deference *Patronizing *Telling others how to think #Push back *Patronizing *Telling others what to do *Telling others what to do *Patronizing

Note. Pseudonyms A, B, C, D are used to anonymize organization names.

Table 2

Vignette Two – Old Data (Notes from a core team meeting)

Thick Description	* = Hostile Behaviors # = Responses
01 Angela discusses her action items for the week, sharing her to-do list 02 with the group. She says one of the stakeholders will need a 03 timeframe for data, and asks the group, "We need to go back 18 04 months, right?" 05	
06 Cole breaks in for the first time today, "I would not write that in the 07 rules. Remember what we're trying to do is a [portal]. You have to 08 go one by one to figure out the date. You can't go by what people are 09 sitting around a table saying." 10	*Telling others what to do and how to think *Patronizing
11 Angela says she asked the same question in last Friday's status 12 meeting with all the partners. Two people said 18 months was 13 standard. Cole was on that call but did not interject at that time. 14 "Right, but we request based on the clinical," his voice wavers, 15 "guidelines. If they don't have it and say all we can give you is 18 16 months, that's very different than we're only gonna ask for 18 17 months because that's what they said. So-" 18	*Telling others what to think
19 "-I agree-," Angela tries to cut in, but Cole continues over her. 20	#Deference
21 "-so if [any data] says to go back that number of months or years, 22 that's the number you *request*." Cole draws out the word request. 23 There's a long pause. Angela's mediation fountain trickles again in 24 the background, bubbling with what should be calm. 25	*Interrupting *Telling others what to think *Patronizing
26 "Yeah-" Angela begins to say, but Cole starts again, cutting her off. 27	
28 "-no matter what they can send you." Another long pause. More 29 trickling. 30	*Interrupting
31 Finally, Angela starts again. "Well, that sounds good to me, Cole," 32 she says, then explains that what the partner can provide is still 33 unknown. She asks Ian if he's been in touch with the partner. Ian 34 says he's waiting until Portal decides on a timeline. "Okay," Angela 35 says, "I'll put together some kind of a table...?" 36	#Deference
37 Cole jumps in again. His tone is more measured this time. "You 38 could do it off the [data logic]. That's the easiest one to work from.	

39	But when it says we need a code every ten years, then we need a	
40	code, or we'll be recommending [options] for people who don't need	
41	them because the data doesn't go back far enough."	
42		
43	"Right," Angela agrees as she jots down some notes.	
44		
45	Cole continues, "And the question is, is that what we want to do?	
46	Obviously, no. So, if they tell us "All we have is 18 months," then	
47	we need to go back to the partner and tell them you guys have two	
48	choices. One, get a whole bunch of data that aren't accurate. Two,	
49	should we remove data? These are the kind of discussions you have	*Telling others
50	to have but you still go one step at a time based on the [professional]	what to do
51	guidelines."	
52		
53	Here, Victoria steps in and tells Cole that she was under the	#Push back
54	impression that partners did not keep data that was ten years old.	
55	"They do," Cole answers. "Some partners don't but these do."	
56		
57	Another pause. Angela breaks it, seeming to come to Victoria's aid.	
58	"Has that been your experience, Victoria?" Victoria talks a little	#Push back
59	about her notion of the data that these partners keep. She explains	
60	that more recent data will certainly be available, and many partners	
61	have older data but tend to not engage much with it. Angela voices	
62	agreement, that what partners have been saying to her aligns with	
63	Victoria's assertion. There might be some ten-year data, she explains,	
64	but the vast majority will be 18-month.	
65		
66	Total silence after this. No response from Cole. Just the drip of the	*Stonewalling
67	meditation waterfall in the background. Finally, Angela moves on	
68	and says she'll get in touch with the partner.	
69		

Note. Pseudonyms A, B, C, D are used to anonymize organization names.

Table 3

Hostile Knowledge Performance Behaviors and Responses

Extent of Engagement in Interaction	Dominating Communication Behaviors	Responding Communication Behaviors
Effusive	Flooding the interactive space • Monologuing • Excessive emailing	Exacerbating • Silence • Deference
Middling	Correcting and Directing • Telling people what to do • Telling people how to think	Mitigating • Questioning • Pushback
Disengaging	Stifling • Interrupting • Patronizing • Stonewalling	