LESSONS FROM A MARTIAL ARTS DOJO: A PROLONGED PROCESS MODEL OF HIGH-CONTEXT COMMUNICATION

BENJAMIN M. COLE
Fordham University

Rather than treat the context of communication as an exogenously determined factor, I investigate the extent to which communicators actively utilize context as a vehicle of communication. Focusing on three cases of "physicality norm" violations observed during a five-year ethnographic study of a Japanese martial arts dojo, I document the use of specific context management and content management practices on the part of the instructors to reconcile the situations in which they found themselves. The prolonged process model of high-context communication that I develop shows how communicators manipulate the two key dimensions of the contexting model of communication—the message content (via continuum staggering and continuum straddling), and the shared understandings that constitute the context in which messages are being delivered and interpreted (via context reliance, i.e., time giving, and context nonreliance, i.e., tearing and reprogramming)—often over extended periods of time.

Despite decades of effort, communication problems in cross-cultural settings continue to vex the business world, perhaps none more so than those between Westerners and Easterners. The historic inability of American air traffic controllers to interpret messages from Korean copilots, for example, resulted in numerous fatalities, even though the messages were in English (Gladwell, 2008). And recent research on Americans interning in Japanese organizations shows that the interns became upset with what was perceived as a lack of timely feedback, whereas their supervisors claimed that they had provided *continuous* feedback throughout the internships (Masumoto, 2004). Thus, even when the language is common or people work side-by-side, if the communicator and the target are not on the same page, there is a possibility that communication is occurring, but not fully registering—often with deleterious consequences.

Meaning is imparted not only by means of the content of a message, but also by means of the context in which the message is delivered (Searle, 1975). In the cross-cultural communications literature, the idea that content must be interpreted in light of context is often tied to Hall's contexting model (Hall, 1989, 1990), wherein the two dimensions are theorized to offset each other to impart meaning. In the model, if substantial information is embedded in the context, then there is less need to include explicit information in the message itself. Although context is a multidimensional, multilevel construct that entails any number of factors at the individual, organizational, and national levels (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), which deeply affects the way in which people communicate and interpret messages (Carpenter, Miyake, & Just, 1995; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Frenkel, 2008; Kostova & Roth, 2002; Molinsky, 2005, 2007; Woodward-Kron, 2008), in explorations of Hall's theory, context is traditionally treated either as an exogenously determined environmental condition (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001) or as an individual characteristic (Kittler, Rygl, & Mackinnon, 2011), which in turn drives communicators to alter content dimensions (e.g., directness, explicitness, emotiveness) (Buchan, Adair, & Chen, 2011; Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996; Tinsley, 1998). Quite sim-

ply, context has not been considered to be something endogenously determined, let alone proactively utilized in the act of communicating.

If content truly does interact with context to create meaning, this gives rise to two questions. First, *to what extent do communicators utilize context to communicate messages?* Should communicators actively use the context, this would provide an additional vehicle for richer, multichanneled communication. Further, *how do communicators mix the context and the content to convey meaning to the target?* Investigating these dynamics is important theoretically because research shows that context is something more than just a characteristic (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Thomas, 1998). It is also important practically, because while those who rely on information embedded in the context (so-called "high-context communicators") are known to be adept at communicating with those who rely more on message content (so-called "low-context communicators"), the same cannot be said of the opposite direction (Adair, Weingart, & Brett, 2007).

To explicate the way in which content and context may be mixed by communicators, I provide an analysis of data generated through a five-year participant observation ethnographic study of a Japanese martial arts dojo. While most martial arts dojo are small sole proprietorships, the organization studied boasts more than 1,000 instructors teaching more than 50,000 students across the five major continents of the world—all under one global leader, the "grandmaster" of the art. This makes the organization larger and more complex in terms of interaction dynamics than all but a handful of multinational firms. Also, because martial arts tend to be nation-specific (Draeger, 1980), manifest multigenerational cultures themselves (Otake, 2007), and require one-to-one interaction to be learned (Hatsumi & Cole, 2001), they represent a rich setting for investigating the multidimensional, multilevel nature of context and how it is mixed with content to convey meaning. Further, Japanese interlocutors have long been held up as exemplars of high-context communicators by Hall himself (Hall, 1989, 1990).

This study makes two contributions to the cross-cultural communications literature. First, I find evidence that context is actively utilized by communicators to impart meaning. I specifically document two context management practices that are deployed in conjunction with two content management practices. Second, I propose a prolonged process model of high-context communication that

demonstrates how these practices are combined across time. While prior research has documented how high-context communicators adapt to other styles (Adair, Taylor, & Tinsley, 2009), the temporal dimension of this adaptation has not been well documented; the extended nature of my study allows me to trace mindful communicative acts on the part of high-context communicators that extended to almost a year in length. My nontraditional research setting also demonstrates important parallels with phenomena observed in more traditional organizational settings, such as cross-cultural conflict (Froese, Peltokorpi, & Ko, 2012), the quality of leader–member exchanges (Lee, 2001), the professionalization of entrepreneurial firms (Banerjee & Cole, 2012; Greiner, 1972; Hellmann & Puri, 2002), and how organizational actors deal with tears in established scripts (Lok & de Rond, 2013). The findings hold the potential to help managers to foster a positive work environment for employees of all backgrounds.

HALL'S CONTEXTING MODEL

> A high-context (HC) communication . . . is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite, i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (Hall, 1989: 91)

In short, meaning is conveyed by relying on the context in ways that offset the need to make messages explicit, or by relying on explicitness when there is little information to be found in the context. Despite being defined as preprogrammed information within the receiver and the setting (Hall, 1989: 101), context historically has been treated as a national-level characteristic that infuses individuals from that nation and informs the way in which they communicate. Classically, Easterners (such as Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese) are categorized as high-context communicators, whereas Westerners (such as Americans, Germans, and Canadians) are considered low-context communicators (Kittler et al., 2011). Such national classifications have been used in studies of cross-cultural negotiation (Adair et al., 2001; Adair et al., 2007), conflict resolution (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Tinsley, 1998), social dilemma (Wade-Benzoni, Brett, Tenbrunsel, Okumura, Moore, & Bazerman, 2002), interpersonal communication (Aune, Hunter, Kim, & Kim, 2001; Kim & Wilson, 1994), and firm messaging (Okazaki,

2004), with varying degrees of success (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Okazaki, 2004; Thomas, 1998).

Still, interactions take place in much narrower contexts than in national ones, which prior research suggests does indeed matter. In experimental settings that manipulate whether negotiators face intracultural or cross-cultural counterparties, for example, Japanese use implicit messages when negotiating with other Japanese, but alter their style to be more explicit when interacting with American counterparts (Adair et al., 2001, 2009). In fact, the lack of contextual information makes something as simple as leaving a message on an answering machine much more cognitively demanding for Japanese than for Americans (Miyamoto & Schwarz, 2006). Japanese need to know not only who to ask when they have a question, but also what meaning might be conveyed by not asking others (Masumoto, 2004).

High-context communication relies strongly on the shared experiences of group members, not only words, although both are vital in the act of communicating:

> When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what's bothering him, so that he doesn't have to be specific. The result is that he will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Putting it properly—the keystone—is the role of the interlocutor. (Hall, 1989: 113)

Thus, for high-context communicators, meaning is derived less from the information conveyed and more from information preprogrammed within the target of the communication regarding relationships, past interactions, the setting, and so on (Hall, 1989: 101).

For this reason, I adopt a definition of "context" as the shared understanding and tacit common ground that are taken for granted by those engaged in communication activity, whether sending or interpreting messages (Adair, Buchan, Chen, & Liu, 2013: 4). This shared understanding is nurtured through their joint (or parallel) exposure to the same (or similar) stimuli in the past. The stimuli can originate from many sources and from different levels of analysis, ranging from exposure to institutional structures, rituals, and cultural artifacts (e.g., film and music) at the most macro level (e.g., Chen, 2004; Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), through exposure to routines, protocols, and expectations at the organizational

level (e.g., Hahn, 2007; Kostova & Roth, 2002; Parmigiani & Howard-Grenville, 2011), to exposure to the content of prior interactions at the individual level (e.g., Baker, 1984; Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011).

It is because of these shared understandings that hearing the word "Stormtrooper" as part of a conversation could elicit thoughts of fondness from individuals who grew up reenacting the scenes of the film *Star Wars* (in which Stormtroopers are naive patsies who always lose their battles) at the same time as it elicits thoughts of horror among veterans who fought trench warfare against the German stormtroopers of World War I. Naturally, the ability to impart meaning by leveraging these shared understandings requires knowledge that there even exist shared understandings in the first place. At a national level, Shapiro, Von Glinow, and Xiao (2007) describe a native of Hong Kong being offered a seat as a dinner guest in Beijing, wherein the guest of honor is always seated facing the door. Refusing to sit in the seat when offered would be considered a sign of modesty in a room filled with mainland Chinese; in contrast, the same refusal would be considered a sign of rudeness toward an American host offering a seat at her dining room table. Further still, simply taking the seat without first declining it would be read as arrogant in an interaction dominated by Chinese, whereas the same act might have no communicative meaning when observed by Americans. Thus the simple act of refusing or taking a seat is transformed into meaningful communication content only when contextualized within an environment occupied by others who hold a shared understanding of that act. In Japan, among the many shared understandings are a view of the self as interdependent with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), an acceptance of shared responsibility (Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 2006), and a preference for conflict avoidance and saving face (Ting-Toomey, 1994).

Shared understandings are important at more micro levels of analysis as well. An executive distributing souvenirs from an overseas trip to some of his staff could communicate gratitude to those designated as recipients of the gifts, but it could also communicate displeasure to those not so designated; what message is communicated depends on whether the observer knows that some of the staff went beyond the call of duty in helping the executive to prepare for his trip, or knows that the executive returned ahead of schedule and discovered one staff member secretly napping in his office. In short, what is part of the shared understanding fundamentally

alters the meaning of a communicative act, whether it is spoken or unspoken.

It is therefore vital that one comprehends the shared understandings and tacit common ground within a given context before examining and interpreting communicative acts that rely on that context to convey meaning. For this reason, I shall now turn my attention to the shared understandings that are common among all martial arts as they are taught in Japan, before describing my analysis of the shared understandings within the specific martial arts dojo studied.

Martial Arts in Japan

At heart, martial arts as they are practiced in Japan are "practice arts," like flower arrangement and tea ceremony. Practice arts entail a type of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), wherein individuals learn a practice by doing, while at the same time developing a social competence within a community of practice (Singleton, 1998: 4). Practice arts often hold a long-term goal of self-improvement through the learning process (Hahn, 2007), so actions that impede that goal are antithetical to the practice art itself.

Because the knowledge of practice arts is cumulative (Arrow, 1962), path-dependent (Arthur, 1989), and complex (Simon, 1962), the failure to transmit both the structured knowledge and the tacit knowledge of the art could lead to its demise. Since the days when hieroglyphics depicted wrestlers in various combative positions, martial forms have been codified to preserve and transmit martial knowledge (Rosenbaum, 2004). A series of physical steps depicting offensive or defensive situations, martial forms record and summarize the key techniques and principles of a martial art (Kane & Wilder, 2005: xiv). Still, possession of the codified forms is insufficient to claim understanding of an art. All martial arts contain a highly tacit component, which is difficult to transfer among actors and must be learned through personal experience (Polanyi, 1962). If the codified forms can be likened to food recipes, one must have tasted the food to know what the recipes ultimately make (Hatsumi & Cole, 2001: 59). That "tasting" comes at the hands of a teacher applying the techniques to the student; progress is possible only by combining the foundations provided by the forms with the guidance provided by an experienced instructor. Hahn's ethnographic work on knowledge transmission in Japanese dance revealed an analogous process, whereby transmission entailed visual, oral or aural, and tactile interactions (Hahn, 2007). During transmission, there is a clear need to make known when something is "wrong" versus "right"; the failure of students to understand what is wrong could lead to the end of the art as it has been passed down to date. Thus it is vital that students understand when they have moved off the proper path and are potentially heading down the wrong one. Precisely how that wrongness is communicated is therefore an important characteristic of such practice arts and a rich setting for investigating communication dynamics that rely on shared understandings.

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

Data Collection

The setting of this study is a large global martial arts organization headquartered in Japan. At the top is the grandmaster, a Japanese national designated head of the art by the prior grandmaster. Around the grandmaster is gathered a small band of Japanese lieutenants, who derive legitimacy from training with the grandmaster for decades and from their rank. Next come the long-term Japan-domiciled foreigners ("long-termers"), whose status is somewhat discounted because they are not native speakers of Japanese, the grandmaster's language. Further out in the informal structure are the non-Japan-domiciled instructors, who likely trained under someone at least one step removed from the grandmaster. At the furthest reaches of the organization is the global student population.

Ethnographic study of cross-cultural interactions has led to important insights about how individuals convey points when dealing with those from other cultures (de Moraes Garcez, 1993). One method of ethnographic study is participant observation, wherein a "researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (Musante DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002: 1). I was qualified to engage in participant observation at a Japanese martial arts dojo: over the preceding 15 years, I had trained in multiple martial arts, and I am fluent in both Japanese and English. This background gave me the ability not only to interact with dojo members as a legitimate participant, but also to understand and interpret the goings-on.

The physical nature of the activity precluded keeping field notes during the session itself; in-

stead, I began reconstructing the session in my notebooks after practice had ended and typed the notes up the next day. I was mindful to detail techniques taught, utterances made by the grand-master or other figures, and notable occurrences. These notes were supplemented at times via input from bilingual long-termers, who appreciated my attempt to reconstruct the practices. If a key concept were to escape both me and these others, I would consult with Japanese practitioners, the lieutenants, or even the grandmaster himself on subsequent training days. For each 90-minute practice session, transcription took 5–6 hours. This protocol was maintained for each session attended over a roughly five-year period between 1995 and 2000.

Case Selection

Given that martial arts training is the study of controlled violence wherein practitioners learn to cause physical pain or damage to people, violations of the "physicality norms" of the dojo engender concern among dojo members, and provide an opportunity for instructors and dojo members to respond to the situation. Because precisely *how* they respond in communicative terms was of theoretical interest, I isolated for deeper analysis three unique cases that presented themselves during my time in the dojo. The three cases shared important points of similarity: (a) they involved non-Japanese practitioners, (b) using problematic physicality, (c) who were guided to resolve the issue by those senior to them, and (d) they involved a cross-cultural communicator. The cases also held distinct differences: (e) the expectations of the norm violator given exposure to Japan (i.e., visitor vs. long-term resident); (f) the intentionality of the violation (i.e., a lack of awareness, a purposeful disregard, and an accident resulting from substance abuse); and (g) the implications of the violation (i.e., individual level vs. dojo level). These key similarities and differences are summarized in Table 1. Across all cases, the end goal of returning the dojo to stasis by reconciling the violation was met, but via different communicative means.

Analysis Strategy

Shared understandings and tacit common ground can be held with respect to many different dimensions of human activity, including relational (e.g., respect for authority), spatial (e.g., personal distance), and temporal (e.g., punctuality) dimensions (Adair et al., 2013). Thus, when analyzing communication that may rely on these shared understandings, it is vital to characterize those understandings fully in advance of any such analysis. To

TABLE 1
Summary of Physicality Norm Violation Cases

	The visitor	Ringo	Einstein
Violator	First-time visitor to Japan	Long-term Japan-based senior foreign practitioner	Long-term Japan-based senior foreign practitioner
Expectations held of violator	None	Should know better	Should know better
Intentionality of violation	Unintentional (resulting from lack of awareness)	Purposeful disregard (resulting from exposure to arts outside group boundaries)	Accidental (resulting from substance abuse)
Degree of threat	Minimal	Egregious	Egregious
Type of threat	*Individual level* ● Partner: Pain ● Violator: Hindrance to learning	*Individual level* ● Partner: Damage ● Violator: Hindrance to learning *Dojo level* ● Dojo: Upsetting culture in interaction	*Individual level* ● Victim: Damage ● Violator: Loss of face *Dojo level* ● Dojo: Scrutiny from outsiders
Resolution	● Compliance with norms	● Departure from dojo	● Ultimatum to recognize responsibility to self or others ● Six-plus years' self-imposed exile ● Alcohol cessation

assist in this effort, I draw upon the "culture in interaction" model, which details three dimensions that "document patterns of interaction and meaning making that might otherwise go unnoticed": group boundaries, group bonds, and speech norms (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003: 740). These dimensions map well onto Hall's model of high-context communication, the former two constituting the preprogramming of information within individuals as a result of shared experiences and understandings, while the latter constitutes the actual way in which the communication unfolds, as well as shared understandings of how communication *should* unfold.

Group boundaries "put into practice a group's assumptions about what the group's relationship (imagined and real) to the wider world should be while in the group context" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003: 739). In martial arts, the importance placed on the sanctity of the knowledge historically has created tendencies toward tribalism, informing why one art should be considered superior to others and who should have access to the art's knowledge. For example, the second grandmaster of Takagi Ryu challenged the third grandmaster of Takenouchi Ryu to prove his art's superiority (Mol, 2001: 196–197). The latter accepted on the condition that the loser had to become a student of the winner—and, upon losing, the challenger did so. Even Bruce Lee was challenged for his decision to teach kung fu to non-Chinese students (IMDb, 2013).

Group bonds "put into practice a group's assumptions about what members' mutual responsibilities should be while in the group context" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003: 739). In a martial arts context, those interactions revolve around following the instruction of the teacher and striving to achieve competency in ways that the teacher specifies. The former means that students show deep deference to the instructor; when individuals show respect for hierarchy, it represents an acceptance of the hierarchical nature of relationships (Yang, 1998). While it is known that Japan is far more hierarchical than the United States (Kato & Kato, 1992), respect for hierarchy is magnified in a dojo setting owing to the importance of the teacher in protecting and passing on the art, and the responsibility of the student in understanding the lessons. Thus hierarchical differences are seen in such dichotomies as the *sensei–deshi* (teacher–student) relationship and the *sempai–kohai* (senior–junior) relationship (McDonald & Hallinan, 2005). Learn-

ing in the dojo also takes place through one-to-one practice of the techniques with other dojo members. "There is a difference between causing pain and causing damage," I would often hear members of the dojo explain. Pain provides important feedback as to how to administer a technique properly; damage, however, removes the individual from training opportunities and thus stymies personal development.

Finally, speech norms "put into practice a group's assumptions about what appropriate speech is in the group context" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003: 739). In the dojo, this means any number of messages or interactions that affect the ability to assimilate lessons from the grandmaster. Speaking when the grandmaster is instructing, for example, was frowned upon for obvious reasons: doing so denies him the right to impart the knowledge that he is tasked to impart and impedes the student's ability to learn the lessons. To ease learning, the grandmaster systematically built on prior lessons, creating a cumulative corpus of knowledge for those in regular attendance. Research in learning shows that when learning complex movements, as in martial arts, repeating and refining movements in successive blocks is beneficial (Wulf & Shea, 2002). I observed this trend in the dojo, except in the case of Ringo, which made it a meaningful departure (see "Case Two: Ringo").

The "culture in interaction" model thus allows us to discern important dimensions of those shared understandings—the responsibilities of dojo members and instructors to other members of the dojo and to the dojo itself, deference dynamics within the dojo hierarchy, communication patterns, and so on—that constitute shared understandings in the dojo setting.

CASE ANALYSES

Because high-context communication mixes both the content of the message and the context in which the message is delivered and interpreted, I focused specifically on these two dimensions in my analysis. While various scholars have suggested that high-context communication may entail any number of different content dimensions (e.g., rudeness—Fallows, 2010: 33; expressiveness—Buchan et al., 2011; the dramatic nature of the content—Gudykunst et al., 1996, and so on), I focus on only one dimension originally identified by Hall (1989) and others (Miracle, Chang, & Taylor, 1992; Suzuki, 2010): the relative explicitness of the message,

which traditionally offsets the degree to which the context holds information along a continuum. As described earlier, "context" here does not refer to a national-level characteristic, but rather to the shared understanding and tacit common ground taken for granted by those engaged in communication activity, either sending or interpreting messages (Adair et al., 2013: 4). I document the use of specific communicative acts on the part of the instructors to reconcile the physicality norm violation that has emerged—a process that engages both content and context.

Case One: The Visitor

The first case involves a physicality norm violation by someone who might not have known better: a visitor from a foreign country. There were two victims of the violation: (1) the visitor's partner, an American long-termer who was experiencing discomfort at the hands of the visitor, who was training with enthusiastic vigor; and (2) the visitor himself, who was oblivious to the physicality norms of the dojo, which, in turn, had the potential to impede his own learning during his time in Japan. My analysis focuses on the interaction between the long-termer and the instructor making his rounds of the room to provide guidance regarding the grandmaster's technique, as well as the interaction between the long-termer and the visitor.

Making his rounds, the instructor addresses the long-termer:

Instructor: How is it going?

Long-termer: My partner is hitting really hard.

Instructor: [Looks the visitor up and down] Don't worry. It's his first time. He'll pick up on what we're doing.

Long-termer: I understand.

The training continues. About 10 minutes later, the instructor stops by again:

Instructor: Any better yet?

Long-termer: Nope. He's hitting really hard.

Instructor: Be patient. Show him what the grandmaster is teaching. He'll come around.

Long-termer: I understand.

The training continues further. About 10 minutes later, the instructor checks in again:

Instructor: Any better yet?

Long-termer: No, *Sensei*. He's still hitting way too hard. It actually hurts.

Instructor: [Looks the visitor up and down again for the second time] Take him out!

Long-termer: I understand.

The long-termer complies, hitting the visitor to the ground:

Visitor: [From the ground, rubbing his jaw] Wow! You hit really hard!

Long-termer: Anyone can hit hard. We're trying to learn to hit efficiently. Why don't we work on our efficiency instead from now on?

Visitor: [Taking the hand held out for him from the long-termer] Yeah. I think we should do that.

The training vigor of the visitor changes immediately, coming into line with others.

Analysis

Norms. The visitor's violation of the physicality norms of the dojo represented a failure to observe what others were doing (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991), which would classify it as a failure to adhere to "descriptive norms." This view of why individuals adhere to norms is a heuristics-based view of behavior, wherein the individual thinks:

[I]f everyone else is doing or thinking or believing it, it must be a sensible thing to do or think or believe . . . By simply registering what most others are doing there and imitating their actions, one can usually choose efficiently and well. (Cialdini et al., 1991: 203)

The visitor was not choosing well in pounding away at his training partner, which catalyzed a sequence of communication on the part of the long-termer and the instructor. The norm violation can be traced to a violation of group boundaries (i.e., the grandmaster's dojo vs. the visitor's home dojo) and group bonds (i.e., the adding of pain elements not shown by the grandmaster), which I detail next.

Group boundaries. Unlike other arts with which I was familiar, the dojo studied was characterized by a relatively subdued training atmosphere. In karate, a loud shout (i.e., *kiai*) accompanies attacks; in judo, a slapping of the floor to disperse energy accompanies breakfalls; all such practitioner-generated noises were absent during the training that I observed. In fact, several visiting observers independently noted the relative quiet-

ness of the training. Dojo members considered such embellishments to be distractions from the task at hand: learning to move efficiently by mimicking closely the grandmaster. In their mind, if the grandmaster was not himself shouting or slapping, then it was inappropriate for practitioners to do so. The fact that the visitor could not recognize how the grandmaster's dojo may be different from his home dojo was a cause of concern for the long-termer (who was experiencing pain as a result) and for the instructor (who wanted the visitor to have movement more closely aligned with that of the grandmaster than with that of others, including his instructor back home—after all, the grandmaster was the wellspring and anyone else was a tributary, or possibly an isolated pond).

Group bonds. By not adhering to the physicality norms, the visitor was failing to meet his obligations to his partner in the dojo setting. Also, if the grandmaster himself was not teaching a technique that required pain to be understood, then the visitor's act of adding pain embodied a failure to meet his obligations as a student. In a sense, the visitor was defiling the grandmaster's lesson by adding elements that were not part of the teachings. For the visitor, realization that a lower training vigor might facilitate his ability to learn the efficiency that the grandmaster was trying to impart could have a lasting impact on the visitor's training for years to come.

Speech norms. The communication dynamics were rich in this case. First, in the interaction between the long-termer and the instructor, examination of the language shows that the long-termer was seeking guidance as to how to handle the situation through his reply to the question, "How is it going?" Normally, this instructor inquiry would be met with questions about the technique at hand. In this case, however, the long-termer sought guidance regarding his partner's violation by explicitly stating, "My partner is hitting really hard." Had the practitioner not desired guidance, he probably would have replied, "It's going well," and persevered onward. By answering the instructor inquiry in the way that he did, the long-termer was altering the shared understanding of what the instructor's inquiry would mean for the rest of that practice session. Once that inquiry time had been shifted to become "Let's figure out what to do about this visitor" time, any further inquiry by the instructor as to "How is it going?" clearly was intended to discern whether the visitor situation had resolved itself; "How is it going?" would continue to mean

"How is your attempt at practicing the grandmaster's technique?" to everyone else whom the instructor asked.

In response to this shift in shared understanding, the instructor initially provided explicit guidance to give the violator time to "figure things out" by himself. It is interesting to note that the long-termer refrained from violating the physicality norms himself until he received explicit guidance to do so from the instructor at a later point. This captures the degree to which deference plays a role within a Japanese dojo: even in the face of pain, the student will adhere to the dojo norms and defer to the judgment of the instructor.

Socialization processes within groups with strong group identification usually acculturate newcomers quickly (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975). Existing members monitor newcomers and correct them when mistakes are made (Cogswell, 1968). In this case, however, we see the communicators preferring the target to recognize the issue at hand without being informed. By insisting that the long-termer give the visitor more time, the instructor was demonstrating hope that the visitor would notice on his own that the vigor he was using exceeded that used by those around him (i.e., that he would come into the shared understanding). After monitoring that time, the instructor then told the long-termer to try communicating implicitly, by showing the visitor what the grandmaster had taught. Again, this was done in the hope that the visitor would "get it" without further guidance. After giving further time, the instructor finally authorized an explicit physical response. I feel that it is important to note that the actions of both the instructor and the long-termer should not be construed as "punishment" of the visitor for the norm violation. The long-termer's hit was not injunctive in nature, but rather communicative and intended to make the descriptive norms evident to the target—a strategy that worked with one simple punch and a solicitation to jointly temper their training vigor: a collectivistic solution to a violation caused solely by the violator.

In summary, from the American long-termer, we see explicit guidance-seeking directed at the instructor, implicit guidance given to the violator, then an explicit, yet collectivist, solicitation to the violator. From the Japanese instructor, we see explicit instruction to monitor the situation, explicit instruction to use implicit message content, then explicit instruction to adopt physicality. Few of the communicative acts observed accord with classic

representations of how supposedly low-context Americans and high-context Japanese should communicate, yet the overall approach toward the violator was extremely high-context, prioritizing the giving of time for the target to come into the shared understanding and prioritizing implicit communication over more explicit guidance. Time giving is used to provide the target the opportunity to recognize that the norm violation is under his or her control, and includes active monitoring by the (silent) communicator of the target's progress toward the desired outcome of norm compliance. As time giving and more implicit message content failed to yield a resolution, though, I observed an increase in the explicitness of the message. I refer to this shift along the continuum of the content dimension, from implicit messaging to explicit messaging, as "continuum staggering." This finding accords with prior research that shows how Japanese negotiators adjust to the assumptions of their American counterparts (Adair et al., 2001; Adair et al., 2009), but the adjustment may take time.

Case Two: Ringo

The second case involved another American long-termer, "Ringo," whose pejorative view of others and own restlessness toward the art rose as his skill and rank also rose. Inquiries within the dojo regarding Ringo revealed him to hold a sense of superiority and to be dangerous to his training partners. His increasingly dangerous behavior was affecting the mood of the dojo. One comment from another long-termer particularly piqued my interest in how Ringo's behavior was being managed by the grandmaster: "Have you noticed that whenever Ringo shows up for practice, we work on the superlight techniques that he hates?" In the spirit of research on emergent themes that spring forth through the fieldwork experience (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I began observing the content of the lessons closely.

Over the course of nine months, I repeatedly observed the described pattern. While Ringo once had been publicly praised by the grandmaster for perfect attendance, Ringo's attendance began to fall off; at one point, he was attending perhaps once a month. In the weeks leading up to Ringo's appearance, the grandmaster would be teaching extremely brutal techniques that could easily lead to death or paralysis. These lessons would build on the prior week's lessons, creating a cumulative corpus for those in continued attendance. When Ringo at-

tended, however, very light techniques that required little partner contact became the focus, such as catching attacker timing so as to unbalance him or her. Intriguingly, these softer techniques were taught only on the days that Ringo attended—and Ringo visibly disdained them. In subsequent weeks, when Ringo failed to return, the grandmaster reverted back to the previous cumulative corpus of dangerous techniques as if no time had passed between the sessions. Ringo eventually stopped attending all together.

Analysis

Norms. In contrast with the descriptive norm violation of the case of the visitor, the violation of the physicality norm in this case would place it the "injunctive norms" category:

> Injunctive norms specify what ought to be done. They constitute the moral rules of the group. Such norms motivate action by promising social rewards and punishments (informal sanctions) for it. Whereas descriptive norms inform behavior, injunctive norms enjoin it. (Cialdini et al., 1991: 203)

As a senior foreign practitioner, Ringo was well aware of the physicality norms enjoining the dojo, and the difference between using pain (acceptable) and inflicting damage (unacceptable) on dojo members. With his repeated violent behavior, he was willfully and maliciously rejecting the norms of the dojo regarding partner safety. As with the case of the visitor, the norm violation was intimately linked with violations of both the group boundaries (i.e., importing outside techniques into training and bringing outside arts to the dojo location) and group bonds (i.e., alienating others by rejecting dojo safety norms).

Group boundaries. The negative feelings held by dojo members regarding Ringo may have stemmed from his experimentation with other martial arts: a violation of group boundaries. Ringo would often draw comparisons between the physicality norms of the dojo and those of other martial arts dojo at which he was now also training. One day, before the grandmaster had arrived, Ringo asked another long-termer if he would help him to practice something. There was a shared understanding that practitioners would use such time to refresh their memories of prior lessons or to practice material with which they struggled in the past. This day, however, Ringo began using techniques that clearly originated from outside the grandmas-

ter's art. Ringo was intent on proving that the physicality norms that he was rejecting were not preparing dojo members for encounters beyond its boundaries and to shift opinions among dojo members as to what constitutes "good" training. Another day, a long-termer showed me a flyer from Ringo, soliciting participation in a seminar from a rival art in the same facility as the grandmaster's lessons. Ringo was purposely and overtly violating group boundaries in his campaign to alter the tacit common ground held by members of the dojo, and he showed no remorse.

One long-termer offered an insightful interpretation of the grandmaster's switching of the lesson content when Ringo was present: "The grandmaster doesn't kick people out of the dojo. He never has. Instead, he simply allows them to leave of their own accord." This matches with communication preferences toward conflict avoidance (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1994) and self-realization on the part of the target. While Ringo ultimately left the dojo of his own accord, he was arguably nudged in that direction by the teaching decisions of the grandmaster. Ringo's departure for another art resolved the physicality norm violation, returning the dojo to stasis; without doubt, the grandmaster's teaching changes altered the environment in which that decision was made. In contrast with the case of the visitor, in which the long-termer (following guidance of the instructor) shifted from an implicit message to an explicit one (i.e., continuum staggering), in the case of Ringo, the grandmaster decided to modify the shared understanding that "Learning is best when contiguous in nature"; through the regular changes to his teaching content, the grandmaster was adding a condition to that shared understanding in the form ". . . unless Ringo is present." Thus we see both Ringo and the grandmaster attempting to manipulate the shared understanding, with different degrees of success. Ringo was trying to shift fundamentally the shared understanding regarding training vigor, whereas the grandmaster was modifying somewhat the shared understanding regarding training continuity. I refer to such acts of intentionally trying to modify the shared understanding as "context nonreliance." (See "Speech norms" below for discussion of how the context nonreliance was delivering a message that Ringo was missing.)

Group bonds. Ringo's violent tendencies were making it difficult for him to find training partners, who normally acted as allies in the learning process by sharing opinions about how to approach techniques. Ringo's behavior was alienating him from those who could help him to better understand the grandmaster's movement, which means that he was creating two victims with his behavior: his training partner (who experienced pain or damage), and himself (he was hindering his own learning by alienating partners). To an attuned individual, social distancing should signal disapproval; to Ringo, however, his inability to find partners simply reinforced his self-construal that he was superior to others in skill. The implicit message of social disapproval was not registering with the norm violator.

Injunctive norms are an incentive-based prediction of behavior, wherein individuals attempt to avoid social disapproval for personal behavior, while coveting social approval (Gouldner, 1960). If the violator does not care about the disapproval and instead interprets it as flattering, then theory would predict that the type or degree of sanctions should escalate. This was not observed in the case of Ringo; instead, the grandmaster systematically began switching his lessons in response to Ringo's presence. Doing so allowed the grandmaster to mitigate the possibility of injury for Ringo's partners and allowed everyone's (even Ringo's) learning to continue. It also communicated displeasure with Ringo's behavior to those who were mindful of the changes in continuity of the lessons. The grandmaster acted in a way that served the interest of all without creating loss of face, even for the willful violator, providing him with numerous opportunities to self-correct his behavior—time giving that stretched nine months in length. Ringo eventually severed his bonds with the group and exited the group boundaries. For his part, the grandmaster was fulfilling his obligation to the dojo members by shielding them from Ringo's violent tendencies and communicating implicitly regarding behaviors that he disapproved, all the while continuing to teach important lessons of the art.

Speech norms. One day, Ringo slammed his partner to the ground with little regard for safety during a demonstration. The grandmaster called out to Ringo's partner to see if he was okay, then turned to me, stating, "We can learn a lot from each other, can't we?" While the words, at face value, entreated the benefits of demonstrations, what the grandmaster was really saying was, "That's not how you want to treat people when you train." The grandmaster was observing Ringo closely and communicating to him via third persons—another form of implicit communication that balances message

content with the information embedded in the context.

Because dojo members all understood that the teachings involved the grandmaster building on prior lessons, if someone were to miss training, there was a shared understanding that the individual should ask others what had been covered in the prior session. During my observation, I never viewed any attempt by Ringo to contextualize the pending lesson with prior material via interactions with others. Had he made the effort to try, he may have noticed the changing pattern in training when he was present. At that point, the guidance that the grandmaster was providing through context nonreliance would have moved from being more hidden to being more visible, possibly eliciting introspection on the part of Ringo and a change in behavior. While shaming is a more common response to norm violations in collectivist cultures than in individualist ones (Tinsley & Weldon, 2003), this was not an act of shaming: the Japanese avoid upsetting group harmony at all costs (Davies & Ikeno, 2002), using up to 16 different alternatives to avoid saying "no" (Imai, 1981). Rather, it appeared that the grandmaster preferred no one to lose face as the physicality norm violation was resolved and the dojo returned to stasis. It did so with Ringo's departure. In the end, Ringo's failure to adhere to speech norms (i.e., seeking assistance in catching up on missed material) prevented him from receiving the message being conveyed by the grandmaster.

Case Three: Einstein

The third case involves the reaction of the grandmaster to another American long-termer, who was arrested for injuring, while drunk, a local Japanese man. The long-termer was a senior dojo member who had moved to Japan to train at the age of 17. At the time of the incident, he had been in Japan roughly 15 years and was training essentially daily. He was highly respected by other long-termers, the lieutenants, and the grandmaster for his work ethic and his love of the art. The grandmaster went so far to call the individual "a genius" as a martial artist. Thus I shall refer to him as "Einstein."

When the grandmaster arrived one evening, he was not in his usual jovial mood. He called over the administrator, who began distributing a piece of paper to each waiting student. The document was headed "Rules for Participation" and specified a series of transgressions that would disallow train-

ing in the art, including "those unable to demonstrate self-control" and "troublemakers." The descriptions were repetitive in nature across numbered disqualifiers, but one rule did stand out: it discussed how the martial art had been open to many people across the years, but sadly this included those guilty of "violent drunkenness," who "took actions that were self-centered" and who "disregarded considerations of how those actions might affect those surrounding them"—a direct appeal to dojo-wide collectivism and cohesion. The grandmaster insisted that everyone get a copy of the ruleset and commit it to memory, and instructed the translators to make an English version to distribute globally. According to several long-termers, this document was the first real set of formal rules that had ever been codified in the history of the dojo. Until that point, behavior in the dojo depended on mindfulness regarding unspoken informal norms, rather than formal rule requirements codified in writing.

Naturally, the circumstances led to collective attempts at organizational sense making (Weick, 1995: 170). During the time when dojo members should be practicing, most of the long-termers were huddled in small groups, tossing out ideas about what might have happened. Someone noted the absence of Einstein, who was isolated quickly as a rational explanation for what had transpired. When a lieutenant walked by and was asked whether the ruleset had something to do with Einstein, the lieutenant nodded in affirmation and kept walking. The mysterious document finally had a context. Einstein never returned to the dojo, having been told explicitly by the grandmaster that he was not welcome to train until he could prove that he was sober and taking his responsibilities to himself and to others seriously.

Analysis

Norms. Einstein's violation of the physicality norms of the dojo represented a failure to listen to his internal compass: his "personal norms" (Schwartz, 1977). This view of behavior is an internalized values-based prediction of behavior, wherein individuals hold within themselves both the standards and the sanctions for behavior (Cialdini et al., 1991: 226). Sanctions are internal to the individual, exemplified in regret for past actions, anticipated regret for potential actions, and contrite efforts not to engage in similar actions in the future (Zeelenberg, 1999; Zeelenberg

& Beattie, 1997). Unlike Ringo, who was willfully and without remorse violating the safety norms that bound dojo members together and the group boundaries that kept rival arts outside the dojo, Einstein's case happened in a state of weakness, accidentally, and in conflict with his internalized standards—and he was deeply remorseful:

> People implicitly ask themselves whether they are morally responsible for these potential actions in this situation, given their own internalized moral values. Thus personal norms are situated, self-based standards for specific behavior generated from internalized values during the process of behavioral decision making. (Schwartz & Howard, 1984: 234)

Einstein's actions that evening did not reflect his own internalized values, as I was able to confirm several years after leaving Japan, when I learned that Einstein was visiting the U.S. state in which I was domiciled. When I arranged to meet him at a local restaurant, Einstein showed deep remorse, explaining that he had been sober since the incident and had taken a "regular job" in order to demonstrate to the grandmaster that he could be responsible to others. (Einstein historically had relied on income from martial arts seminars before the incident.) When I asked whether he had been back to meet the grandmaster to see about rejoining the dojo, Einstein replied: "No. It hasn't been long enough yet." When I pointed out that the incident had happened over six years prior, and that surely six years of sobriety and work would sufficiently communicate his earnestness, Einstein waved off the suggestion, saying: "Someday, I'll make it up to him. It's still too soon." Einstein's extreme contrition demonstrates the degree to which the target holds responsibility for interpreting high-context communication: doing one's time in Japan really does matter, it seems (Masumoto, 2004). As I shall discuss, the case of Einstein involved boundary crossing in one direction spurring boundary crossing in the other direction, whereas group bonds were reinforced by group members.

Group boundaries. When Einstein was arrested, the local police called the grandmaster in the middle of the night to answer for the behavior of his student. High levels of interdependency among group members mean that problematic behavior in Japan can bring shame not only to the violator, but also to the groups to which the violator belongs (Thornton, 1992). As a senior member of the dojo, Einstein had involved the grandmaster in the incident, marring the grandmaster's name and

the dojo at large in the community. By crossing the boundary between the group—which contains people skilled in defending themselves against potential damage—and the outside—where such individuals are rare—Einstein had invited external scrutiny of the dojo's affairs by law enforcement (i.e., boundary crossing in the other direction). The introduction of the ruleset was an explicit message regarding how mindfulness to others can help to avoid such situations in the future.

Group bonds. In scenarios in which actors unintentionally harm others, Japanese show a preference for mitigating account making, including apologies and excuses, especially with in-group members (Itoi, Ohbuchi, & Fukuno, 2006). I observed this tendency with respect to Einstein, who I learned was born to an alcoholic father and took his first drink at the age of six. Einstein regularly attended bonding time with other long-termers after training, outdrinking everyone. The destructive nature of Einstein's drinking habit was well known among dojo members, but broaching the subject would lead to embarrassing arguments, which would affect group bonds. At one point, the post-training group was turned away from a preferred hangout; the manager cited an incident involving Einstein and another patron. The ban was to be lifted only on the condition that Einstein not be present. This put the group in a difficult situation. Einstein was a key dojo member, with many more years' experience than most of the other members. He was highly respected by the grandmaster and was very skilled in the art. Frequenting an establishment that barred his entry would be the equivalent of socially shunning him—something that the group did not wish to do (compare with the case of Ringo). The group instead found a different hangout. Owing to the way in which information flows among high-context communicators, the reason for the group's move certainly made its way into the grandmaster's ears.

Before the arrest incident, there were no formal rules in the dojo. Practitioners understood that their martial arts abilities were to be used in practice against those who were skilled in defending themselves from harm and, in real life, only in defense against an actual threat of danger. The possibility that an average salaryman represented such a threat that it required Einstein to hospitalize the man was extremely low. Violent crime in Japan is among the lowest in the world (Roberts & LaFree, 2006) and Einstein was a martial arts "genius." For someone as skilled as Einstein, simple evasion

should have been sufficient to dispel the situation. Alas, Einstein escalated beyond that and, in doing so, violated his obligations to the dojo, to the grandmaster, and to himself. The act also led to a codification of formal rules that specified those responsibilities to others in ways that were unprecedented in the dojo's history.

Speech norms. While some might classify the training ban against Einstein as injunctive in nature, I argue that the grandmaster was primarily seeking to have Einstein live up to his internalized norms. Once individuals feel a sense of loyalty and responsibility to the collective, they are more inclined to display behaviors congruent with those values (Yao & Wang, 2008: 248). Einstein was failing to live up to the expectations of someone so respected within the dojo, and the grandmaster desired for him to look inside himself and hold himself to the same standard of respect that others afforded him. "The grandmaster really loves that guy," explained a long-termer, but:

> It was time for him to finally put his foot down and address the problem. This certainly is not the first time that Einstein has been in trouble, but he could really kill someone if he loses control. The grandmaster had to do something.

Japanese use rewards or punishments to encourage behavior as a last resort (Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986: 259). Years of giving Einstein time to recognize his personal failings had not elicited an adjustment in behavior. The injury incident required an escalation of explicitness in messaging. The grandmaster not only adopted an explicit, confrontational approach, but also fundamentally altered the context in which Einstein would be making decisions by taking away the thing he loved most: the opportunity to train in martial arts. In directly addressing Einstein's drinking, the grandmaster was no longer engaging in conflict avoidance and saving face, as Japanese culture normally would prescribe.

I should note that the Einstein incident contained another important dimension: the grandmaster was communicating to someone other than the norm violator through the distribution of the ruleset. Formal rules are often introduced within organizations as a consequence of informal rule violations. In general, it is the implication of those rules being introduced, rather than the *way* in which they are introduced, that attracts interest. In this case, however, distribution of the ruleset acted both as low-context communication (by explicitly appealing to instructors around the world to take in only students who have unwavering personal norms with respect to the potential impact of their actions on others) and as high-context communication (by stating implicitly that Einstein's behavior was unacceptable and should not be encouraged by members of the grandmaster's dojo), all without mentioning Einstein or the incident that catalyzed the rules. This communication of contemporaneous implicit and explicit content to two different audiences differs from the temporal shifting from implicit to explicit content observed in the case of the visitor. The distribution of the ruleset straddled two points on the continuum of the content dimension (i.e., both implicit and explicit content simultaneously) to communicate to multiple audiences; what I observed in the case of the visitor was a systematic shift along the continuum (i.e., from implicit to explicit sequentially) to communicate to one audience. Thus I classify the practice in the case of Einstein as "continuum straddling," in contrast with the "continuum staggering" practice seen in the case of the visitor.

Case Summary

Table 2 summarizes the way in which communicators mixed content and context to impart meaning across the cases analyzed. Focusing on only the relative explicitness of the content and the shared understandings that embody the context, we can see that messages can be more or less explicit in content, while at the same time communicated in ways that rely on existing shared understandings or in ways that tear (or even reprogram) those shared understandings (i.e., nonreliance). The horizontal axis of Table 2 shows the content characteristic continuum, wherein items more to the left represent more implicit content than the items on the right, and vice versa for more explicit content. The vertical axis of Table 2 represents whether the communicator is relying on the shared understanding (i.e., "context") or not. Of the latter, there can be tears that are intended to be small, momentary communications, but also others that are intended to be full-on attempts to reconfigure the shared understanding and tacit common ground (i.e., to reprogram that which is preprogrammed). For this reason, the context nonreliance dimension is further subdivided to capture that degree of nonreliance.

In terms of the constructs that the analysis has revealed, the two content management practices of

TABLE 2
Content and Context Mixing

①~⑭ Visitor Case
Ⓐ~Ⓔ Ringo Case
❶~❸ Einstein Case
▲ Staggering
■ Straddling
✖ Failed Attempt
LT: Long-termer
GM: Grandmaster

		Content (Message Characteristic)	
		Implicit	Explicit
Context (Shared Understanding) / Reliance		④ LT engages in time giving w.r.t. visitor ⑤⑨ Instructor follow up inquiry regarding violation ⑧▲ LT re-shows GM technique to visitor Ⓒ GM engages in time giving w.r.t. Ringo behavior Ⓒ GM communicates thru third parties w.r.t. Ringo Ⓒ Training partners avoid Ringo as partner ❶ GM engages in time giving w.r.t. Einstein drinking ❸■ GM introduces ruleset specifying behaviors attributable to Einstein without naming him (directed at Einstein)	① Instructor initial inquiry to LT regarding technique ③ Instructor provides LT explicit guidance for time giving ⑥⑩ LT uses violation query time for further guidance seeking ⑦ Instructor provides LT explicit guidance for implicit message thru technique ⑭ Visitor agrees and training recommences in accordance with shared understanding
Non-Reliance / Tearing		② LT uses technique query opportunity for guidance seeking from Instructor Ⓔ✖ Had Ringo adhered to shared understanding regarding filling in missed material, he may have recognized GM's implicit message Ⓓ GM tears understanding that learning best when contiguous in nature; introduces condition "…unless Ringo is present"	⑬▲ LT recommends training vigor to visitor ⑫▲ LT hits visitor with vigor ⑪ Instructor provides LT explicit guidance for physicality ❷ GM bans Einstein with strict conditions for return
Reprogramming		❸■ GM introduces ruleset without explanation	Ⓐ✖ Ringo attempts to alter training convention Ⓑ✖ Ringo solicits participants for outside seminars ❸■ GM introduces first formal ruleset in dojo history (understanding that all should share now explicit; directed at those who might mimic Einstein)

"staggering" and "straddling" are marked with the black triangle (▲) or black square (■), respectively. Each of the cases is presented in an ordinal fashion, to show how continuum staggering occurs across time in the case of the visitor case as the long-termer ⑧ reshows the visitor the grandmaster's technique (an implicit message that relies on the shared understandings of the dojo), ⑫ hits the visitor to the floor (a more—but not fully—explicit message, which also violated the shared understandings of the dojo), and then ⑬ explicitly invites the visitor to temper down his vigor (an explicit message that relies on the now crystal-clear shared understandings). Likewise, one can see the continuum straddling that occurs in the Einstein case as the grandmaster ❸ introduces the first formal ruleset in the dojo history (making explicit what should have been the shared understanding; directed at those who might mimic Einstein), ❸

introduces the rules without any explanation, and ❸ introduces a set of rules that specifies behaviors that could be attributable to Einstein without actually naming him (directed at Einstein himself). Because all three things are happening at the same time through the same communicative act, the items share the same ordinal number ❸, indicating the contemporaneous nature of the straddling across multiple locations along the content continuum (i.e., both explicit and implicit at the same time).

The degree to which the communicator is relying on shared understandings as they stand now ("context reliance") or is trying to alter those shared understandings ("context nonreliance") is captured vertically in Table 2. Given that time giving is a purposeful attempt to give the norm violator a chance to realize what the shared understandings are without explicit guidance, the act of time giving

relies on those shared understandings to function and is implicit in nature. Its location is the upper left quadrant of the matrix. The practice of context nonreliance is a bit more complex and thus is subdivided to ease interpretation, wherein nonreliance activities that are intended to permanently reprogram the preprogrammed shared understandings are considered the strongest form of nonreliance and are thus positioned at the bottommost pole of the matrix. Nonreliance activities that are only temporary in nature represent a weaker form of nonreliance, and are thus positioned between the context reliance activities and the reprogramming ones.

When a communicator purposely tears at those shared understandings, that act becomes a meaningful communication in ways that accidental (or oblivious) tears are not. So, in the case of the visitor, when the long-termer purposely utilizes the instructor's technique inquiry time to complain about the visitor's training vigor (rather than to inquire about how to replicate the grandmaster's technique, as the shared understanding of the purpose of the instructor's rounds would have demanded), that is a meaningful piece of communication and was interpreted as such by the instructor, in ways that the oblivious action of the visitor, in violating the shared understandings about training vigor, did not. There was no communication by the visitor through his tearing at the shared understanding, because it was not intended for communicative effect; the same cannot be said for the long-termer, who was clearly looking for guidance by temporarily violating the shared understanding of the purpose of the instructor's inquiry. In future interactions, when the long-termer was working with other partners, the instructor's inquiry would naturally shift back to the original shared understanding of its purpose (i.e., "Can I help you understand the grandmaster's technique better?"). The nonpermanent nature of this shift in shared understanding is what makes it merely a tear in, rather than a full-scale reprogramming of, the shared understanding.

In the Einstein incident, however, the introduction of a formal ruleset into an organization that has run only on informal norms is a huge shock to a system that had relied on mindfulness and awareness of what was proper, and what was not, for decades. With the introduction of the ruleset, the grandmaster was permanently reconfiguring the shared understandings within the dojo from that day forward. In the entrepreneurship literature, that process is often referred to as the "profession-

alization process" (Greiner, 1972; Hellmann & Puri, 2002), which is something that all startups must eventually undertake as they grow (and usually does not happen after three decades of being in business). The introduction of a formal ruleset changes the ground rules under which activity is observed and interpreted in meaningful ways forever; that is the reprogramming dimension of the "nonreliance."

Table 2 also includes the failures of Ringo both in terms of his attempt to reconfigure the shared understanding regarding training vigor and also his failure to act in accordance with the shared understanding about what someone who has missed practice should do (i.e., pair up with someone to figure out what was taught in the missed lessons). Had Ringo done so, there is a high probability that he would have started to recognize patterns over the nine-month period during which the grandmaster was altering the teaching content and would have thus "got the grandmaster's message." Ringo obviously failed along both dimensions, which are marked accordingly (✖).

LESSONS FROM THE DOJO

The findings that I report above describe the process of communication that unfolded regarding the violation of physicality norms in a Japanese martial arts dojo. In this section, I discuss these findings with respect to my research questions, develop a set of propositions that formalize the processes suggested by my data, and present an emergent process flow model that encapsulates the acts of communication across time.

Context as a Vehicle for Communication

My first research question asks to what degree the context dimension of Hall's contexting model is ever actually treated as an active vehicle of communication, rather than as an exogenously determined environmental condition or characteristic. My analysis suggests that there are two primary context management practices exploited by high-context communicators that utilize context as a vehicle in the communication process.

First, it is important to note that, across all three unique norm violations, communicators used guidance behavior to try to reconcile the situation. By "guidance behavior," I mean a process of attempting to draw the violator's attention to the situation at hand in such a way that the violator self-regu-

lates his or her behavior. In the case of the visitor, the norm violation represented a failure to observe what others commonly do (Cialdini et al., 1991); the actions taken by both the long-termer and the instructor were intended to draw the violator's attention to the information available within the training environment regarding the appropriate level of training vigor. In the case of Ringo, we observe a purposeful disregard for the norms of safety that bind the dojo members together, catalyzed by Ringo's crossing of group boundaries into other martial arts. The guidance behavior was multifaceted, including social distancing by other members of the dojo, the grandmaster's communication through third parties, and the grandmaster's manipulation of the lesson content across time—all of which were intended (yet failed) to prod the violator to adopt norm-compliant behavior. In the Einstein case, we see a failure to listen to one's internal compass (Schwartz, 1977); Einstein required blunt external guidance from the grandmaster before eventually recognizing those interself expectations, which guided his self-imposed sanctions over a six-year period. It is well known that individuals can be primed to self-regulate their behavior (e.g., Sitzmann & Ely, 2010) and that the simplest of interactions with others can profoundly impact decision making (e.g., Gunia, Wang, Huang, Wang, & Murnighan, 2012). The present research shows that there are attempts by communicators to elicit norm compliance in subtle ways that may not be recognized by the target, nor fully captured in prior research (e.g., Brew, Tan, Booth, & Malik, 2011):

Proposition 1. High-context communicators will engage in guidance behaviors in the face of norm violations in order to elicit norm compliance.

Second, I also observed a reliance on the extant shared understanding as is, which was noticeably temporally bounded, wherein the target is afforded the opportunity to self-realize that he or she holds the ability to reconcile the issue at hand. This occurs by the target coming into that shared understanding and adjusting his or her behavior accordingly. I label this temporally bounded reliance on the extant shared understanding as "time giving." Recent work construes time as one of the four primary components of communication context (Adair et al., 2013), and time giving entails active monitoring by the (silent) communicator of the target, who is being given the opportunity to adjust his

or her behavior without further interaction. In Japan, the use of silence has long been recognized as a communicative act (Gudykunst et al., 1996); so too, I argue, should be time giving. Time giving is a purposeful act on the part of the communicator to save the face of all parties by relying on existing shared understandings, while yielding a resolution to the issue at hand. Time giving appeared across all three cases and was used regularly as part of the process of communication:

Proposition 2. High-context communicators will engage in time giving to allow norm violators to come into the shared understanding themselves.

Third, I also observed examples of the communicator purposely manipulating the shared understanding from which messages are delivered and interpreted. This activity occasionally entailed outright attempts to "reprogram" the preprogrammed shared understandings that everyone took for granted. Because these activities center on the communicator trying to change the nature of the shared understanding, either on a temporary basis or more permanently, I label these activities as "context nonreliance." Context nonreliance alters the decision-making environment of the target in an effort to prime consideration of the issue at hand, which ranged from addressing an ongoing norm violation to addressing the residual concern that a prior violation had engendered. That issue may not actually be recognized by the target, or may be recognized as an issue, but not seen as something that is within the target's control. Context nonreliance is therefore utilized to prime the target to consider the current situation differently, thus conveying communicative meaning from the communicator:

Proposition 3. High-context communicators may engage in manipulation of shared understandings to impart communicative meaning.

The discovery of the use of context reliance and nonreliance activity provides evidence that high-context communicators do, in fact, actively utilize the context in communication in ways that prior research has documented in relation to message content. Given this evidence of these practices, context should no longer be considered merely a national-level cultural characteristic or an exogenously determined environment; rather, "context" is an endogenously controlled dimension in the communication process. Thus communica-

tors have access to both context management practices and content management practices when trying to impart meaning.

Given that context can be endogenously altered by individuals, I argue that there is value to scholars in prioritizing contextual factors at more micro levels over those at more macro levels. Evidence elsewhere supports this proposition. Japanese employees (traditionally assumed to be high-context individuals) identify more strongly with those in their immediate circle (e.g., work colleagues) than with the broader circle (e.g., the firm) (Fruin, 1980), and adapt to organizational norms when they differ from broader societal norms (Ono, 2007). Also, when members from distinct organizational or national cultures come together, a negotiated culture begins to emerge (Brannen & Salk, 2000) in much the same way as a culture in interaction emerges when individuals interact as group members (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003). These suggest that the fact that, for example, a supposedly low-context American would use implicit messaging and collectivistic solicitation (in the case of the visitor) should not be construed as counter to our understanding of how context balances with content in communication. After all, the long-termer was engaged in a micro-level interaction with the visitor (whom he may never meet again), a micro-level interaction with the instructor (informed by teacher–student hierarchies, and prior and future interactions), and as part of a group bound by certain shared understandings with respect to learning the art. The long-termer's behavior was attuned to the context in ways that make it a meaningful representation of a high-context form of communication, despite arguments that Americans should be classified as low-context. The same would hold for the Japanese instructor, who was explicit three different times (in conflict with classic portrayals of Japanese as being implicit communicators) in an attempt to give the target an opportunity to recognize his or her role in reconciling the situation (a decidedly high-context way of communicating). For a contexting model to be meaningful, we must acknowledge the subtleties that context brings to bear on the participants:

Proposition 4. More micro factors of context will have greater influence on the communicative practices of individuals than more macro factors of context.

Content–Context Communicative Mix

My second research question asks how communicators mix the content and context to convey meaning to the target. My findings suggest that, in addition to the aforementioned two context management practices of reliance and nonreliance, there are two content management practices that are exploited by high-context communicators as well. These content management practices are interspersed with context management practices as part of the communicative process.

First, I observed the sequential shift from implicit messaging to explicit messaging on the part of the communicator. I label this content management practice "continuum staggering," because the communicator is gradually shifting the content of the message along the continuum of the content dimension of note—in this case, the relative explicitness of the content. This phenomenon has been documented previously in experimental cross-cultural negotiation settings (Adair et al., 2001, 2009). Continuum staggering occurs when a communicator utilizes a mix of content and context that accords with his or her own level of understanding, but which mix fails to impart meaning properly to the target. This requires the communicator to adjust the mix in a way that more closely aligns with the needs of the target. In the cases analyzed, I observed shifting in only one direction along the continuum of the content dimension (from less explicit content to more explicit content), but theoretically that should not preclude shifting in the other direction. Because continuum staggering entails a sequential shift from one point in the continuum to another point, the shift must occur after the initial attempt at communication has failed to bring about resolution to the issue at hand, which will be always followed by time giving:

Proposition 5a. High-context communicators will engage in continuum staggering when time giving fails to lead to resolution of the issue at hand, providing evidence to the communicator that the target communicates at a different point along the continuum when acting as a communicator himself or herself.

Second, I also observed examples of the simultaneous use of both implicit and explicit messages. I label this content management practice "continuum straddling," because the communicator is exploiting two (or more) points along the content characteristic continuum at the same time. Contin-

uum straddling may be helpful when the communicator faces multiple unique audiences of the communicative act; using continuum straddling can communicate one thing to one of those audiences and another thing to another audience. As with all communication, precisely how much of the message is understood depends on the individual receiving the communication. Research suggests that high-context individuals will be able to understand content positioned anywhere along the continuum, whereas low-context individuals are more likely to understand content positioned low on the continuum:

> *Proposition 5b. High-context communicators will engage in continuum straddling when facing multiple unique audiences of a communication who would communicate at different points along the continuum when acting as communicators themselves.*

While utilizing purely low-context communication when the audience is mixed with low-context and high-context targets seems as though it may be the "easiest" way of handling the situation, I argue that it undermines an important dimension of the interaction: it forces the communicator to take responsibility for behaviors in ways that should fall on the target. In high-context communication, it is the responsibility of the target to lay the final keystone in making meaning of communication (Hall, 1989: 113). Forcing the communicator to bear that keystone instead is cognitively taxing (i.e., communicators must function at a different level of context than their normal level), upsets the balance of responsibility in the relationship, and reduces the amount of introspection required of the target to function with other high-context communicators. Being addressed in a low-context manner may actually be insulting to high-context targets, just as an adult may feel insulted being spoken to as a child. Thus, for high-context communicators, there will be a preference to begin with or incorporate some dimension of high-context communication when communicating. Given that other scholars have suggested that high-context communication may entail any number of different content dimensions (e.g., the expressive—Buchan et al., 2011, or the dramatic nature of the content—Gudykunst et al., 1996), I propose that the practices of staggering and straddling should be observable with respect to other content characteristics as well. Only future work could provide supporting or refuting evidence of this:

> *Proposition 5c. Continuum-staggering and continuum-straddling content management practices will be used by high-context communicators irrespective of the content characteristic of study.*

Prolonged Process Model of High-Context Communication

In addition to identifying these specific context management and content management practices, I document how high-context communicators dynamically mix those practices across time in the process of communicating. The length of my observation period allows me to suggest a prolonged process model of high-context communication (see Figure 1), which illustrates how these practices are used across time—occasionally occupying exceedingly long periods. Communication can be conceptualized as occurring in stages, wherein a stage represents a decision point for the communicator; the communicator can utilize as many stages as he or she deems necessary until the situation is reconciled. Unlike low-context communicators, high-context communicators do not necessarily take it upon themselves to readily communicate regarding a norm violation; instead, communicators often give time to the individual who could reconcile the situation to do so and actively monitor progress toward that end.

If context-reliant time giving fails to yield a resolution, the communicator then becomes more interactive with the target, guiding him or her toward self-realization through implicit communication, or by tearing or reprogramming the shared understandings through which messages are being interpreted. This communication may actually be hidden from the violator, which again allows the situation to be reconciled without loss of face. Time giving is used to provide that opportunity. If the practices and time giving still fail, the communicator may take on more explicit messaging—either by shifting away from implicit messages toward more explicit ones, or by using both implicit and explicit messaging simultaneously, or by tearing or reprogramming the shared understandings (again, or for the first time). The communicator role in high-context communication differs fundamentally from that usually observed in low-context communication: its intent is to elicit self-reflection and self-correction with the minimum of direct confronta-

FIGURE 1
Prolonged Process Model of High Context Communication
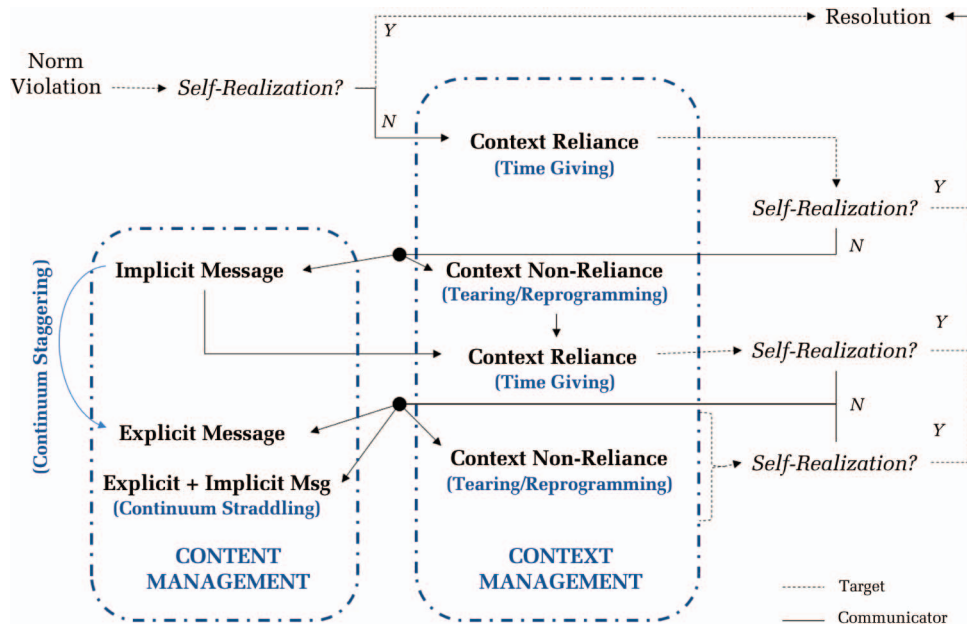
tion and loss of face on the part of those involved.[1] Taken together, these dynamics suggest the following propositions:

Proposition 6a. High-context communicators prefer to engage in time-giving activity before engaging more interactive communicative activity with the target.

Proposition 6b. High-context communicators will engage in time giving at each stage after using more interactive communicative activity.

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[1] One may even interpret the actions of the instructors across the three cases as examples of paternalistic (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004; Wu, Hu, & Jiang, 2012) or benevolent (Niu, Wang, & Cheng, 2009) leadership. In the case of the visitor, the long-termer sought instructor guidance and refused to address the visitor's vigor until receiving that guidance. For his part, the instructor saw that the visitor's ability to understand the grandmaster's art would be hindered until the visitor understood that the physicality norms of the dojo existed for a reason. Direct guidance ensued after time giving. In the case of Ringo, the grandmaster shielded his flock from Ringo's violent tendencies and allowed Ringo to discover that the art was no longer for him—all without causing a loss of face for anyone. Finally, in the Einstein case, the grandmaster insisted that Einstein see within himself what others saw in him; it worked, because Einstein considered even six years of contrition to be insufficient to allow him to approach the grandmaster to make amends.

Proposition 6c. High-context communicators will engage in less interactive communicative activity before engaging in more interactive activity.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

While Hall's contexting model may be one of the most cited theoretical lenses of cross-cultural communication research, findings have not always accorded with theory (Cardon, 2008). The present research suggests that the reason for this may stem from the fact that high-context communicators utilize content management practices—which alter message content characteristics—and context management practices—which either rely on, tear at temporarily, or attempt to reprogram more permanently the shared understandings through which messages are being delivered and interpreted. The combination of these practices may have eluded documentation in research relying on self-reporting or experimental settings (e.g., Adair et al., 2001, 2007; Brew et al., 2011; Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986; Masumoto, 2004). The results suggest that individuals also might end up missing messages regarding their behavior if unaware of the ways in which communication manifests.

Drawing on three cases of physicality norm violations that occurred within a Japanese martial arts

dojo during a five-year participant observation ethnographic study, this research presents a prolonged process model of high-context communication. The emergent model that I propose shows the use of specific content management and context management practices as part of high-context communication, which entail altering the explicitness with which messages are sent to the target (continuum staggering and continuum straddling), or reliance or nonreliance on the shared understandings through which messages are interpreted by targets of communication (time giving, context tearing, and context reprogramming). I observe the frequent use of the practice of time giving, to allow the target to come to the shared understanding and recognize how his or her own actions might reconcile the issue at hand. As less interactive (and more covert) attempts at guidance fail, the communicator gradually increases the interactivity and overtness of the guidance, with nonconfrontational, face-saving guidance preferred over more explicit methods. This research thus contributes to the classic literature on speech acts, and their connection to communicative intent and meaning transfer (Austin, 1975; Derrida, 1982; Searle, 1975).

By focusing solely on one organization, questions regarding the generalizability across other organizations will follow. Still, strong insights can emerge from single case studies (Weick, 1993) or single organization ethnographies (Lok & de Rond, 2013), which may help to sharpen existing theory or spur new theory (Siggelkow, 2007). Recent work on what is known as "institutional maintenance work," for example, documents how organizational actors deal with disrupted institutional arrangements (Micelotta & Washington, 2013), often engaging in "containment work" on tears in established scripts (Lok & de Rond, 2013). The present research shows how some of those tears may in fact have been initiated for communicative reasons. The tearing of shared understandings, or outright reprogramming of preprogrammed tacit common ground, may take place as part of communication targeted at those who fail to recognize what is being communicated in prior interactions. Those targets could be individuals, groups, organizations, or even nation states, depending on the communicator (e.g., Meredith, 2013). This paper therefore meets the call for research that combines high-context and low-context communication (Adair et al., 2007), and taps into the empirical phenomena of the East to provide a richer understanding of managing organizations and behavior globally (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2012).

Practical Implications

Although the communication was documented in a martial arts dojo with instructors (rather than in a firm with managers), the same processes are evident in more conventional settings as well. Unproductive employees are often given empty tasks in Japanese firms (Kasahara, Fujita, & Sakai, 1987), as a form of context nonreliance that is used to drive employees to leave the firm for alternative employment. Such a nonconfrontational approach allows firms to claim that they "do not fire people"—a cultural taboo that has only recently begun to change (AHK & RolandBerger, 2009). Personal communication with several long-term foreign residents of Japan not from the dojo revealed both continuum staggering and continuum straddling in common business settings:

> My boss would often try to elicit a response by using indirect communication. Many times I felt what was being asked of me was unreasonable and I picked up on his communication but would ignore it (many expats do this). Then he would try to switch to a more direct form of communication, e.g., he would try to indirectly tell me that my numbers needed to be increased by communicating this through a junior colleague that would get to me. If I "didn't get it," he would switch to a more direct form and tell me he wanted me to reach a certain number.

> The department head chose to tear into a junior employee in the middle of the office to make a point. He would routinely use him and other low-level employees, who were involved but had very little decision-making power with respect to what he was unhappy about to send a message to the others.

Similar communicative practices have also been documented outside Japan (Azevedo, 2011). In future work, researchers may want to assess the degree to which low-context communicators understand, but purposely avoid, indicating understanding of high-context messages, and for what purposes (e.g., avoiding responsibility, as an act of defiance, etc.).

The lessons also apply to Western managers trying to harness the talents of Eastern and Western employees alike. Subordinates in low-quality leader–member exchanges perceive less distributive and procedural fairness than peers in high-quality exchanges (Lee, 2001), which can impact every-

thing from workplace trust to employee performance (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). An increased attentiveness to workplace dissatisfaction and interpersonal friction, for example, may allow managers to stop potential fires before they visibly spark. These skills could even be used with Western employees who have yet to voice concerns. Honing such skills of attentiveness would allow managers to shift from being post hoc reactive to being real-time responsive, fostering a positive work environment for employees of all backgrounds. Research shows that congruence in communication and conflict styles positively impacts attitudes in cross-cultural work environments (Froese et al., 2012). Perhaps future work could examine whether, for example, those who take on expatriate experiences in locales with many high-context communicators (e.g., Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009) improve in their ability to manage employees after returning home.

Concluding Thoughts

In sum, the lessons learned at the Japanese martial arts dojo far exceeded the technical points of punching and kicking, suggesting intriguing paths for scholars and managers alike in cross-cultural communication, the management of human resources, and the interactions surrounding the violation of norms. The findings particularly suggest important lessons for low-context communicators striving to understand high-context ones. Direct messages from high-context communicators regarding issues requiring the target's attention should be viewed not only as an indication that a particular activity needs attention, but also as a catalyst to reflect how the communicator may have been trying in vain to communicate via higher context methods prior to that. The prolonged process model of high-context communication developed in this paper would suggest as much.

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Benjamin M. Cole (bmcole@fordham.edu) is an associate professor of management systems at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University. He earned his PhD from the University of Michigan. His research interests include the social construction of innovation, moral or cultural lenses in organizational settings, and institutional complexity.

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