

Adult Ed & Online Hate

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Virtual Theatre of the Oppressed (Video 2)

Definition

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* was established in the 1970s by Augusto Boal. It is a participatory form of theatre—forum theatre—in which the lines between spectator and actor are blurred. It begins with the actors portraying a dramatic situation from everyday life. Audience members are then invited to "intervene by stopping the action, coming on to stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas." In this way, it allows participants to play out multiple possible responses to everyday challenges and encourages them to engage in "self-empowering processes of dialogue that help foster critical thinking." (source: [Brecht Forum Archive](#))

Video Summary

Alex and her friends decide to use a theatre of the oppressed approach to develop a series of possible responses to the hateful speech painted on their school. Once these responses are created, they decide to post the responses to social media and have the public vote and give feedback on which responses are helpful.

Guiding Questions

If you were in Alex's shoes, you might want to consider the following questions to help guide...

The development of content that you post to social media

- Who or what does the hate speech attack?
- Who or what does the hateful viewpoint serve?
- If you were a member of the group being targeted by the hate speech, how might you respond?
- If you had friends and/or family members who were part of the group being targeted by the hate speech, how might you respond?
- If you sympathized with the hateful viewpoint, how might you respond?
- If you were a member of law enforcement within the community affected by hate speech, how might you respond?
- If you were a member of a political party within the community affected by hate speech, how might you respond?

Someone

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Your selection of social media platform/technology

- Is it important for you to try to protect your community from offensive ideas or comments?
- Do you need a platform that is closed (users need a subscription or login information to view and contribute content)?
- Do you need a platform that is semi-open (users need a subscription or login information to contribute content, but not to view it)?
- Do you need a platform that is open (anyone can view and contribute content)?
- Do you need a platform where the users are primarily local, national, or international?
- Does the platform have features that will allow you to get users' feedback (e.g., commenting or voting functionality)?

Pros

Using social media to crowdsource opinions about a range of potential responses can help spark conversations about the merits and drawbacks of each alternative. This can help illuminate important power structures and socio-political dynamics operating within different scenarios, and prompt critical reflection on these aspects. It can also help identify potential constructive ways forward.

Importantly, getting feedback from a wide audience (beyond the traditional boundaries of the affected group/community) can help generate broader awareness of, and support for, a particular injustice affecting a group or community, which is a crucial aspect of building resiliency.

Cons

Depending on the social media platform(s) used, it may be difficult to provide a lot of background/contextual information surrounding the event that precipitated the use of virtual theatre of the oppressed. Without this information, the feedback given might be unhelpful for, or even harmful to, the goals that you are trying to achieve.

Moreover, if you choose to solicit feedback in a largely unmediated and heterogeneous environment (e.g., Twitter), it will be more difficult to follow and/or moderate all relevant discussions than if you choose to solicit feedback in a more closed and closely moderated environment (e.g., reddit).

Virtual Appreciative Inquiry Asset Mapping (Video 3)

Definition

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to community/organizational analysis that focuses on identifying achievements and existing strengths, skills, and adaptive strategies. There are four main steps to appreciative inquiry: discovery, dream, design, delivery. Discovery involves identifying and appreciating existing community/organization assets. Dream involves envisioning ways to build on and enhance existing assets. Design involves creating strategies to realize enhanced assets. Delivery involves putting design strategies into action. (source: [Appreciative Inquiry](#))

Asset Mapping is a fundamental component of appreciative inquiry. It is a strategy for identifying and documenting the tangible and intangible sources within a community, organization, or environment and treating these sources as assets to be enhanced, rather than deficits to be remedied. In short, asset mapping involves identifying the best of 'what is' in order to pursue 'what could be'. (source: [Community Asset Mapping](#))

Video Summary

Alex and her friends set up a closed web forum to identify the tools within their community that support resilience. They invite members of their community to the web forum and engage in a process of appreciative inquiry asset mapping.

Guiding Questions

If you were in Alex's shoes, you might want to consider the following questions to help guide...

The development of content that you post to social media

- Will there be norms of discussion in your closed forum?
- If so, who will establish them and when will they be established?
- Will you provide every forum user with the same information regarding the context of, and goals for, the forum?
- Who will determine the goals for the forum?
- Will you provide activity prompts or open-ended questions to guide discussion?
- Will conversation be free-flowing or structured?
- How will disagreements and diverse perspectives be handled?
- Will conversation be moderated?
- Will you provide a summary of the discussions, pointing out any notable patterns or insights?
- Is consensus important to the success of this initiative?

Someone

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Your selection of social media platform/technology

- Is it important for you to try to protect your community from offensive ideas or comments?
- Do you need a platform that supports a moderator role?
- Do you need a platform that supports multimedia (e.g., text, audio, visual)?
- Do you need a platform that supports private messaging between group members?
- Do you need a platform that requires a fee for service or paid subscription?
- What privacy measures does the platform support?
- Where are the platform's data stored (e.g., what country hosts its servers)?

Pros

Appreciative inquiry, broadly, and asset mapping, specifically, allow communities to identify positive resources and tools to promote community resilience. Asset mapping through the use of web forums is an asynchronous means to involve community members in identifying the best of what they have to offer.

One of the primary benefits of using web forums is that due to the oftentimes asynchronous nature of the communication that they support, they can encourage wide participation, as individuals are free to choose to participate at a time and location that is convenient to them.

Moreover, asynchronous communication gives individuals time for reflection and can encourage more thoughtful responses than real-time communication. Importantly, online communication in general offers individuals, particularly those who typically might be shy or hesitant to speak up in person, an opportunity to have their voices heard.

Cons

One of the primary drawbacks of using a closed web forum is that conversations will necessarily be limited to those individuals who are given access. This can limit the diversity of perspectives present within conversations, which may impede important differences and novel ideas from surfacing.

Virtual Town Hall Meeting (Video 4)

Definition

A *Town Hall Meeting* is an approach to hosting an informal discussion between citizens and public figures (though not always restricted to these two groups). Often, the goal for these meetings is to encourage two-way dialogue between groups.

The *World Café* methodology is a simple, flexible way of hosting and facilitating large group dialogue. In its most basic form, it is built on five design principles:

1. **Setting:** create a special environment, often resembling a café.
2. **Welcome and introduction:** the host makes introductions, sets the context for the discussion, and communicates rules of engagement.
3. **Small group rounds:** participants are separated into small groups where they hold a discussion for 20 minutes; after 20 minutes, each participant moves to a new group for a new 20 minute discussion. This process is repeated for at least 3 times.
4. **Questions:** each discussion round is set up by one question that is carefully tailored to the context and purpose of the world café; the same question can be used for more than one discussion round or different questions may be used for successive rounds.
5. **Harvest:** after the series of discussion rounds are complete (or in between each round, as required) participants are invited to share insights from their small group conversations with the larger group; this information is usually recorded centrally by the conversation host. (source: [World Café Method](#))

Video Summary

Alex and her friends decide to get people together face-to-face in a town hall meeting to talk about the issues that their community is facing. To encourage dialogue during this meeting, they use World Café (a consensus-based decision making approach) in conjunction with social media.

Guiding Questions

If you were in Alex's shoes, you might want to consider the following questions to help guide...

The development of content that you post to social media

- Will you provide prompts or open-ended questions to guide online discussion?
- Will the online and face-to-face discussions follow a similar format (e.g., one question or prompt every 20 minutes)?
- How will you integrate online conversations within the face-to-face town hall meeting?
- How will disagreements and diverse perspectives be handled?
- Will the online discussion(s) be moderated? If so, by whom?
- Will you provide a summary of the online discussions, pointing out any notable patterns or insights?
- Is consensus important to the success of this initiative?

Someone

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Your selection of social media platform/technology

- Is it important for you to try to protect your community from offensive ideas or comments?
- Do you need a platform that is closed (users need a subscription or login information to view and contribute content)?
- Do you need a platform that is semi-open (users need a subscription or login information to contribute content, but not to view it)?
- Do you need a platform that is open (anyone can view and contribute content)?
- Do you need a platform where the users are primarily local, national, or international? Do you need a platform that supports a moderator role?
- Do you need a platform that supports multimedia (e.g., text, audio, visual)?
- Does the platform have features that will allow you to get users' feedback (e.g., commenting or voting functionality)?

Pros

By combining face-to-face, large group dialogue with online conversations through social media, virtual town halls have the potential to bring a large number of people together at the same time, regardless of the geographic distance that might separate them otherwise. This can help highlight diverse perspectives about the same issue and ensure that all opinions, ideas, and concerns are taken into account.

Cons

Managing online and face-to-face discussions simultaneously requires extraordinary facilitation skills. Not only do conversations need to remain fluid within each setting, but there should be fluidity and cross-pollination of ideas across the settings, as well.

If you choose to host your online conversation in a largely unmediated and heterogeneous environment (e.g., Twitter), it will be more difficult to follow and/or moderate all relevant discussions than if you choose to solicit feedback in a more closed and closely moderated environment (e.g., reddit).

