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**Conflict Mediation Discourse Examined Through a Girardian Lens:
Weapons and Wounds in Conflict Talk**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the disputants who chose mediation as the avenue to discuss their conflict. Without their willingness to share their experiences this dissertation would not be possible.

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Conflict Mediation Discourse Examined Through a Girardian Lens: Weapons and Wounds in Conflict Talk

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Mediation promises a way for conflicting parties to address differences and reach an agreement to settle their dispute. This study looks at mediation discourse of five cases from a university conflict resolution center through the lens of Girard's (1977) theory of mimetic desire. Girard (1977) suggests that we are all in a pattern of mimesis. Antagonism that is prevalent in conflict develops, in Girard's view, from the cycle of desire when one person wants an object and another person copies that desire for the object. The two parties quickly forget the object, but antagonism emerges as the mimetic desire continues. Girard argues parties have a tendency to place blame on a scapegoat to break the antagonism pattern. Alternatively, in her application of Girard's theory, Cobb (1997, 2003, 2010a, 2010b) advocates a social constructionist perspective where disputants work on turning *thin* conflict stories into *thicker* ones to break the pattern.

This project addresses a need for research on cycles of antagonism in discourse constructed by disputants during real mediation sessions. Knowing how disputants construct discourse lends insight into how people handle their most challenging interpersonal problems. The analysis of discourse through the guiding frameworks of

conflict tactics, production format, and tenor of discourse sheds light on how disputants construct perpetuated mimicked antagonism and how they break the pattern. Additionally, findings highlight the emergence of *weapons* and *wounds* in the discourse suggesting that *communicative* violence is constructed whether or not there was actual physical violence.

Components of thin conflict narratives are evident in findings from all five cases. Yet, while two cases are characterized by discourse of perpetuated mimicked antagonism, three represent a break in that pattern without placing blame on a scapegoat or constructing a thicker conflict narrative. The distinctions between a perpetuated and broken cycle are unpacked through the discussion of: a) animator-only position; b) indirectness and presumptive attribution; and c) shift in footing between talking to the other disputant and the mediators. This project provides a more nuanced understanding of the Girardian perspective relating to conflict mediation to contribute to the extant literature on conflict discourse and mediation practice.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

RATIONALE

"I think the basis of the problem is more that, to say that Nick and I intensely dislike each other, despise each other is a bit of an understatement, and that given that, it's quite, it's gonna be quite hard for us to exist, I mean in a sense the problem with the agreement is that it's regulating our manifest behavior, but, while there are these underlying emotions involved, I mean, the most you can hope for is a thin veneer which will, or might crack if it's pushed in the least."

The passage above was shared by Amy, a disputant in one of the cases studied for this dissertation. Here she reveals negative feelings between her and Nick, and her view that the agreement that they have reached through the mediation session may be precarious. Her comment also represents what I see as the crux of issues regarding how people resolve conflict. Are our interpersonal interactions guarded by a thin veneer of civility that is completely volatile? If we approach some resolution to our problems, are those agreements simply a regulation of our behavior that does not address underlying concerns? Or perhaps could there be an alternative where we can transcend our differences? These questions highlight my motivation for this project.

GIRARD'S MIMETIC DESIRE

One explanation for the presence of interpersonal conflict is that people get stuck in a cycle of mimicked antagonism. Girard (1977) suggests we are continually in a pattern of mimetic desire. This mimesis snowballs when two people desiring the same object quickly grows to three, and four, and five people that mimic the desire for the object. Yet, often the object is forgotten as people are actually mimicking the other's desire for the object rather than desiring the object itself. Soon, as Girard puts it, this mimetic desire progresses toward antagonism. The mimesis continues as the conflicting

1

parties mimic the others' antagonism, thus perpetuating a reciprocating cycle toward potential violence. To avoid the violence, a substitute victim may be located to serve as a scapegoat. The "mimetic crisis" of locating the violence on the scapegoat brings peace to the conflicting parties. However, this peace is only temporary. Therefore, Girard suggests that rituals are often created as a remembrance of the mimetic crisis – the violence that was placed upon the substitute – to maintain peace. While Girard (1996) later concedes that good mimetic desire exists - when one person imitates a positive model - he suggests the momentum toward antagonism and violence is more common. Sara Cobb (1997, 2003, 2010a, & 2010b) has been the key scholar in bringing these concepts from Girard's theory to the conflict mediation conversation.

CONFLICT MEDIATION

Mediation promises a way for conflicting parties to address differences and reach an agreement to settle their disputes. Various theories and practice-based perspectives have highlighted the potential for resolving differences. For example, some scholars argue that determining the *ripe* time to get people to the table for mediation is the most important promise for moving past conflict (for a review see Kleibor, 1994). Other scholars promote practice-based styles for approaching the mediation session.

There are several types of mediation meant to help disputants reach a resolution. In interventionist mediation (Kressel & Pruitt, 1989), mediators encourage disputants to separate feelings from the problem to identify the underlying interests that serve as the starting point for reaching an agreement. Through transformative mediation, Bush and Folger (2005) suggest mediators should help disputants take a departure from focusing

specifically on problem-solving the points of the deal to instead work toward mutual understanding and recognition. In narrative mediation (Winslade and Monk, 2000 & 2008), the mediators encourage disputants to create new ways of explaining their experiences, mind-sets, people, and relationships in the conflict. While these types of mediation offer guidance for practitioners, there is a need for more research on the actual discourse constructed by the disputants, as it pertains to the development of the conflict. Knowing how disputants construct mediation discourse lends insight into how people handle their most challenging interpersonal problems. The cycle of antagonism that is constructed in conflict discourse is not confined to the walls of conflict mediation sessions, and therefore analysis of that discourse provides insights that are valuable to interpersonal communication scholars outside the realm of mediation.

Mediation transcripts are data from a natural setting of real people working through real conflicts, thus holding promise for understanding interpersonal conflict beyond the walls of a mediation session. Garcia, Vise, and Whitaker (2002) highlight the importance of examining actual mediation interactions as a rich avenue for understanding how people enact dispute resolution. Watching videos of disputants in mediation sessions and analyzing actual mediation transcripts sheds light on the patterns of conflict people construct and how their communication is characteristic of perpetuating the conflict or resolving it. Being able to watch videos and read the transcripts of people in conflict provides the luxury of an extended retrospective analysis of how parties stay stuck in perpetuated conflict as well as those times when they are able to move forward during their attempts at resolution.

A GIRARDIAN LENS FOR MEDIATION

The pull toward mimicked antagonism may be very strong, thus explaining the presence of much of the conflict in interpersonal relationships. If the cycle of antagonism is the root of much conflict, then understanding how it is constructed in discourse may offer some answers for reaching resolution to those conflicts.

In the conflict mediation literature, looking at discourse as socially constructed was promoted in large part by Sara Cobb. While the prevailing assumption leading into the early 1990s was for mediators to maintain objective neutrality by distancing themselves from the disputants' resolution talks, Cobb and Rifkin (1991) jumped in to demonstrate how neutrality was actually a discursive practice. The belief in a strict sense of neutrality fell off the scene in the mediation literature. In essence, Cobb (1993 & 1994) set a new direction for mediation that dispelled the myth of neutrality, and showcased storytelling as an inherent act of social construction.

Through the vein of storytelling and narrative mediation, Cobb (2003) brought concepts from Girard's theory into the mediation conversation. She argued that a new vocabulary for moral discussions and prescriptions for ADR practice that reinstates moral discussions was needed. Cobb's (2003) view that all mediation is narrative, in the sense that mediators influence and are influenced within the conversation, is what distinguishes *second-generation* mediation from *first-generation* mediation (her terms). As she explained it, in first-generation mediation, guidelines were created to bring disputing parties to the table, to create structures for fair talk, and to build a process that could be trusted despite the uniqueness of various mediators. First-generation mediation was

aimed at maintaining a sense of neutrality, intervention when appropriate, and management of rules of interaction so that the disputants could work toward a resolution. However, she highlighted that a potential outcome of first-generation mediation is mutual blame, and cautioned that disputants use moral frames as tools to negatively position the other in discourse. Therefore, she advocates a focus on the process of storytelling as it relates to perpetuating the conflict or reaching resolution. According to Cobb (2003):

> This is a highly engaged mode of mediation practice, recognizing that mediators participate in the social construction of meaning, regardless of what questions they ask and what they do not ask; regardless of whether they remain silent or make summaries; regardless of whether they actively reframe or whether they simply repeat descriptions that disputants offer. This kind of engagement on the part of the mediator requires calibration with disputants and careful ongoing observation of self-in-interaction. (p. 226)

Second-generation mediation is characteristically a social construction approach. Therefore, in her view, nuanced understandings of the orientations disputants take toward telling their stories become the aim for reaching resolution.

Construction of stories provides an opportunity for changes in the pieces of the conflict narrative. Yet in the storytelling, through the Girardian lens, mimicked antagonism could get increasingly negative and increasingly intense. The fundamental assumptions about the construction of conflict are intimately linked to how resolution is constructed. Second-generation mediation bypasses a strict sense of neutrality so that all parties in the mediation session play an active role in the social construction of the conflict story. More specifically, Cobb (2010a & 2010b) suggests there is more promise for resolution by taking *thin* conflict stories and constructing them into *thicker* ones.

Thin narratives often contain flat plot lines of simplistic cause-effect explanations, polarizing references to characters, and a context for the story that lack interdependence in terms of time, characters, and events. Thick narratives on the other hand have additional layers to the plot line that help contextualize character behavior and build a context for the story where interdependence and mutual influence are acknowledged. Her work focuses on the narrative form of mediation (Winslade & Monk, 2000 & 2008) through a social constructionist lens. I became intrigued about exploring the pattern of mimicked antagonism in mediation sessions that did not follow the narrative mediation style to see how conflict is perpetuated or resolved in disputant discourse. In essence, how does the Girardian lens hold up in mediation sessions not guided by a narrative frame?

Analyzing the discourse of disputants provides answers regarding how the pull toward mimicked antagonism, characteristic of the Girardian pattern, is constructed by disputants. A close look at the discourse can also provide an answer to whether there is promise for breaking this cycle. Mediation offers rich natural data of discourse of conflicting parties for articulating how well Girard's perspective fits for conflicting parties that have come together to attempt to reach a resolution.

If mediation holds true on its promise then we should be able to see a shift from mimetic antagonism toward an agreed upon resolution. Girard (1977) might argue that the shift toward resolution comes through the mimetic crisis. In fact, Cobb (2003) followed this argument in suggesting that the mediator at times may fill the role of the substitute victim during the mediation session. Yet, it may be possible for disputants to

reach resolution without a scapegoat. If there are cases where this occurs, disputants may be creating powerful moves that allow them to get out of difficult interpersonal problems through the construction of discourse that breaks the cycle of mimicked antagonism.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIATION TEXT

Discourse analysis is a method that sheds light on the constructed meanings in talk. In the discourse, we can identify the role of linguistic items in the text in terms of their function in building meaning; and address the manner by which patterns are built up for the overall construction of a genre of text that has been shaped by its context (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). In that vein, this dissertation is a micro-level analysis of the discourse of mediation that assesses whether Girard's theory holds up in the context of mediation – which holds the promise for moving past negative patterns toward reaching a resolution. Understanding the pattern of mimicked antagonism in discourse contributes to our understanding of constructed meanings between disputants across all types of mediation (e.g., interventionist, transformative, narrative).

It may be unreasonable to think that disputants could change a reciprocating cycle of mimicked antagonism during one mediation session. Yet, mediators do speak of such memorable moments that occur. Looking at discourse from cases that are characteristically antagonistic provides insight on how that pattern is constructed, and on how an alternative pattern may emerge. This project explores whether there are moments when disputants have abandoned their antagonism or have constructed a pattern of imitating a good model (Girard, 1996). Perhaps it is possible for disputants to halt their previously mimicked antagonism through changed discourse. I am not arguing that

everyone wants to move beyond their antagonism (we cannot assume intent), but instead am looking at the discourse to understand what it is that may be contributing to the construction of the negative pattern between the disputants; and that which may characterize a break in the pattern.

FUTURE POTENTIAL

My aim is to explore whether Girard's work (see 1996 for a review), on mimetic desire holds up in the context of mediation. If Girard's perspective applies, we will find disputants that mimic each other's antagonism – in a reciprocated cycle that prevents them from reaching a resolution. Neither disputant will want the other to get what they want. Even if the object of desire has been forgotten, the force of mimicked antagonism will take over. If so, Girard (1977) would predict disputants will be looking for a scapegoat to serve as the substitute victim to move past their shared antagonism.

Instead of finding a scapegoat, mediation may indeed offer a promise for the disputants to transcend the mimicry of antagonism. Yet, the answer may not be in a particular style of mediation. The answer may be in a changed discourse between the disputants. Cobb (1993, 1994, 2003, & 2010) has extended the research on narrative mediation, and advocated for this style to serve as the avenue for transcending the Girardian pattern. Findings that suggest the antagonistic pattern can be transcended in other types of mediation (i.e., interventionist/therapeutic) would support the argument that it is in fact the construction of the discourse that holds the promise independent of the form of mediation promoted.

This dissertation serves as a needed contribution to mediation theory development. If communication scholars could incorporate a pragmatic understanding of discourse that focuses on issues to dispute along with the propensity toward mimicked antagonism, I believe we are a step closer to resolving more disputes. Through this shift, the discourse in essence becomes the resolution of those disputes as antagonism is abandoned or transformed. In all, being able to articulate how the Girardian pattern emerges in discourse gives us promising avenues for theorizing about communication in mediation, for elaborating upon methodological choices for interpreting conflict interactions, and for developing praxis for mediation. Also, if there are any powerful communicative moves that disputants are able to construct to get out of the cycle of mimicked antagonism, we may have clearer insight on how people in conflict resolve, or at least move past, their interpersonal problems through talk.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The current analysis is inspired by the insightful philosophical work of Girard (1977) on mimetic attributes of violence and the initial extension of those ideas by Cobb (2003) to the mediation context. Additionally, robust literatures on conflict tactics and affect provide the foundation for my current aim to explain mediation discourse that is characterized by a perpetuated negative reciprocity. Therefore, I first discuss my philosophical approach influenced by Girard's (1977) articulation of mimetic attributes of violence; and Cobb's (2003) shift to second-generation mediation. Second, I cover the taxonomy of conflict tactics that Sillars, Coletti, Parry, and Rogers (1982) developed and Goffman's (1979) idea of footing as constructed by way of the production format. Finally, I offer the promise of vanDijk's (1997) context theory and Halliday's (1989) delineation of tenor of discourse for understanding the given mediation text. My aim is to pull the relevant literature together to build my argument toward the research question guiding this project.

MIMICKED ANTAGONISM AND VIOLENCE

My foundational assumption is that there is an ever-present opportunity for mimicking antagonism. Conflict itself is a characteristically reciprocal interpersonal dynamic – one that builds momentum in a positive or negative direction. Mimetic desire leads to reciprocity of antagonism as neither person is able to attain that which the other desires. The intangible nature of mimetic desire that cannot be satisfied thus presents the threat of violence (Girard, 1977). Indeed, much conflict has escalated to the point of physical violence. Yet *communicative* violence is evidence of a violent dynamic between

individuals as well. Scarry's (1985) conception of "language of agency" takes the

subjective experience of pain to objectify it through language. Therefore, subjective

experiences of pain, or threat of pain, emerge in discourse to highlight a violence that

may not be physical, yet is constructed as a more symbolic and communicative violence

by disputing parties.

Mimetic Desire and Conflict

Girard (1977) argues that violence (and terror of absolute violence) is stronger

than desire – "in fact the only force that can snuff out desire, is that nameless but

irresistible terror" (p. 118). While desire to resolve disputes may be of great importance,

an ever-present opportunity for violence may trump that desire and side-track the ability

for disputants to systematically settle their differences. Furthermore, it is the mimetic

attribute of violence that is especially noteworthy since there is a staying power to the

need for violence to find something to sink its teeth into. As stated by Girard (1977),

"[t]he more men strive to curb their violent impulses, the more these impulses seem to

prosper" (p. 118). If we assume a violent lens, if one person perceives a threat of violence

it seems rational that they would be particularly aware and cautious of impending danger.

In other words, it is better to be cautious than to be underprepared or taken advantage of.

Girard (1977) suggests that a sacrifice is needed to appease the experience with a

wrong-doing. In essence if there is a victim of a crime, then a sacrifice with unique and

valuable characteristics commensurate with the intensity of the situation is needed. If a

suitable sacrifice cannot be determined, the possibility for escalation remains. As Girard

(1977) stated, "[a]s long as there exists no sovereign and independent body capable of

taking the place of the injured party and taking upon itself the responsibility for revenge, the danger of interminable escalation remains" (p. 17). He argued that the judicial system may be the firm mechanism that serves as the independent organizing body today that determines where the responsibility for harm to a victim lies. Mediation serves as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) approach that shies away from unilateral claims of fault and responsibility. Instead, the process aims to allow disputants to discover possible solutions rather than determining fault.

Exploring the Girardian perspective as it pertains to mediation is particularly fitting as the lack of placing fault may pose complications for disputants who are looking for retribution for harm done. Girard (1977) argues that "[r]itual in general, and sacrificial rites in particular, assume essential roles in societies that lack a firm judicial system" (p. 18). Certainly, mediation offers a context with unique ritualistic components. However, it is not the ritual itself that I am interested in here, but instead the unique discourse that is housed within the ritualistic décor. There is an opportunity for disputants to construct a new discourse that transcends the reciprocity of antagonism. We just do not have a lot of clarity on how that does (if at all) or does not happen.

If Girard's perspective applies to conflict interactions in the context of mediation, we should be able to locate his ideas surrounding mimicked antagonism and violence within the discourse of the disputants. This lens is particularly important for understanding how intractable conflicts develop, explaining the tone of violence that may be evident in the talk, and if and how disputants get out of the pattern of mimicked antagonism.

Violence triggered is not easily appeased

Whereas the judicial system isolates violence into *acts* that can be analyzed and measured against legal criteria, mediation presents a space where less tangible (what I refer to as *communicative*) violence may be expressed (or at least where its emergence becomes particularly salient in discourse). In other words, the violence may not be visible, but there may be violence in the discourse. Girard (1977) argues:

> Once aroused, the urge to violence triggers certain physical changes that prepare men's bodies for battle. This set toward violence lingers on; it should not be regarded as a simple reflex that ceases with the removal of the initial stimulus. Storr remarks that it is more difficult to quell an impulse toward violence than to rouse it, especially within the normal framework of social behavior. (p. 2).

The difficulty with mitigating violent tendencies, as highlighted in the quotation above, may be exasperated within mediation when the violence cannot be isolated into single acts but is instead an ever-present pattern of mimicked antagonism. Valuable mediation strategies have included an attempt to separate discussion of the problem from personal attacks (Fisher & Ury, 1991); or physically putting disputants in different rooms (shuttle mediation) so that the mediator can stay focused on problem-solving without the disputants hijacking the discussion toward attack-counterattack moves.

Scapegoating vs. constructing a shared account of conflict

The idea of scapegoating offered by Girard (1977) maintains that unappeased violence triggered by one source seeks out a convenient victim other than the source. As he stated, violence will continue to look for something it can "sink its teeth into" (p. 4). Cobb (2003) suggested that mediation is a place where mediators sometimes witness this

victimization. She argues that the mediator could not only serve as this witness, but also even serve as an alternative victim for the wrongdoing (i.e., rather than hurt the other disputant). It is also possible that the disputants could place blame on an alternate person not currently engaged in the mediation, thus scapegoating. Any scapegoating option in mediation is not a resolution of the unappeased violence, but instead a deflection onto an unsuspecting other.

As an alternative to scapegoating, disputants may be able to construct and agree on an account of the conflict that removes claims of blame or victimization. Then disputants would be left with the challenge to make account of the conflict in a way that is meaningful to all involved in the conflict. As mentioned, Cobb (2003) suggests this can happen with help from the mediators to make the narrative thicker. In this sense, mediation discourse might transcend mimicked antagonism not by scapegoating but instead by transforming the entire meaning of wrongdoing, victimization, and need for revenge through construction of a new conflict narrative.

Redirecting violence toward proper channels

The societal impact of perpetuating antagonism could be far-reaching. If left unappeased, violence accumulates and overflows into surrounding areas. In Girard's view, contemporary Western society implemented the judicial system to provide *proper channels* for societal concerns to be judged. In essence this formal legal system puts parameters around the display of unfettered violence. Girard argues that the judicial system deflects violence making a decision for retribution that serves as the final response to wrongdoing. The community is meant to accept this judgment since the

system is made up of specialized individuals. The judgment is placed upon the one who committed the crime. Punishment is meant to serve as the ultimate response to wrongdoing to avoid the propensity for reciprocated revenge which could fuel an attack-counterattack cycle onward – what Girard calls "an infinitely repetitive process."

Mediation has emerged in response to the need for alternative way to handle conflict as the courts were too full to accommodate the judgment of all societal issues. Qualitatively some conflicts may not be fitting for the judicial system. There are a few ways in which mediation has primarily taken over the role of *properly channeled* violence in appropriate cases. First, for disputes that would take longer than the court would like to invest, mediation is a screening attempt to resolve disputes. Second, some disputants do not want to invest the time or money that court requires. Third, there are disputes (community in nature) that may not merit a justified claim to court, yet gone unchecked would lead to decreased society functioning. Therefore the community has risen up to provide an avenue for resolving disputes (e.g., handling violence). Mediators, in turn, are called to be the specialized individuals who can handle the complex interpersonal dynamics that could so easily lean toward communicative or physical violence.

As the mediation field has evolved over the past 40 years (Herrman, 2006), there is a strong need for in-depth analysis of the discourse that proposes to be an alternative to the repetitive process of revenge. Cobb (2003) argued that by shifting to mediation, community members have volunteered to be the ones who may unwittingly put themselves into a role as a substitute victim to be scapegoated. The mimicked antagonism

is properly channeled through an institutionalized communication structure of mediation, which presents the opportunity for the mediator to become the substitute victim. If Cobb's views are true, we might see some form of communicative violence in the discourse directed toward the mediators. In the cases I analyzed there are no examples of such occurrences in the discourse. Alternatively, Girard's explanation allows for the possibility of fault to be externalized to others outside the mediation session, as the triggered violence continues to seek out a substitute victim.

Private interaction vs. public address to vengeance

Mediators promise disputants that the session will be confidential with the exception of allegations of abuse. This confidential system of mediation occurring behind closed doors may not satisfy the reciprocal nature of violence in the same way that a public event would. According to Girard (1977), it is the public aspect of the judicial system, and a shared experience of a punishment being delivered, that holds the potential to appease the community. Alternatively, without an objective and independent body determining fault, a community may choose another public route – that of *taking the law into their own hands* much like vigilantes. Therefore, while the private interaction of disputants (and promise of confidentiality) may lead toward resolution of their conflict, since the mediation is happening behind closed doors the community may not be appeased if they are not aware of how resolution was reached.

Also, there are likely times when mediation does not even satisfy the desires of the parties involved. A public day in court with a judge rendering judgment may be more appealing than together coming to a resolution in a closed room. Additionally, the view *I*

want to win may permeate the dispute resolution process more than *I want to work it out*.

The purpose of the Girardian sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community to

reinforce the social fabric and stop the negative reciprocal cycle when internal violence

(e.g., dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels) existed in community. Yet, in a

society where sacrifice is not as evident, it is possible that the court system can publicly

make a ruling that overcomes the negative reciprocal cycle. It is also possible, though,

that the private conversation in mediation can both resolve the dispute and change the

dynamics of the cycle of violent communication. Cobb (2003) has argued that private

conversation would have to be a cooperative discourse to create a thick narrative shared

by the disputants. In the current project, I analyze mediation discourse of private

conversation with mimicked antagonism to unpack the notion of whether a thicker

narrative provides a resolution. Mediation holds potential to create an avenue for

disputants to relinquish frustration and antagonism through an alternative narrated

conflict story.

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Mediation discourse is socially constructed by the parties involved in the dispute.

Cobb (2003) offered an extension of the Girardian perspective to the mediation context

by suggesting a *second-generation* practice of alternative dispute resolution that is

characteristically constructionist in approach. This is a useful perspective for

understanding conflict talk. To Cobb (2003) the social constructionist perspective allows

for a *moral* discourse that recognizes communion, witnessing, giving testimony, and

creating covenants. Rather than giving highest priority to objective neutrality, primacy is

17

instead placed on morality through the telling of moral stories. The following excerpt

highlights Cobb's (2003) experiences that shaped her perspective:

> [t]he conflict is itself just a vehicle for the creation of something sacred, something whole, something holy. This experience of mine often coincides with confessions on the part of the disputants and a quality of sharing that exceeds the technical boundaries of problem-solving processes; apologies are offered, personal stories exchanged, even pictures of children, grandchildren, and vacation homes appear. It is as though the process of conflict resolution cannot contain the often spontaneous and reciprocal expressions of relief and renewed hope that emerge not only as a result of the agreement but also in the course of its construction. (p. 215)

This vein of the social constructionist tradition contains both strengths and weaknesses

for explaining the resolution of conflict. Certainly, the space of mediation places the

mediator in a position to guide a private interaction that serves as an alternative to the

need for public address of vengeance to cease the reciprocity antagonism and violence.

Cobb (2003) argued the mediator – a third party – is a witness to victimization and

represents a larger community that is involved with transforming a violent relational

dynamic toward restoration of the social fabric through the use of narrative.

In victim stories the one that has been wronged is constructed as the person that is

morally right, and the other is constructed as morally inappropriate. As mentioned, Cobb

(2003) positions the mediator as a witness to the story. In other words mediators witness

victimization and, in a very small way could, constitute an interactive audience that is

brought into the story of what happened to the victim. Girard (1977) argued that this

process of witnessing victimization is essential for establishing (or restoring) community

as causality is assigned and moral consequences as reparations for the victim are

established. In other words, to build community is to recognize that the dispute is not

simply between two parties, but in fact that a third party is engaged in the story as well. The violation to one individual is a potential risk for the whole community. In essence, the mediator is a sort of representative for the community. This shift takes one step toward realizing that making accounts for actions in mediation discourse includes the experience of an additional member – albeit a witness outside the realm of the immediate location of action. The presence of a mediator affects the way the story is told, thus shaping the story itself. In essence, the disputants tell their story for another from a particular stance.

Cobb (2003) provided a new vocabulary for mediation practice that allowed for moral discussions. A social construction approach allows for stories to be told, which means victim stories can be told and witnessed. Narrative mediation, and more specifically constructing thicker stories, has been advocated as an answer for reaching resolution. Yet, I am not so sure that this is the only avenue available for disputants to get out of the pattern of mimicked antagonism. Other styles of mediation such as interventionist (Kressel & Pruitt, 1989) and transformative (Bush & Folger, 2005) boost promising results to discuss the substance of the dispute (i.e., wrong-doing) while also focusing on relational dimensions of understanding and recognition. In other words, it may be possible that Cobb's extension of Girard's ideas to mediation could be extended beyond the narrative practice. She advocates for a type of mediation that promotes storytelling and encourages mediators to engage with disputants to help them construct different conflict stories. Cobb (2003) provided a strong starting point for evaluating the

fit of the Girardian lens for understanding mediation discourse. My aim is to explore the extension of Girard's ideas to mediation discourse beyond the storytelling form.

COBB'S NARRATIVE TREATMENT OF GIRARD'S PERSPECTIVE.

In an interview highlighting her approach to narrative analysis at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Cobb (2010b) asserted that conflicts are not preexisting, but instead are based in social constructionism. Scarce resources or unmet needs, alone, do not attend to the story of how people talk about their problem or dispute. In essence, how they talk about the problem constitutes the problem, in addition to scarce resources and unmet needs. Therefore, conflict is not transformed just by meeting needs or increasing abundance. Conflict is understood through examining the parts of the story people tell, and how they share those parts. Cobb highlighted four parts to conflict stories: 1) context or setting 2) character set, 3) values and moral corollaries; and 4) plot. The moral corollaries of each disputant are the claims of "right" and "wrong" that can be inferred from their contributions in light of their guiding narrative. These moral claims then shape the meanings disputants attach to the characters and plot line.

The distinction of conflict narratives, according to Cobb, lies in a number of factors. One factor is that they have *flat* or *skinny* under-developed plots that externalize responsibility. Another factor is that there is no evidence of independence (e.g., disputants may say "I did this because you did this" rather than recognizing the complex circularity of their behaviors). Also, disputants create very polarized and *flat* descriptions of character traits (i.e., there are *good guys* and *bad guys*). The moral claims are *flat* - or *skinny* − such that there is one way to be *good* and one way to be *bad*. Finally, disputant

stories usually don't have temporal complexity, which means they rarely connect past, present, and future together in complex ways.

By looking at mediation discourse through a Girardian lens guided by Cobb's approach to narrative analysis, the mimicked antagonism characteristic of adversarial exchanges of accusations and counteraccusations (i.e., attack-counterattack) comes to light. Each disputant may make an account of what happened – and what is happening - that makes sense to them. Yet if disputants tend to be in an accusation and counteraccusation cycle, there is resistance when the other is not willing to accept the account proposed by the other. The following figure and explanation from Cobb (2010a) illustrates how meanings within the *flat* narrative plot line may not always matchup between the two disputants, which requires attention to deviations from the main plot line that *thicken* and contextualize the narrative.

Figure 1. Structure of Narratives (Cobb, 2010a)
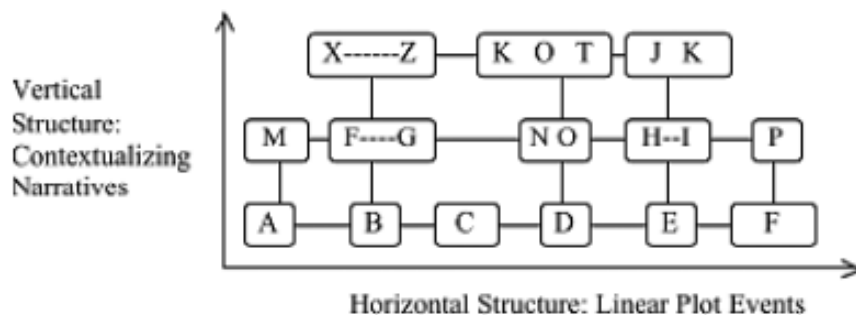
"Vertically, the structure of the narrative is equivalent to the contextualizing narratives that stabilize the meaning of events from the main plot line. Contextualizing narratives thicken and contextualize the episodes in the main plot line, providing a context in which to understand or make sense of that episode. They are subplots, developed during the course of interaction; they are layered onto a plot line. They stabilize the

main plot line as they provide context for understanding, "thickening" the story." (Cobb, 2010a, p. 302-303)

While a judicial system (in Girardian thought) is the designated party that can strike the gavel to place blame (and consequence) on the *right* victim; mediation, on the other hand, is the alternative party that has no gavel to strike, has been stripped of the power to independently make blame claims, and therefore must provide a proper channel to contain violence and ideally encourage the construction of a shared resolution that accounts for both disputants meanings of the conflict situation. This discussion facilitated by mediators during the mediation session becomes the proper channel for containing violence with attempts to alleviate the dangerous potential of mimicked antagonism. Therefore, to be a mediator is to recognize, even witness, the ever-present potential for communicative violence – and to desire to engage in a discourse that provides a *third way* that goes deeper than simply resolving the content of the dispute.

So, in all, the vocabulary of second-generation mediation holds heuristic value for gaining insight on mediation discourse as it is socially constructed by disputants. The next extension to this line of research is first to look at the actual discourse that has characteristics of mimicked antagonism to explain how disputants construct that pattern; and second to see if disputants are able to break the pattern. Furthermore, ceasing the mimicked antagonism may require a thicker narrative as proposed by Cobb. Yet, disputants may be able to construct a change in the negative communication pattern in other ways as well. Rather than join an argument about the best mediation practice, this dissertation investigates the actual discourse of cases.

CONFLICT TACTICS AND SHIFTS IN FOOTING

The Girardian lens draws attention to the pattern of antagonism in discourse when there is the presence of, or potential for, violence. During mediation, disputants are discussing the points of the deal, or problem-solving to attempt to resolve their dispute. So, there are not only relational dimensions that a Girardian lens would highlight, but also content dimensions. Therefore, I turn next to the applicable research on conflict tactics and shifts in footing as avenues for understanding the discourse constructed by the disputants I am analyzing. The research on conflict tactics helps focus in on the types of contributions parties can make in conflict talk. The research on footing helps focus in on the orientation the parties take in producing those contributions.

Sillars et al. (1982) advanced a promising line of inquiry focused on the specific communicative tactics used by participants in conflict conversations. These scholars explained three general categories of tactics: integrative, distributive, and avoidant for identifying moves that help disputants move toward resolution, away from it, or avoid it altogether. One way to capture what is going on in the conflict talk is to code the interaction for these tactics. In the current project, I sought to gain additional insight into how these tactics are constructed in mediation discourse by also acknowledging the way participants orient themselves to the tactics. Goffman (1979) coined the term footing to explain these ways that participants orient themselves to others and frame the production of a comment in face-to-face interaction.

Disputants' conflict tactics during mediation session are characterized by multipotentiality. A starting point to gain insight on meanings of tactics is to analyze the sequential interaction of mediation. By looking at specific verbal moves, we begin to

understand the complexity of mediation; namely how communication of conflict tactics is constructed in the discourse of two disputants. In line with the current project, van Dijk (1997) clarified that in discourse analysis scholars are interested in "*who* uses language, *how*, *why*, and *when*" (p. 3). I sought to understand how shifts in footing (Goffman, 1979), or the orientation toward conflict tactics (which I explain in an upcoming section on footing), function in face-to-face communication between disputants within the context of conflict mediation.

In line with conflict tactics research (Sillars, Coletti, Parry, & Rogers, 1982) as well as Goffman's (1981) production format, my primary focus was on verbal messages. Using the conflict tactics and footing frameworks provided insight into the numerous ways the disputants can construct mimicked antagonism or potentially break that cycle. Examining the discourse itself and how it functions in a sequential exchange reveals how disputants are using conflict tactics to build a discourse characterized by antagonism or not. Furthermore, looking at footing adds more nuanced explanations of how disputants construct antagonism in mediation discourse. Overall, the aspects of conflict tactics and footing in the discourse are explored to see how disputants perpetuate conflict or find ways to move past it. In the following sections, I first cover the relevant research of conflict tactics in interpersonal relationships. Then, I describe footing as an approach for understanding how individuals frame the production of their comments.

Conflict Tactics

Examining how disputants interact during conflict increases understanding of how messages are negotiated – my interest being particularly with messages that perpetuate

the mimicked antagonism in the discourse. Sillars (1980) argued when someone responds to a conflict she or he may take account of: (a) the degree to which the response directly discloses information; and (b) the degree to which the response reflects the attainment of individual or mutual goals. The interaction of these dimensions led to three distinct kinds of tactics that are used during conflict. First, avoidance tactics involve no direct discussion of the problem and low disclosure of information. Second, distributive tactics involve explicit acknowledgement of the problem and verbally *competitive or individualistic* behavior. Third, integrative tactics involve explicit acknowledgement of the problem and verbally *cooperative* behavior that recognizes the view of the partner and aims toward a mutually favorable resolution of the conflict. Sillars et al. (1982) provided support for the distinction of these three kinds of tactics as well as the validity of a verbal conflict tactic coding scheme. Avoidance tactics are recognized when people enact simple denial, extended denial, underresponsiveness, topic shifting, topic avoidance, abstractness, semantic focus, process focus, joking, ambivalence, and/or pessimism. Distributive tactics are recognized when people enact faulting, rejection, hostile questioning, hostile joking, presumptive attribution, avoiding responsibility, and/or prescription. Integrative tactics are recognized when people enact description, qualification, disclosure, soliciting disclosure, negative inquiry, empathy or support, emphasizing commonalities, accepting responsibility, and/or initiating problem-solving.

Interpersonal conflict involves communication about goals that are perceived as incompatible. Canary, Cunningham, and Cody (1988) found that goal types influenced the use of conflict tactics. For example, the goal of defending oneself led to less

integrative tactics than the goal of changing or redefining the relationship. In other words, people use different tactics depending on the goals they hope to achieve. More specifically the way the messages are produced is linked to goals (Keck & Samp, 2007). The uses of these tactics in turn are linked to relational outcomes; through a perceptual filter of competence (Canary, Cupach, & Serpe, 2001; Canary & Spitzberg, 1989). Overall, how people interact in conflict has effects on the nature of their relationship. In any given mediation, a disputant may have a variety of goals including defending themselves, redefining the relationship, or acquiring material goods just to mention a few. Therefore, disputants use different tactics, and produce messages, depending on the goals they hope to achieve. Both disputants and mediators are in a position to reframe those tactics competently for positive relational outcomes from the dispute. While previous researchers have made particular note of how goals shape the tactics chosen, I focus on the tactics that are present *in situ* without concern for the reason they were chosen by the participants. Their presence and function in the local discourse is in and of itself of interest for the current investigation.

Footing in face-to-face interaction

Footing is a concept Goffman (1979) introduced to refer to how participants align themselves to others and frame the production of a comment in face-to-face interaction. Footing is rooted in Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction as dramaturgical perspective. He suggested that all of life is a theater, and that people are all on a stage presenting various *faces* to their audience. Therefore, descriptions of interaction should not be limited to a dyadic, speaker-hearer perspective, but instead should acknowledge a variety

26

of ways people can participate in encounters. In other words, speakers can take different footings in relation to what they say. By examining shifts of footing in sequential interaction, we can better describe talk that contributes to mimicked antagonism in the context of the participation status of each person present. In other words, the mimicked antagonism or the break in that pattern may be evident not only in the content of the dispute, but in the way that each disputant positions him or herself as they contribute to the construction of the mediation discourse.

The current analysis used Goffman's (1981) framework of the production format to uncover meanings of particular tactics that cannot always be taken at their surface level between disputants. In Goffman's (1981) production format he distinguishes between three stances to an utterance participants can take: animator, author, and principal. The animator is simply the sounding box for words that have been composed by another person. The author is the agent who scripts the lines (i.e., chooses the words to express a thought). The principal is the person or party whose underlying thought, intent, or belief is being expressed. In accordance with Goffman (1959) I am not concerned with the psychology of individuals, but instead the social organization of orientation and involvement in an *encounter*. These encounters can be categorized as gatherings that are focused (i.e., jointly sustained focus of attention) or unfocused (i.e., various participants are present but have separate concerns). Conflict mediation is a focused gathering, also called face engagement, because all parties present, including the disputants and the mediators focus their attention on the interaction at hand.

People seem to attend to some behavior as explicit acts and other behavior as background or irrelevant. In a face engagement, "it is common that first one person does something and then another does something, but these successive doings are treated by the participants as being somehow linked together, often in such a way that B's doing is regarded as some sort of a response to A's previous doing" (Drew & Wootton, 1988, p. 31). The sequential interaction in mediation allows for analysis of what contributions the disputants are linking together, while others are disregarded or treated as irrelevant.

Mediators may benefit from learning what Goffman (1971) called *frame attunement* to understand what perspective disputants' comments are coming from. Goffman (1971) provided some guidance for learning this frame attunement when he stated, "to appreciate the significance of a move, look for the effects it has on anticipations as to how the interchange in which it occurs was to unfold" (p. 209). Goffman (1981) was particularly interested in the behaviors in interaction outside the frame of the dominant interaction sequence of attributing the origin and responsibility for action to the other party. Drake and Donohue (1996) demonstrated that communicative framing was used in mediation to highlight particular issues while ignoring others in conflict resolution attempts. They found that greater frequencies of agreements were reached when disputants converged rather than diverged on frames.

Goffman (1971) argued that there is a certain momentum to interaction. So, to change the direction of an interaction sequence in mediation, a disputant or mediator may use shifts in footing to present another frame through which to address the conflict. These shifts in footing are cues to behaviors that fall outside the frame of the dominant

interaction sequence. In other words, disputants may be *wrestling* with each other over which frame they would like the conflict to be viewed through. The significance of these moves in mediation lies not only in the actual words spoken, but also in the effect those words have on the other disputant in terms of converging on or diverging from a given frame (Drake & Donohue, 1996).

Implications for footing of conflict tactics

Examining footing and conflict tactics together in mediation discourse reveals how meanings emerge over several conversational turns between disputants. The shifts in footing may shed new light on the meanings disputants derive from each other's conflict tactics. Being aware of how disputants shift footing while engaging in conflict tactics aids in analyzing the dynamic of reciprocated antagonism. For example, one disputant may shift to from the full production format (animator, author, and principle) to an animator and author format to restate a turn the other disputant made earlier in the session. As animator and author, that disputant may show now the seemingly integrative tactic of the first disputant could in fact be framed as a threatening or blaming tactic when positioned differently. These shifts in footing provide a fuller view of the meanings disputants are working with from the context of their individual conflict narratives. Looking at shifts in footing and conflict tactics together provides a more contextualized understanding of how disputants construct antagonism in conflict talk. In addition, issues such as avoidant responses to the production of integrative tactics may offer insight into the ways disputants fail to cooperate on constructing *thick* narratives. For example, one disputant's

attempt to demonstrate interdependence through shared responsibility may be met with avoidance by the other party who wants to continue to place blame on the first.

Being attuned to the way disputants frame the production of their conflict tactics may also be cues into underlying disagreements. Bonito and Sanders (2002) discovered that by using shifts in footing, people can address disagreements without explicitly expressing a conflict. While this approach worked for the short-term problem solving task of that study, the relationships between disputants in mediation may have increased complexity. Therefore, it may be beneficial to address those disagreements that could otherwise have gone unsaid through strategic shifts in footing. This discernment may come from being more tuned into shifts in footing that accompany conflict tactics used by disputants. In some instances, disputants may not find it necessary or fruitful to clearly articulate interests, concerns, or issues. Shifts in footing may provide a way for disputants to stay engaged in the mediation discourse while also being disengaged from constructing a story that changes the dynamic of the conflict. Overall, knowing how shifts in footing with conflict tactics work in the discourse brings the many meanings of the disputants to light as they struggle to resolve their conflict, make antagonistic digs at the other, avoid responsibility, place blame, offer an apology, or any number of moves that are a part of building their mediation discourse.

CONTEXT THEORY

There is uniqueness in the contributions people make, and so discourses are unique. There is uniqueness and personal variety in text and talk, due to what van Dijk (2009) labels subjective *definitions of the situation*. People do not see even their shared

experiences in the same way. These definitions of the situation are the way participants understand and contribute to the social situation in such a way that accounts for "the fact that people form their own personal representations of an event, with their own perspective, interests, evaluation, emotions, and other elements based on their unique personal history or their current subjective experience" (p. 6). Looking at the talk between people in conflict could offer insight into the contexts that they use for understanding what is going on in the interaction. van Dijk (2009) argued that there is no direct influence between the objectively shared social situation and discourse, "simply because social properties of the situation are not directly involved in the cognitive processes of discourse production and understanding" (p. 4). Analyzing conflict talk within mediation from an objective standpoint is challenging because of these subjective definitions of the situation among participants. Additionally, constructing a thicker narrative (Cobb, 2003) would mean that disputants are converging their definitions of the situation in such a way that accounts for their individual meanings of the people involved, the sequence of events, and the allocation of responsibility for (e.g., shared acceptance of some role in creating) the conflict. Narrative analysis is one approach to bring these points to light. Analysis of the turn-by-turn contributions of the discourse of the participants that put their meanings *in conversation* with each other is another.

In mediation, individuals have subjective definitions of the situation that shape their contributions in the mediation talk – ones that are seemingly appropriate and fitting to the current social situation. In-depth discourse analysis provides an avenue for making sense of the pieces of discourse that provide insight into the context that each participant

31

has defined. That defined context in turn shapes subsequent pieces of discourse during the mediation event. In essence, the structure of discourse adapts within the communicative situation – not solely because of the social context, but based on the subjective definitions of the situations. We can interact with the other since we have some semblance of the other, shared common ground, and/or knowledge of the other from previous interaction (even if very limited). According to van Dijk (2009), participants make some guesses about each other's intentions – guesses that shape the discourse produced. The advantage of a retrospective analysis of the actual talk between disputants in this study is the ability to use a guiding framework to pick apart the pieces of discourse to understand the negotiation of text and context throughout a mediation event, without placing the scholar in the role of a mind-reader.

Text and context are intricately linked in mediation discourse. As van Dijk (2009) puts it, "[context] models subjectively represent or construct situations, both those we talk *about* as well as those *in which* we talk" (p. 6). Mediation talk holds heuristic value because it can be a new discourse for disputants. While practitioners and scholars may take the discourse of mediation for granted (albeit a discourse that may have some fundamental flaws), those individuals doing a mediation for a first time often find it difficult to predict which move the other disputant will make. In mediation I have seen sometimes it is this *openness to surprise* that constitutes the potential powerful shift out of an impasse for disputants. Yet this uncertainty also highlights the importance and impact of contributions during mediation. If both disputants are not open to playing with uncertainty and exploring potential shift out of an impasse, then one disputant's efforts

alone may be rendered ineffective. van Dijk (2009) argued that communicative

interaction is influenced by the context that participants focus on. If one disputant sees

the other as a *bad guy*, it may be difficult to attach meaning to contributions that do not

have a negative slant. Yet, we do not fully understand: a) how participants mutually tune

into a particular context; b) how that context shapes the talk and understanding within the

mediation session; and c) how understandings of the context in turn shape the next

actions (in sequence) of participants. To begin to address these questions conceptually,

we turn toward Halliday's (1989) articulation of text and context.

CONTEXT OF SITUATION

Halliday's (1989) work with language theory fits nicely with van Dijk's (2009)

notion of context as *definitions of the situation* as the functions of the discourse could not

only reveal the context from which people are communicating, but also serve to shape the

context for future turns. Halliday (1989) argued that we can come into an ongoing

interaction and start participating by first observing the *field* (noting what is going on),

second assigning a *tenor* (recognizing the personal relationships involved), and finally

assigning to the interaction a *mode* (seeing what is being achieved by means of

language). The focus on tenor of discourse in this framework is particularly fitting for the

aim of my project. Analyzing mediation through a Girardian lens requires looking at the

personal relationships involved in the dispute and the overall mood or tone between the

disputants. Halliday (1989) posits that the text is "not only a representation of reality; it is

also a piece of interaction between speaker and listener… in its interpersonal meaning

language is a way of acting" (p. 20). When it comes to mediation, one could argue that

the field, tenor, and mode are initially articulated by the mediators during the in-take for the case and the introduction to the mediation event. Indeed, one valuable line of research might be to examine and prescribe how to set the field, tenor, and mode most clearly for mediation talk. However, in practice it is throughout the interaction that these three features of the *context of situation* are negotiated by the disputants. Since detailed discussion of these three features is found elsewhere (see Halliday & Hasan, 1989) I will briefly define them and move on to a more pointed application to mediation discourse.

Field is the general sense of what the nature of talk is. According to Halliday and Hasan (1989), the field "is expressed through the experiential function in the semantics" (p. 25). Some relevant examples include: the discourse of conflict; discourse of restoration; discourse of problem-solving. Second, tenor is concerned with the personal relationships involved or who the participants are to each other. The tenor "is expressed through the interpersonal function in the semantics" (p. 25). Relevant examples include the power expressed through roles such as: disputants, plaintiff-defendant, petitioner-respondent, parent-child (literal or figurative), or victim-offender. Additionally, there could be a secondary tenor of actors addressing a larger imagined audience (e.g., in one of the mediation cases one disputant wanted the apology from the other disputant to happen in front of the camera). Mood is included in tenor. Third, mode is the particular part that the language is playing in the interactive process. The mode is "expressed through the textual function in the semantics" (p. 25). Some relevant examples include: spoken text or written text. In mediation in fact there is an interesting shift from one to the other in many cases as the oral discussion turns into written agreement. Other modes

may include strategic and spontaneous talk or talk to move toward solving a problem, reaching a settlement, or winning a case.

To take a more pointed shift toward functions and meanings in mediation, I will unpack the concepts of field, tenor, and mode in mediation discourse. I discuss each, in turn, from the perspective of a disputant trying to account for each of the three when coming into an ongoing interaction (summarized in Table 1).

Field of Discourse

Field refers to the features of the situation. Initial observations of the mediation cases I am analyzing would lead to descriptions such as: blank, sterile, and white walls; hard classroom chairs (e.g., this is not a therapy session with couches); mediators drawing attention to a whiteboard on the wall for *problem-solving*; sitting around table; and pens and paper "to write down what you want to say." One interpretation offers a field of discourse (i.e., features of the situation) that promotes problem- solving. Yet an alternative plausible interpretation could be a field of discourse (i.e., features of the situation) that promotes what I will term here a *polite location for hostile interaction* since I am considering a Girardian perspective. In this sense, pens might be seen as weapons of destructive messages, the white board as *public space* to showcase aggressive comments, the table as a border defense to keep the other from encroaching. Depending on the field assigned by each participant, it is possible that one disputant could initiate antagonism as participants attempt to tune in to a mutual context. If the pattern persists it may become increasingly difficult to change the mimicked antagonism to attempt to tune

in to a context constituted by a discourse of problem-solving and construction of a new narrative.

Tenor of Discourse

Tenor refers to the personal relationships involved. To assign an initial tenor, the observer might notice pronouns used to refer to each other in mediation; and the mood of the interaction evident in forms such as statements, questions, and/or demands. In the current cases such examples include: asking an open-ended question to gain further understanding; asking a leading question which in fact is controlling the actions of the other; listening to the other disputant sharing his or her experiences; cutting the other off from sharing their experiences; agreeing that the rules put forth by mediators is the appropriate way to *do conflict*; or arguing against the procedure for *doing conflict*. In these cases, assigning a tenor requires asking what relationship is represented. Is it two friends? Enemy-victor? Good guy- bad guy? Perpetrator-victim? Girard (1977) has identified one relationship in conflict stories as victim-offender. In addition, Cobb (2003) offers that good guy-bad guy is often used in thin or flat underdeveloped conflict stories. Identifying which relationship appears in the text through both labels and forms of talk is particularly relevant for understanding mediation discourse.

Mode of Discourse

Mode refers to the spoken language. An observer of the four people sitting down during mediation might ask whether this is a monologue or dialogue. Additionally the observer might note whether it is pragmatic and task oriented, or therapeutic and social-emotionally oriented. For example, one could see if it is monologue or dialogue by

36

noticing question-answer sequences. In other words, analyzing mode might focus on whether participants in mediation are delivering monologues of competing narratives or are in fact engaged in dialogue. Task-oriented talk could be identified by interaction with *objects*, which in the case of mediation, are the facts, ideas, and interests in the dispute. Additionally, objects such as the whiteboard for brainstorming ideas, paper on the table for taking notes, and forms for agreeing to mediate and negotiating a settlement constitute the mode of mediation discourse. The problem-solving approach to mediation seems to couch ideas and interests as objects, or pieces of a puzzle to put together efficiently. On the other hand, relationally oriented talk may focus less on ideas and interests as objects by paying more attention to support messages between participants. Finally, to understand mode the observer could acknowledge which talk is oral and which is written and the significance of the use of both.

Table 1. Field, Tenor, and Mode

Situation: Feature of the context	(realized by)	**Text:** Functional component of semantic system

Field of discourse
  (what is going on)
		Ideational (Logical & Experiential) meanings
		   (transitivity, naming, etc.)

Tenor of discourse
  (who are taking part)
		Interpersonal meanings
		   (mood, modality, person, etc.)

Mode of discourse
  (role assigned to language)
		Textual meanings
		   (theme, information, cohesive relations)

Connection of Text to Context

By incorporating Halliday's (1989) perspective in my analysis, my aim is to pull out additional interpersonal meanings through tenor along with the examination of tactics and footing. This perspective is a shift from examining strategic individuals making moves to achieve a goal - while that is important work in and of itself - toward a look at the discourse (since we cannot make assumptions about strategy or intent) that already exists. In particular I narrow in on instances which are particularly illustrative of mimicked antagonism. Thus, this work further extends Girardian thought on violence within an engaged face-to-face encounter, and is another step toward our understandings of mediation discourse.

Halliday (1989) provided a succinct explanation of the interplay between text and context that I extend to mediation talk. He stated, "I am not saying… that either the participant in the situation, or the linguist looking over his or her shoulder, can predict the

text in the sense of actually guessing in advance exactly what is going to be said or written… What I am saying is that we can and do (and must) make inferences from the situation to the text, about the kinds of meaning that are likely to be exchanged; and also inferences from the text to the situation" (p. 36). I put the participant contributions in conversation with each other throughout my analyses.

Context provides some guidance for interpreting the tactics and shifts in footing offered by each disputant. As an example, participants coming into the mediation session that feels somewhat like going to court may interpret meaning in the interaction through the lens of attack-counterattack. On the other hand, participants that see the mediation as an open space to air grievances may interpret meaning differently. As a starting point, conflict tactics research has been approached in terms of goal attainment (Sillars et al, 1982). While the goals of disputants in mediation may vary widely, one shared by all is to attempt to reach a resolution. So, instead of making assumptions about the disputants' goals (mostly because we do not have the luxury of knowing others' intentions), conflict tactics are looked at in terms of their function *in situ*. Reasonable renderings of the discourse can be achieved by noticing what context is *at work* for the disputant based on the negotiation of meaning (of particular statements made) in the interaction. Here van Dijk's (2009) idea of context as a subjective mental model is appropriate to explore whether disputants operate within the same context for establishing meaning.

Therefore, much of the work of mediation, particularly as mediators attempt to intervene, is constructing a shared context in which meanings of disputant statements - previous and present - can be negotiated. Many times participants do not *understand* what

the other is thinking while engaged in interaction (Sillars, Pike, Jones, & Murphy, 1984; Sillars, Weisberg, Burggraf, & Zietlow, 1990). Therefore, the ability to strategically predict the next move of a participant is troublesome. However, retrospective analysis of mediation discourse provides understanding of the development of mimicked antagonism and how that dynamic is constructed between disputants.

In essence, an analysis of conflict tactics, footing, and tenor provide multiple angles for articulating the unique features of mimicked antagonism in conflict talk. As Halliday (1989) puts it, "Every sentence in a text is multifunctional…the meanings are woven together in a very dense fabric in such a way that, to understand them, we do not look separately at its different parts; rather, we look at the whole thing simultaneously from a number of different angles, each perspective contributing towards the total interpretation. That is the essential nature of a functional approach" (p. 23). An in-depth analysis of mediation should attempt to accurately capture the features of the situation that the participants are taking account of.

The reader may ask, what does it mean for disputants and mediators to take *account*? Accounting for some things and not others in essence reveals the context through which disputants are observing, experiencing, and acting within the current discourse. Differences in what participants take account of in turn reveal and shape their context. My approach side-steps the question of whether it matters that *accurate understanding* has been achieved, and brings the difficulty of expressing meanings to the forefront while attempting to resolve conflicts.

It is possible that disputants may experience mediation as a completely *foreign context* where they have to do a quick survey to figure out the meanings of the situation and make predictions about what will be said. Halliday's (1989) perspective holds that particularly in those situations "we are making inferences from the situation to the text, and from the text to the situation" (p. 36). So, in their quick assessment of mediation talk, if disputants are *looking for* the other to be difficult, condescending, hostile, and aggressive, then their assessment of the context may fit that which keeps them in an undesirable repetitive pattern. Even if the other disputant argues that it is a rational, problem-solving discussion, they may have trouble interpreting the text through that context. On the other hand, if disputants are looking for the other to be helpful, respectful, kind, and patient, then that context shapes the inferences made about the subsequent text that is produced.

The disparity between these two hypothetical definitions of the situation sheds some light on how challenging it can be to analyze the negotiation of meaning in mediation discourse. My goal is to make an initial attempt at explaining how the messages are constructed which shape the sequence of discourse between disputants in conflict. The aspects of the discourse that I analyze are conflict tactics, footing, and tenor to understand how mimicked antagonism is constructed and how, if at all, the cycle is broken. The project is guided by the following overarching question:

RQ: How well does the Girardian perspective explain conflict mediation discourse?

METHODS

Mediation data is rich with meaning. Naturally occurring data of people discussing a conflict is ripe for investigation. The different perspectives of disputants come to light as they either agree with or challenge meaning in each other's contributions to the mediation session. Furthermore having a third party present creates an opportunity for unique shifts in footing for those contributions. For example, disputants may share part of their story with the mediator as a way to indirectly communicate with the other disputant in the room. I put disputant meanings in conversation with each other as I analyze the text through a Girardian lens. More pointedly, the aim of this project was to analyze 5 specific mediation cases to examine how the orientation (footing) disputants take toward their contributions constructs meaning of each other's conflict tactics; how disputants construct mimicked antagonism; and how interpersonal meanings are constructed in the tenor of discourse.

I want to first offer a quick glimpse of the opportunity discourse analysis provides for analyzing mediation data. Second, I will take a broad step back to justify an interpretive social scientific approach. Third, I will portray the uniqueness of mediation data that is characteristically storytelling. Fourth, I will illustrate my discourse analysis approach. Fifth, I will describe the data by providing a context for the five mediation cases analyzed. Finally, I will lay out my procedures for analyzing these data.

OPPORTUNITIES FROM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIATION TALK

The aim of this discourse analysis approach to research is to facilitate dialogue among participant perspectives rather than making a linear path to truth. In line with this

goal, the current study brought the layers of meaning in the disputant talk that may lean

toward a more destructive, even violent, tone to come to light. As Putnam (2005) put it,

discourse analysis requires a bit of *mucking around with the data*. That is to say, rather

than relying on pre-existing categories to analyze texts, a discourse analyst allows

patterns to emerge and grow out of the data. This investigative approach requires

narrowing in on particular texts, then backing away to understand that text within the

given context, and in turn using that new understanding to narrow back in through the

framework of context to discover new meanings in the text. Indeed, one could assume an

entire career of such *mucking around* to make great contributions toward understanding a

given phenomenon. Rather than seeking to create a clean verifiable model of

communication in mediation to generalize to the greater population, the current discourse

analysis shed light on the nuances of communication between disputants in conflict.

    Wood and Kroger (2000) clearly present the contrast between traditional social

science approaches and discourse analysis:

> Variability is a problem for the standard social science approaches,
> because in their search for general laws and consistency, any sign of
> variability is a nuisance, an error. Vast amounts of statistical computing
> time are therefore expended in the identification and suppression of
> variability…. In contrast to conventional approaches, discourse analysis
> thrives on variability; variability is something to be understood, including
> the way in which participants use variability to construct their talk for
> different purposes, for different audiences, and for different occasions.
> Thus, in the same way that discourse analysts see talk as their subject
> matter rather than as a resource to give them access to the putative inner
> person, they see variability as an essential feature of their subject matter
> rather than as a problem. The goal is to understand variability and to
> employ it for analytical purposes, not to eliminate it. (p. 10)

The goal of discourse analysis is to understand the complexity of communication by bringing the nuances of an interaction to the surface. Mediation data is so rich that an interpretive, narrative, discourse analytic approach serves well to offer the best insights into the research question posed: How well does the Girardian perspective explain conflict mediation discourse?

INTERPRETIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE

Traditional and interpretive social scientific approaches complement each other well for understanding communication phenomena. Traditional approaches isolate variability to offer generalized conclusions about communication that can be trusted with a reasonably high level of confidence. Interpretive approaches dig into the variability to offer deep insights into unique aspects of communication as experienced by unique people. Furthermore, the mediation discourse for the current study is occurring within a context where there is an active observer. The mediator does not passively observe dyadic interaction in a lab. Instead, this is a situation where active participants (i.e., co-mediators) are injected into the dyadic interaction (i.e., disputants) to make it a 4-part conversation. My experience with mediation sessions has drawn me to an interpretive approach due to the particular attention paid, primarily by the disputants, to the nuanced meanings of words and phrases during the session. The interaction between the disputants is so specialized to them and their understandings of their lives that focused attention must be paid to their perspectives - as expressed in their talk - within this given context. Of greatest importance is that the emergent meaning is *here and now* - unique to the disputants - with no regard for whether or not that experience is generalizable to a larger

population. Therefore, rather than trying to control any variability in the communication, an interpretive approach seeks to focus in on it and seeks to unpack what it means.

Interpretive communication research provides an avenue for highlighting opportunities to construct new social worlds. Gergen (2001) wrote of an *emancipation* through discourse that involves "the opening of new visions and alternative futures" (p. 63) as we recognize that we have many ways of talking based on the multiple communities we are a part of. It is in the relationship to the other that meaning is constructed. Furthermore, that meaning is often being constructed as each person presents a public identity in front of an audience (Goffman, 1959).

Gergen (2001) suggested that instead of looking at language as containing the world, or individuals being self-contained, our senses of the world emerge in relationship with others. In other words, our reality can be shared in interpretive communities rather than our individual minds. He does not like the ideology of the self-contained individual, arguing that if an individual keeps the most significant part of who they are hidden, then the other person cannot fully trust or be certain of who they are or what they want.

Within the context of conflict research, an interpretive approach to mediation data allows the researcher to discover meanings drawn from the emergent interaction. Cobb and Rifkin (1991) attempted to raise awareness of this constitutive function of language as it pertains to mediation when they examined neutrality as a discursive practice. More specifically they sought to inform the American Bar Foundation of post-structural approaches to social sciences by deconstructing neutrality through an analysis of mediation transcripts. In a similar vein, I approach the current study through an

interpretive approach to discover what meanings are shared or not between disputants as they construct their discourse.

An interpretive approach allows for the discussion of interpersonal meanings in the interaction. One foundational proposition in the communication discipline is that relationship is ever-present and cannot be removed from interactions, and so is ever-influencing and ever-emerging in the talk (Watzlavak, Beaven, & Jackson, 1967). In other words, relational meanings are continually feeding back into the discourse during mediation. With my aim to unpack discourse that constitutes mimicked antagonism in the text, an interpretive approach is justified. While the aim is not to make claims of underlying needs or desires in terms of the disputants, the goal is certainly to understand the discourse as it pertains to the Girardian perspective.

TELLING STORIES

In mediation practice disputants are invited to be storytellers. The telling of stories between each other is one of the characteristically unique features of mediation discourse. Therefore discovering or narrating a story often constitutes the work of mediation. Sometimes the narrative serves to place blame on one disputant, and/or to put a disputant in the position of the victim. Sometimes the storytelling constitutes relational growth or development during the mediation session. At any rate, in mediations disputants pursue someone to help, or at least be involved, with handling their stories. Cobb (2003) argued that one of the most significant roles of the mediator(s) in practice may be to help with storytelling.

Storytelling is complex. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective (i.e., life as a theater) suggests that disputants in mediation present various *faces* to their audience (i.e., other disputant and co-mediators) while telling their story. Goffman's perspective is not concerned with the psychology of individuals, but instead the social organization of orientation and involvement in the encounter. Indeed, conflict mediation is a focused gathering - called face engagement in Goffman's (1959) terms - since all parties focus their attention on the interaction at hand. The focused gathering is focused on the disputants' conflict story. During mediation, disputants are making sense of interaction within a sequence of discourse that often has an overarching individual, even competing, narrative that has been constructed and in turn shapes their turns. The challenge for the discourse analyst is to allow the individual meanings within those stories to remain unaltered. Analysts of mediation data should always be in a place to recognize their own limitations by having an *air of curiosity* about peoples' stories as they emerge, rather than having an a priori framework for how to analyze the mediation data (see Putnam 2005 for comparable discussion on negotiation data). I will return to the issue of guiding frameworks shortly; however let's first address the general assumptions of narrative approaches in research and practice that allows for an *air of curiosity*.

Narrative Inquiry

Fisher (1985) advanced a narrative paradigm for the communication discipline. From his view, people are storytellers who read and evaluate the texts of life and in turn are active agents (i.e., authors) in making messages. In their work on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote of being heavily influenced by John Dewey's

47

concepts of *experience* (all individuals are operating in relation to each other within a social context) and *continuity* (experiences grow out of other experiences in the past, present, and future) as they approached their work as educators. Therefore, the general guide for narrative inquiry is that we create continuity in our lives by connecting our past, present, and future experiences through a relational and contextual lens.

Narrative inquiry focuses on understanding experience as both lived and told stories. It encompasses a theoretical perspective as well as a useful research method. Additionally, assumptions inherent in narrative inquiry have been applied to the practice of conflict mediation.

Narrative Mediation as Practice

Narrative as mediation practice emerged as a departure from interest-based problem-solving approaches (Taylor, 2002; Winslade & Monk, 2000; 2008). Through a social construction lens, the focus of practice shifted away from identifying objective facts to move toward examining the use of language and subjective interpretations and construction of meanings. Cobb (1993, 1994) was influential in promoting a narrative approach to mediation. In essence, she suggested that a narrative approach could destabilize disputant conflict narratives allowing for possible transformation of their stories. The story is the social reality of the conflict, and therefore practitioners should focus on the *discourse* around the way the story is shared (Cobb, 1994).

Most recently, Winslade and Monk (2008) have articulated nine *hallmarks* of an approach to the practice of narrative mediation. These are: a) assume people live their lives through stories; b) avoid essentialist assumptions; c) engage in double listening; d)

build an externalizing conversation; e) view the problem story as a restraint; f) listen for discursive positioning; g) identify openings to an alternative story; h) re-author the relationship story; and i) document progress. Within this list, and most relevant to the current study, is a focus on *discursive positioning*. While mediation practice is evolving, the value in acknowledging the actual discourse is coming to light (Cobb, 2003; Cobb & Rifkin, 1991; Heisterkamp, 2006). An emphasis on the discourse is a transition in mediation practice from looking *through* communication to looking *at* the communication.

Narrative mediation represented a shift in mediation away from the structured, objective interest-based style characteristic of the Western roots of mediation. A narrative perspective focuses on the large overarching story. However, narratives are involved in mediation sessions that do not follow the narrative style. Finding stories in any mediation may be beneficial for moving toward resolution. My research question requires a view toward the overarching story, or stories, while also narrowing in on the details of the discourse. The cases I analyze were not conducted as narrative mediations. However, there are stories in the discourse. The current study is a micro-level analysis of mediation data that looks at mimicked antagonism. So, while I acknowledge that the excerpts of the mediation transcripts I am analyzing exist within a larger narrative, the conclusions I seek to draw focus in on the way the meanings in language are negotiated between the disputants and the potential for the current narrative being constructed as it pertains to antagonism as understood through a Girardian lens. While Cobb (1993, 1994) has advanced a *narrative turn* in mediation and subsequently has assimilated a Girardian

49

perspective with mediation practice, I seek to extend Girard's (1977) ideas through this

analysis that represents a *discursive turn* in mediation research.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Texts evoke multiple meanings. When we look *at* the communication to see

emergent meaning, rather than *through it* to make a guess about another's perceptions

and intentions, we gain a richer appreciation for the storytelling the individuals engage in

during face-to-face interaction. Rather than pointing to a static trait that an individual

possesses, the discourse is seen as an ongoing reflexive improvisation that creates and

recreates patterns that become the life of the relationship. In mediation discourse we see

the communication that constitutes the blending of stories told.

Scholars could look through communication to other forms of action in the

context of mediation (e.g., reaching a settlement). For example, one of my first research

interests in conflict mediation was to think about the metaphors that people use within the

mediation session as a guide to understanding their ways of *thinking*. For example certain

metaphors of economy may help me see that one disputant is more geared toward

consideration of available resources and would likely want to discuss material resources

of the conflict; while other metaphors of separation-togetherness may help me see that

another disputant is more geared toward relational aspects of the conflict. Considering

metaphors of economy, relationships, and others would be an approach of looking

through communication to try to put disputants into particular *types* so that mediators

could intervene in fitting ways to help disputants understand each other. However, I

quickly realized that in any given personal conflict I myself approach the discussion

through any number of perspectives and my language and metaphors likely change from one interaction to the next. Therefore, I found it more promising to look *at* the communication within the episode to understand the local emergence of language and meaning rather than trying to label disputants at a cognitive level.

Discourse analysis values looking *at* the communication (communication is the action) instead of *through* the communication (as an avenue to reach other conclusions). I view the communication in mediation in itself as the nature of the conflict between the disputants – albeit one that is constantly shifting and changing. By looking at the layered contexts of meaning we see that any given interaction and conflict is particular, it is unique, and the form of interaction in and of itself is the ongoing negotiation of meaning among the disputants. This of course does not discredit my previous example to study metaphor as a useful approach in mediation research; however, my philosophical approach to discourse as action for the current analysis keeps me focused on the actual text.

Discourse analysis provides a method for moving beyond just looking at the words in mediation, to examining the nuanced way the participants communicate during the session. In line with a social construction perspective, discourse analysis recognizes the constitutive nature of communication and can sensitize me to the context disputants are using to draw meaning from what is going on in the interaction (van Dijk, 2009). In other words, discourse analysis is the study of contextualized text. The analysis should allow for patterns in the mediation transcripts to emerge as meanings are constructed between disputants.

An inherent value in discourse analysis is being able to unpack the sequential and contextual aspects of mediation. More specifically, being able to describe how participants orient to their contribution provides insight into how meaning is constructed in patterns of mimicked antagonism when disputants do not get their way or cooperate on a combined narrative. Cobb (2003) has taken a critical approach by questioning the process and structure of the first-generation approach to mediation. Furthermore she has brought Girardian thought to the table. The current study offers an analysis of discourse from the perspective of this alternative paradigm. This work extends Cobb's (2003) narrative approach to a more discursive approach to mediation that does not have to be bound to a particular *type* of mediation. Rather than being concerned about putting the data into a priori categories (i.e., conflict tactics is used as a guiding framework rather than a coding system) or filling in pieces of a narrative, I am interested with what is being done with language. In other words, the function and *workings* of the story are more fitting than the actual pieces of the story.

DATA

The data for analysis were chosen from a corpus of conflict mediation sessions conducted at a southwestern university conflict resolution center (CRC). Most discourse scholars agree that it is best to have naturally occurring data (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Putnam, 2005; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The CRC provides a free and confidential service that people with real problems can use to resolve their disputes. Participants contact the CRC voluntarily when they have a conflict they are seeking to resolve, with no explicit incentive for participation. The disputants are university students and community

members ranging from 18 to 50 years of age. When participants first arrive at the CRC, they read through a form that details the purpose of mediation, time commitment of approximately two to three hours, and the video-recording. Second, they are assured of confidentiality - with the exception of disclosures of child or elder abuse - and reminded that they should only disclose information they are comfortable sharing and can quit the session at any point. After agreeing to participate the mediators begin the session. The disputants then engage in a two to three hour conflict mediation session discussing the dispute that they have brought to the table to address. All sessions are conducted by novice trained university student mediators. The CRC uses a co-mediation model, so all cases are conducted by two mediators. All participants only use first names during the video-recorded session. Sometimes mediators ask to meet with disputants individually in a caucus; however, since the focus of this analysis is on the construction of meanings between the disputants, caucuses were not included in this study.

After completing training and an ethics test, the CRC granted me permission to be a part of their center for viewing, transcribing, and analyzing these videos. Participants know that videos may be used within the CRC for research purposes. There were some videos in need of being transcribed and others within the corpus of data that were available in both video and transcript form.

When transcripts are created, pseudonyms are used to replace the participants' original first name. The recordings are permanently held by the director of the CRC kept locked in a secure room for viewing. The director labels videos by participant first name only. Some videos are additionally organized by a sequential number to match the video

to signed forms provided by participants giving permission to use the videos for research purposes. However, any forms used by the center are stored in a separate secured location which I did not have access to. Additionally, the transcripts are kept on a secure, password protected, server which is managed by the director.

In consultation with the director of the center, the 5 cases listed below were selected for analysis in the current study. These cases are particularly illuminative of the concepts under investigation (Patton, 2002). That is, the excerpts where chosen as moments where mimicked antagonism existed to highlight how that pattern was constructed between the disputants. In these cases, I had access to videos (labeled by participant first name only) and transcripts (labeled by pseudonyms created for participants). All caucus sessions were excluded from the analysis, leaving only the joint sessions of the mediation where both disputants were in the room together. A total of 368 pages of double-spaced transcripts were included in this analysis.

Cases

The following provides a brief description of each of the five cases chosen for analysis.

M13 – Amy & Nick (romantic relationship breakup)

Amy and Nick are both graduate students in the same program. They had previously been in a romantic relationship together and recently broke up. Due to the presence of workplace tension within the department, they were encouraged by a faculty member to consider trying mediation. Amy mentions wanting to be assured of civil interactions at work and to discontinue contact outside of work. Nick mentions wanting

to apologize for inappropriate behavior and to be assured Amy will remove threats she has hanging over his head.

M31 - Tom & Rumi (marriage and co-parenting challenges)

Tom and Rumi are married with a 3 year-old son. They are currently involved in litigation processes involving the custody of their son. Recently, Rumi filed for divorce and moved back home to India. In the process, custody of the son was given to the grandparents - Tom's parents - who live nearby. Tom asked Rumi to move back from India and she withdrew the file for divorce and came back. They came to mediation to discuss options about continuing or discontinuing their marriage, living arrangements, and issues concerning custody of their son.

M1 - Bob & April (advertisement for proofreading)

Bob first met April when he responded to her print advertisement posted on campus seeking someone to proofread her writing. April is an international doctoral student working to complete her dissertation. Bob is a non-traditional student working on an advanced degree in computer science. April was not satisfied with the quality of work that Bob did with proofreading, and Bob was not fully compensated with payment for the number of hours of work he did. Bob believes April had an error in her advertisement which led to the current conflict.

M14 - Tamra & George (long-distance romantic relationship)

Tamra is an undergraduate film student. George is an undergraduate engineering student attending a college a couple hours away. Tamra and George are in a romantic relationship and spend time together on the weekends. They have been fighting more

often. Tamra says she doesn't want to have to argue about everything all the time because she just wants to enjoy the time they have together. George says he wants them to be able to bring up whatever might be bothering either of them, but that those conversations should be brief. Since the two of them have been arguing more often for longer periods of time, they came to mediation to discuss options to improve their relationship.

M23 - *Julie & Marci (difficult roommates)*

Julie and Marci are undergraduate students living in the same house with two other roommates. All of the roommates in the house had previously done a mediation session to agree on house rules. While Marci and Julie acknowledge that the house rules from the previous mediation session worked and are being followed, the two of them do not seem to be getting along with each other and so came back for mediation. Marci wanted to come to mediation to figure out what the living arrangements would be in the house for the upcoming academic year. Julie has decided that she is going to stay in the house for the upcoming year. Marci wants to stay in the house as well.

PROCEDURES

After viewing the chosen 5 cases several times in their entirety while reading along with the transcripts, I identified a few particularly illustrative excerpts of the complex negotiations of meaning that characterize the dynamics under investigation. Excerpts were chosen based on relevance for answering the research question posed. The subset of texts represents sufficient data to justify the claims that emerge in the analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000), and are inherently *puzzles* that arise while observing (Putnam, 2005) the mediation sessions. In essence, these are points in the mediation discourse that

were particularly interesting in terms of the Girardian paradigm. The chosen segments

were then analyzed in terms of the variety of ways that disputants used shifts in footing in

terms of conflict tactics. Finally, the excerpts show the nuances of interpersonal meanings

in the discourse through Halliday's (1989) notion of tenor.

Guiding Frameworks

Insights from naturally occurring data such as mediation sessions could take an

entire career to exhaust. Therefore, once the illustrative exemplars were inductively

chosen, the current study used a few key frameworks to guide the micro-level analysis of

the text: a) verbal conflict tactics (Sillars et al, 1982); b) production format (Goffman,

1981); and c) functions of language (Halliday, 1989). These will each be discussed in

turn below to provide further explanation. Overall, through this analysis, we have a

deeper understanding of how the mimetic antagonism in talk is constructed in mediation

discourse. The analysis thus extends our understanding of Girard's perspective as it

pertains to mediation discourse.

Girardian Paradigm

In general, discourse analysis seeks to describe the social dimension of discourse,

or the context of the text, that both influence the construction of the discourse and are

also affected by the discourse. I approached the analysis with the Girardian bias that the

social dimension is characteristically antagonistic in a pattern that could represent a

constant drive toward potential violence or a need for scapegoating to a substitute victim.

By looking at talk as action, it is possible that what could appear as, for example

information-sharing, could actually be seen as an accusation by the other disputant.

Looking at the other disputant talking about, or negotiating, the meaning of what was previously said by the first disputant gave insight into the multiple layers of meaning in the text. If the Girardian perspective has merit, the data should show a pattern between one disputant making an accusation, or blaming the accused, and then the accused taking on the role of the accuser or blamer of the other, and vice versa. The data would also highlight a mimicking, on the part of the disputants, of negative ways of doing conflict. Finally, the data could show scapegoating as an alternative *victim* is chosen to be scapegoated so that the disputants can move past their conflict.

Conflict Tactics and the Production Format

Sillars, Coletti, Parry, and Rogers (1982) have established a strong foundation for relational conflict research, albeit in dyadic interactions. Of particular relevance here is their Verbal Conflict Tactics (VCT) coding scheme. This scheme lists three overall conflict tactics: (a) avoidance acts, (b) distributive acts, and (c) integrative acts. Each tactic has several ways that they can be expressed for a total of 27 specific tactics that could be identified (see Table 2). I use their VCT scheme to guide the analysis of particularly interesting sequences of talk during conflict mediation sessions. In the chosen exemplars I used the scheme as a reference point for recognizing specific conflict messages that could be interpreted as avoidant, distributive, and integrative tactics. The goal of this study is not to build upon the comprehensive VCT coding system, but instead to use it as a guide for analysis. Using VCT to unpack mediation discourse through a Girardian paradigm may, for example, show that an integrative tactic viewed from a different stance can in fact be perceived as a distributive tactic of accusation.

What adds further value to the analysis is the production format that is used by disputants to orient toward their contributions. Further insight into the complexity of mediation discourse was gained through Goffman's (1979) idea of footing. Footing refers to how participants align themselves to others and frame the production of their comments in face-to-face interaction. Goffman's (1981) production format distinguishes between three stances to an utterance participants can take: (a) animator - the sounding box for words that have been composed by another person; (b) author - the agent who scripts the lines (i.e., chooses the words to express a thought); and (c) principal - the person or party whose underlying thought, intent, or belief is being expressed. Once conflict tactics were identified in the interaction I examined those utterances and analyzed the distinction between the animator, the author, and the principal of the message. In line with Goffman (1971), particular attention was paid to the sequential interaction between disputants where shifts in footing were present. For example, shifts in footing could be recognized through the selective use of pronouns (DeFina, 1995). Overall, I adopted a position of frame attunement with the conflict tactics to identify how the first turn of a disputant was challenged by a subsequent turn of the other disputant which suggested meaning of the tactic was being challenged.

Table 2. Conflict Tactics and Production Format

	Disputant 1's Footing			Disputant 2's Footing		
	Animator	Author	Principal	Animator	Author	Principal
Avoidance						
1. Simple Denial						
2. Extended Denial						
3. Underresponsiveness						
4. Topic Shifting						
5. Topic Avoidance						
6. Abstractness						
7. Semantic Focus						
8. Process Focus						
9. Joking						
10. Ambivalence						
11. Pessimism						
Distributive						
12. Faulting						
13. Rejection						
14. Hostile Questioning						
15. Hostile Joking						
16. Presumptive Attribution						
17. Avoiding Responsibility						
18. Prescription						
Integrative						
19. Description						
20. Qualification						
21. Disclosure						
22. Soliciting Disclosure						
23. Negative Inquiry						
24. Empathy or Support						
25. Emphasizing Commonalities						
26. Accepting Responsibility						
27. Initiating Problem-Solving						

Halliday's tenor of discourse

While I can identify specific conflict tactics and the orientation from which disputants produce those tactics, the disputants themselves are likely more in tune with the function of their words. In fact, each disputant may have her or his own *purposes* when using language. A retrospective analysis of real conflict interaction provided an opportunity for understanding the sequential discourse of the participants through the view of Halliday's functions of language. This framework provided an understanding of the interpersonal meanings that were being managed between the participants. Table 1 provides an overall delineation of the features of the context and text for mediation discourse for just one of the cases (C5 – Rumi and Tom). While this is not an exhaustive list, it does provide a strong foundation for particularly salient features of mediation discourse. Of particular relevance to the current study was *tenor* of discourse to identify where interpersonal meanings of antagonism emerged within the discourse.

Table 3. Field, Tenor, and Mode of Discourse in Case 2

Situation: Feature of the context	realized by	**Text:** Functional component of semantic system

Field of discourse
 (what is going on)
   4 people sitting around table
   Mediators observing (intervening)
   Paper and pencils
   Discussion of issues
   Located after a (and possibly
     before another) court session
   Reporting to fill in missing
     information
   Reference to past events
   Negotiation of a deal
   Fight
   (video camera recording)
		Ideational (Logical & Experiential) meanings
		   Sequential form – simultaneous interaction
		   Asynchronous form
		   Reference to use of tools
		   Particular terms used to describe discussion
		   Past events mentioned – projections to future events
		
		 Assumed information between disputants disclosed to
		   mediators (asides given to mediator in discussion)
		 Bringing up the past or history
		 Evaluating offers
		 Attack-counterattack
		 (unknown)

Tenor of discourse
 (who are taking part)
   Interaction between husband/wife
     and 2 mediators
   Also filling roles as parents to a
     mutual child
   Both serve as reporters for the
     mediators (giving their
     attributions for the other's
     behavior)
   Mood: Attacking
   Struggle over hierarchy
 	
   Struggle over control of the
   Conversation
		Interpersonal meanings
		
		   Reference to person (wife/husband)
		
		   Reference to person (mother/father)
		
		   Authority role for explaining other's comment or
		     behavior – 'educating' the mediators
		
		 Threats ('you do' 'you said' 'I will, only if'
		 Cooperation vs. winning ('this is not charity'
		 'mother wins' 'I'll cooperate if')
		 Interruptions, ask/clarification, requests to interject

Mode of discourse
 (role assigned to language)
   Dialogue
   Some discussion broken up by
     explanations to mediators
   Spoken – broken ideas/sentences
   Accusations
   Task-focused – with tangents
 	
   Both trying to further their agenda
		Textual meanings
		
		   Questions and answers, interruptions,
		   Pronoun shift from 'you' to 'he/she'
		
		   Complex grammar, simple language choices
		   Focus on losing, clarifying harm
		   Interjections from mediators; disputants
		   reframing discussion back to issues – yet
		   abandoning task to go to attack-counterattack.
		   I want, I don't agree, I'm just saying…

SUMMARY

Staying true to the goals of discourse analysis, my findings have emerged through examining the sequential moves of participants to reveal meanings that were constructed in their talk. The current analysis focused in on the actual turn-by-turn construction of the mimetic feature of antagonism emerging in discourse of mediation *in situ*. Cobb (2003) has already offered a shift toward narrative theory in conflict mediation research to build upon Girardian thought. My analysis took a micro-level view at how specific mediation discourse informs the Girardian perspective. The meanings drawn from analysis of conflict tactics, the production format, and the tenor of discourse both supported and challenged the Girardian lens.

The discussion of these communicative moves makes the assumption of violent attributes of communication more explicit to allow us as scholars to view the problem of conflict and the processes of conflict mediation. Since the Girardian lens highlights the likelihood that mimicked antagonism culminates in violence, I separate the five cases into two chapters. The first presents the findings of two cases with violence likely present. The second presents the findings of three cases with no violence apparent. Through these findings I discuss how well the Girardian lens explains mediation discourse and pave the way for new methods of research and practice. While the end-product is not undisputable answers, it is a strong and compelling contribution to the research on communication in conflict – particularly when a third party is present - to recognize how the provision of unique communicative resources can perpetuate the mimetic features of underlying violence.

MEDIATION DISCOURSE OF CASES WITH VIOLENCE LIKELY PRESENT

Doing discourse analysis and actually writing up the findings are two very different processes. As mentioned previously, analysis involves a bit of *mucking around* with the data. Yet, for the reader, findings must be presented in a clear and coherent way. The current discourse analysis is in line with the interpretive tradition. Wood and Kroger (2000) recognized, "[t]here is no strict rule about how to organize and frame the analysis section, in part because of the multiple ways in which we can see discourse and the terms used to describe it" (p. 182). The way I have organized the analysis is an attempt to allow the reader to follow the guiding frameworks chosen for the project while also maintaining the complexity of the discourse that the disputants construct with each other. My challenge is to share the complexity and depth of insights that emerged through analysis in a way that is organized and readable. Therefore, I seek to provide full disclosure and transparency about the assumptions inherent in the way I have written up the findings. To that end, let me identify the decisions I made.

There are three fundamental decisions I made about writing up my analysis. First, I lay each of the 5 cases out in turn. Rather than working through the same framework for analysis across all five cases, I work through each case and address all frameworks when examining the excerpts from those cases in turn. Second, I move from initially taking a general narrative perspective to narrowing in on the actual text. I organized each case write-up by: 1) setting the context for the mediation through a Girardian perspective by using Cobb's guidelines for narrative analysis of mediation; 2) focusing in on intriguing moments of mimicked antagonism and unpacking those excerpts in terms of conflict

tactics, production format, and tenor; and 3) summarizing meanings available for

disputants to pull out from the mediation discourse. Third, I show the excerpts in

sequence. My aim is to maintain the integrity of the mediation discourse in context. What

is communicated first impacts what comes after. As the reader, you do not have a sense

of the mediation in its entirety. Yet, I make every effort to help connect the sequence of

discourse so that the overall narrative gains some coherence. Overall, the findings unpack

the fit of Girard's perspective for conflict mediation discourse. The number of excerpts

per case varies depending on how clearly the pieces of the Girardian narrative fit

together, and on how clearly and detailed I could articulate the nuanced understanding of

the discourse.

This chapter focuses on two mediation cases in which violence is likely present in

the relationship or in the disputant's background. In one case, the mediator gleaned that

the disputants had a history of at least near-violence based on their references to an

"abusive history" and comments such as "I know that he'd hit me." In the other case, one

disputant had threatened a protective order against the other due to a previous incident

that was at least invasive if not violent. The disputants made comments referring to a

situation of pounding on the door to gain access to her house. In these two cases, the

mediation discourse is examined in terms of the ways it represents a thin rather than thick

structure of the narrative. With this approach, Cobb's (2010) argument for the need for a

thick narrative that transcends mimicked antagonism is explored. For each case, the

overall plot line through Girard's lens is presented, followed by specific excerpts of

moments where disputants construct a pattern of antagonism within the flow of the

mediation discourse, followed by discussion of interpersonal meanings, or the tenor of the discourse. The potential for violence and the construction of communicative weapons and wounds in the text are analyzed to examine the fit of a Girardian perspective for mediation discourse.

Figure 2. Steps of Analysis

Girardian narrative

Construction of thin conflict narrative

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor of discourse
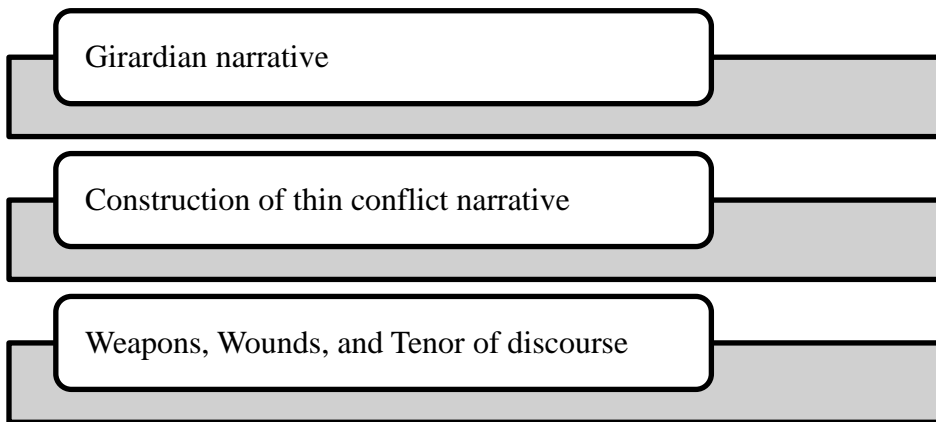
Cobb (2010a) suggests that it is thin narratives that actually create problems in mediation and that thicker narratives are the opportunity for transcending beyond the Girardian pattern of mimicked antagonism. However, the current analysis points toward *communicative* violence being a big piece of the puzzle. The interpersonal relationships between disputants put them in positions to potentially create weapons to inflict wounds upon each other communicatively. Additionally, the discourse could reveal existing disputant wounds. However, despite what Cobb (2010) argues, disputants may be able to maintain thin narratives yet get through the mediation process just fine. The issue is not with creating a thicker narrative always, but it is about awareness of the way disputants are wielding their weapons against each other.

Girardian Narrative of Amy and Nick (M 13 – Romantic Relationship Breakup)

Amy and Nick have both ended up within a hostile environment at work. They are graduate students within the same department, and are trying to live as colleagues after ending a troublesome romantic relationship. Amy has identified their professional environment as "practically unworkable." She accuses Nick of being a "stalker," a *flat* character reference that polarizes him as the *bad guy*. Nick shares his concern that Amy has the ability to drop the axe on him and end his academic and professional career with the threat of a restraining order. Nick makes a counteraccusation that Amy had a problem of cutting herself. He cites his concern for her, and the threat she was to herself, as part of the contextualized explanation for his unexpected visits to Amy. Both disputants lack interdependence within their narratives as they each try to identify the other as the *bad guy* without much view toward how each is influencing the other's communication, other than mentioning that they brought out the worst in each other. They have hit a tension point in the plot line of the narrative as they have changed roles initially from colleagues to romantic partners, and now from romantic partners to colleagues after ending their romantic ties in a tumultuous breakup.

The catalyst for entering mediation was their graduate advisor's suggestion to resolve their issue before the environment in the department became too toxic. During the mediation, both Nick and Amy have a limited view of temporal complexity as they are unable to look at the past, present, and future simultaneously to re-narrate their story. They are unable to fully agree upon a sequential explanation of each other's behavior, which prevents full placement of blame. Neither fully accepts being the *bad guy*. Both

avoid cooperation to negotiate foundational character changes. Instead, they end up settling on "being civil" with each other at work. In terms of moral claims, Amy accuses Nick of attempting to take the moral high ground in this mediation. Simultaneously she has made a moral claim that Nick needs help for his problem and questions whether he is seeing a counselor frequently.

Construction of a thin conflict narrative

The analysis of specific excerpts from this case follows to demonstrate how the mimicked antagonism is perpetuated as a construction of Amy and Nick. These excerpts represent the *how* of the mediation discourse through the analysis of conflict tactics and production format. The key moments in the narratives of these disputants that are relevant to Cobb's (2010) treatment of the Girardian perspective are: a) failed attempt to get out of the *bad guy* role; b) disagreement with *bad guy* label through reciprocated claim of threat; c) accusation met with counter-accusation; d) reciprocated attempt to make the other the *bad guy*; e) lack of temporal complexity minimizing shared responsibility; f) negative affect perpetuating beyond a change in behavior; and g) expressed staying power of negative affect. Ultimately, this case ends in the disputants agreement to "be civil" with each other. The disputants do not cooperate to construct a new thicker shared story as suggested by Cobb (2010). Yet, while the discourse is characterized by mimicked antagonism, the disputants do reach a tentative agreement without scapegoating a substitute victim.

Failed attempt to get out of the bad guy role

Nick's discourse contextualizes his behavior. While he acknowledges that he acted very poorly, he argues he is not the *bad guy* that Amy makes him out to be. Amy solidifies her view of him as the *bad guy*. Nick begins by sharing with the mediators that their conflict began last year, when his relationship with Amy ended. He makes a point to mention that he "broke it off" and that several weeks after the break-up Amy did things that made him "furious," and that this led him to behave "very poorly." Nick subsequently left hostile messages on Amy's answering machine, and showed up to the place where Amy was housesitting and also to her own apartment at different occasions. Amy seemed to have made it clear that she did not want to see Nick at all, and contends that she had seriously considered filing a restraining order against him.

Case 1 - Excerpt 1

139 N: ….Amy had done some things

140   which really made me furious, and um, I, um behaved very poorly. I was furious for

141   several days running, and I behaved inexcusably, and I attempted to contact Amy, I

142   tried to speak with her a couple of times when she plainly didn't want to be spoken

143   with. I left some...hostile...messages on her answering machine, Amy, I, I'm….I'm

144   very sorry, I, I don't, there was, I, there was no excuse at all for the way I behaved, I

145   had some reasons to be angry, I think very angry, but there's no reason at all for what I

146   did, I mean, I never want to have to act like that again, to anybody.

As an explanation for how he reacted to things that Amy did that made him "furious," Nick used an integrative tactic of self-disclosure as animator, author, and principal, when he stated he was "furious" (Lines 140-141) and integrative tactic of description about leaving hostile messages (Lines 141-143). In this integrative vein of

accepting some responsibility he then shifts footing from talking to the mediators toward

making a direct apology to Amy (Lines 143-144). He adds an additional integrative

tactic of qualification when he mentions that he did have reasons for being very angry

(Line 145) but that there was no reason for acting like he did. Amy offers her picture of

the situation:

Case 1 - Excerpt 2

157 A: Nick turned up at my door one day, was in a pretty distraught state and I told him that

158   he really had to go away, and I was serious about that, and that was the last time <u>we</u>

159   talked, think. <u>I mean, to my mind, the phone calls were really only a part of it, I mean</u>

160   <u>they're very unpleasant, I mean, it's not nice to get home and hear 'fuck you bitch' on</u>

161   <u>your answering machine.</u> It's, it was also, <u>I mean, you might remember I was house</u>

162   <u>sitting for Lisa, and you turned up, and banged on the door and wouldn't go away, and</u>

163   <u>you'd come and bang on the door of my apartment, and the time when I was in the</u>

164   <u>office and you were trying to get in, and you wouldn't leave, you were banging on the</u>

165   <u>glass trying to get in and saying you wanted to talk to me. I mean, for me, those were</u>

166   <u>more particularly threatening,</u>

When we look at Amy's turn, it appears that Nick's acceptance of responsibility

and apology does not satisfy her. Nick's turn could have been taken as an integrative

tactic of a small step toward resolving the dispute. However, Amy's turn suggests it is

possible that Nick has attempted to avoid addressing the larger issues at hand. Amy uses

an integrative tactic of disclosure as animator, author, and principal when she shares the

phone calls were only part of the problem (Lines 159-160). She adds further description

when she is animator-only directly quoting Nick, when she stated, "I mean, it's not nice

to get home and hear 'fuck you bitch' on your answering machine" (160-161). Amy

brings a fuller, more detailed, part of the story forward by directly quoting the

"hostile…messages on her answering machine" that Nick has referenced (Line 143).

Similar to Nick, Amy then shifts her footing from talking to the mediators toward making

a direct comment to Nick. She lists off all the situations (i.e., "You might remember…"

Line 161) where Nick showed up uninvited and either banged on the door or tried to

invade Amy's space. She uses an integrative tactic of disclosure to identify those as the

particularly threatening acts (Lines 165-166). She has broadened the scope of Nick's

behavior before willingly accepting his attempt at partial responsibility and apology. She

bolsters her claim that Nick is "scary" and that his behavior may merit a restraining order.

Case 1 - Excerpt 3

170	But I wanted nothing to do with you <u>because you</u>
171	<u>were scary, quite frankly.</u> <u>I mean I was very serious about filing for a restraining order.</u>

Amy does not accommodate to Nick's attempted apology that could get him out

of the bad guy role.

Nick's Meanings. Nick remains author, animator, and principal for his comments

to try to take some responsibility for his behavior, and to apologize to Amy. From his

perspective, while he did have some reasons to be very angry, it did not excuse his

behavior. He does direct the apology to Amy rather than to the mediators, since that is

the point where he shifted from speaking to them, to talking directly to her. After the

apology, he then shifted back to talking to the mediators. His discourse balances between

describing the situation to the mediators and then directing acceptance of some blame and

an attempted apology to Amy. This attempt likely suggests that from Nick's narrative, no

one other than Amy is fitting for receiving his apology.

Amy's Meanings. Amy, however does not think that this is as integrative a move as it may appear at first sight. While it is possible that she could have accepted that apology from Nick, she does not. Instead, she minimizes the focus he puts on the phone calls and says that those were only part of the problem. For Amy, there are many more situations that felt very "threatening" to her. While she agrees it is not nice to hear the verbal attack on the answering machine, Nick unexpectedly showing up banging on doors and on the glass trying to talk with her had stronger meanings. As she states, intervention by the judicial system with a restraining order may be warranted from his behavior.

Disagreement with bad guy label through reciprocated claim of threat

The label that Amy uses to describe the strong meanings she puts on Nick unexpectedly showing up is "stalker." Amy and Nick struggle over their individual meanings of his behavior. Through the lens of the conflict narrative, Nick being given the label of "stalker" places his character in the *bad guy* category. In turn, the *plot line* now has a potentially damaging bump in the road of Nick going through the graduate program and his eventual professional success. Amy's threat of a restraining order means something because there are future consequences to Nick. In essence, Amy shares that she is attempting to keep Nick's violent tendencies contained so that they are not expressed unexpectedly through improper channels.

Nick demonstrates that he feels threatened by the possibility of a restraining order. Amy is clear that she would only file the restraining order if he stalked her again. While his behavior does not seem to merit the label stalker to Nick, he does attempt to apologize for being "out of control for a few days." In Nick's narrative Amy is actually

more of a threat to him at this point because his academic, and future professional, career seems to be on the line. Amy concedes that this is a "threat" to him, and that she believes her decision to make his behavior public to her mentor and other academics in the department is the only thing that is keeping his stalking behavior contained.

Case 1 - Excerpt 4

298 N: I'd like clarification, <u>I'd like a formal indication that something bad isn't going to</u>

299   <u>happen to me if I say something to you</u>. And you're right, I don't have an enormous

300   amount to say to you, but   <u>I feel threatened if any communication at all occurs.</u>

301

302 A: I mean, <u>I'm not going to throw a restraining order on you unless you stalk me.</u> If you

303   start doing that again   I mean, I'm not…

304

305 N: See um, uh,   did you, you don't, <u>you don't want me to respond directly to that do</u>

306   <u>you?</u> I mean I probably shouldn't.

Nick begins his turn as animator, author, and principal for an integrative tactic of initiating problem-solving (Lines 298-299), followed by another integrative tactic of disclosure that he feels threatened (Line 300). Amy's response is a tactic that walks the line of an integrative tactic of qualification and a distributive tactic of prescription, when she says, "I'm not going to throw a restraining order on you unless you stalk me" (Line 302). She continues with another conditional if-then statement, but is cut off by Nick who uses indirect language to ask if she wants him to respond directly to her (Lines 305-306). Nick and Amy do not share the same meanings for the word "stalk." Therefore, Nick's uneasiness about the potential for Amy to file a restraining order is not alleviated when she gives a conditional statement about stalking. Their next few turns seem to

represent a covert negation between the two of them about what should be discussed during the mediation. Interestingly, this in fact is one of the few times early in the mediation where the two are cooperating. It is not cooperation about the conflict issue, but instead cooperation about what to discuss in the mediation. At any rate, the discussion is quickly brought back to focus on the issue of Nick's behavior when Amy asks:

Case 1 - Excerpt 5

316 A: Do you think that you weren't stalking me?

317

318 N: Uh, I think, uhh,   I think I was   I don't know, I mean to me, the word connotes a

319   longer, at least a long term or middle term pattern of behavior. I was out of control for

320   a few days. I can't, all I can do is apologize for that, and uh, you know, and try to do

321   what I can to see that nothing like that will ever happen again, that's all I can do about

322   that. I don't, it seems,   do you really think that's going to happen again Amy? I

323   mean, I don't trust you very much, and I don't like you very much. I do not pose much

324   of a threat to you. I don't think I pose any of a threat to you at this point. I feel, I feel

325   threatened, ironically because of the situation we are in now. And I'm not kidding

326   about that.

Amy solicits disclosure from Nick (Line 316), and he jumps on board with the discussion of "the word." We could argue that the disputants are using an avoidant tactic of semantic focus. However, when Nick wrestles with his meaning of the word "stalker" (Lines 318-319), we see it is an integrative tactic of description that provides information to Amy about his guiding narrative that is shaping their previous experience. So, while it may appear at first that there was an avoidant tactic of semantic focus on the word "stalker" we see in fact this discussion of the appropriate label for the previous incident

matters in terms of the current situation the two disputants are in, and the potential threat each is feeling now. Negotiating the meaning of the past behavior seems important for shaping the agreement (if any) that they might reach for appropriate future behavior. The opportunity for cooperating on a shared story (as proposed by Cobb, 2010) of the past incidents never materializes in the discourse.

Nick makes a qualified apology when he states, "all I can do is apologize for that, and uh, you know, and *try to do what I can to see that* nothing like that will ever happen again" (Lines 320-321- my emphasis added). He then makes a counter-accusation that Amy is in fact the one that is a threat to him rather than the other way around (Lines 324-326). Amy does not accept Nick's qualified apology. *Trying to do what he can* does not appear to be enough assurance for her.

Case 1 - Excerpt 6
328 M₁: Is, Amy, is this something that you haven't heard from Nick before, that he feels

329   threatened by your actions?

330

331 A: Well, I mean, when my mentor talked to me, I mean that's pretty much the

332   impression that I got was that he was feeling threatened by me. And I know that the

333   only thing that seemed to make him stop this behavior that I've defined as stalking was

334   when I told him that I'd told my mentor, and he realized that some of the academics

335   knew. And my mentor used the phrase academic suicide, and as far as I can see, that's

336   what brought Nick to his senses.

Amy discloses that the threat of his actions becoming public appears to be the only deterrent for his bad behavior (Lines 332-335). She directs this statement to the mediator in response to the mediator's question of whether hearing Nick mention that he

feels threatened by her is new information to her. So, in looking at the sequence, we see that Amy is not agreeing with Nick's counter-accusation that rather than posing a threat to her, in fact he is the one that is threatened. The context for the meaning of threat is particularly interesting for understanding Amy's statement later, "I mean, of course I find your presence extremely unpleasant, but I don't feel personally threatened" (Lines 352-353). Amy asserts that while she was threatened by Nick in the past, she no longer is. However her continued antagonism toward him remains. By not accepting his apology he remains the *bad guy*. By not being able to agree on the accurate label for his behavior the narrative remains *thin*.

Amy's Meanings. Nick is the *bad guy* in the story. His behavior is unpredictable and so needs to be contained through public awareness by influential people in Nick's narrative – people who hold his professional success in their hands. There is a *character* problem with Nick, and so Amy does not accept his contextualized explanation of his behavior. She is doing the *right* thing by potentially filing a restraining order, and does not accept the counter-accusation that she in fact is threatening him with that. It is instead the right thing to do in the current circumstance. The only thing keeping Nick in line currently is the fact that his behavior has gone public creating a potential for damage to his academic pursuits. Since Amy does not accept the apology which contextualizes the inappropriate behavior, Nick's alternative narrative is not affirmed by her.

Nick's Meanings. He has done some things wrong. However, he is not a *bad guy* – definitely not a "stalker". The development of his story going through graduate school to become a successful professional has hit a major bump in the road. That his behavior

has become somewhat public could have lasting negative consequences on him. His ex-girlfriend holds the decision-making power over whether his bad behavior will go public and if it is further documented through a restraining order. He will admit to bad behavior but not to being a bad guy, Amy's narrative is not affirmed by him.

Accusation met with counter-accusation

An accusation met with a counter-accusation is another form of mimicked antagonism. Nick has attempted a counter-accusation that Amy is a threat to him. She dispels his attempt to place her as the *bad guy* in this story. Amy provides some context for understanding the meaning of her potential move to file a restraining order. She shares that she wanted to create some uncertainty for Nick, by putting the possibility of filing out in the open as a way to keep Nick's violent tendencies properly channeled or contained. In fact, even though she has made Nick's behavior public to some people, she still attempted to keep boundaries around the information. She attempts to dispel Nick's argument that she is a threat to him, by arguing that if she wanted to ruin his career she could have already done so. She wrestles a bit with whether or not it was a good idea to disclose (integrative tactic) to Nick that she has no intention to try to destroy his career.

Case 1 - Excerpt 7

396 A: <u>I don't think that you should think of me as an academic threat.</u> When Lori asked me

397   what the hell was going on and why there were all those hang ups on her answering

398   machine and why I'd cleared out of her place and left all my stuff in the fridge. I

399   explained it to her, and she asked me if I wanted her to go and talk to Sam Brown

400   because she thought he had a lot of influence over you and that it would be good, that

401   hearing it from your advisor might bring you down to earth a bit. <u>And I thought about</u>

402   <u>that, and I said to her "no, I think it would just make things worse," because I have an</u>

403   inkling of what you're like about shame, particularly shame in front of academics. If I

404   had, I mean, if my intention had been to destroy your academic career, I would have

405   said to Lisa, "yeah, go tell [the director], and could we go tell Dr. Sampson all about

406   it".

407

408 N: You see, this is not 100% reassuring. I hear what you're saying.

Amy provides an integrative tactic of disclosure concerning the issue of "threat" when she discloses that Nick should not think of her as an academic threat (Line 396). She clarifies that she did have an opportunity to share Nick's behavior (Note: in her narrative it was "stalking" behavior) to his advisor. She shifts to animator-only production to give a glimpse into the exact thing she said to her friend, Lori, "And I thought about that, and I said to her 'no, I think it would just make things worse,' because I have an inkling of what you're like about shame, particularly shame in front of academics" (Lines 401-403). This glimpse into her conversation with Lori is a repetition for Nick that she is not a threat to him. She further strengthens her stance by projecting an alternative statement she could have made in response to Lisa to destroy Nick's career, when she is animator-only again to say, "I would have said to Lisa, 'yeah, go tell [the director], and could we go tell Dr. Sampson all about it'" (Lines 404-406). The integrative tactics of disclosure does not, however, produce any relief for Nick (Line 408). Amy offers further justification:

Case 1 - Excerpt 8
414 A: Even when I was really mad at you, I didn't want to destroy your academic career.

415   And now, I mean, it's true, there was a kind of hope that I'd come back from spring

416   break and you would have transferred to some east coast college where you'd be

417   happier anyway. You're always expressing how unhappy you are about [this state]. But….

418

419 N: Ok.

420

421 A: <u>I have no interest in threatening your career</u>. <u>I would have done so already if that</u>

422   <u>were my intention here</u>.

Amy shifts to speak directly to Nick with an integrative tactic of disclosure to

repeat that she does not want to destroy his academic career (Line 414) or his career in

general (Line 421). However, the disagreement about the meaning of Nick's

inappropriate behavior is again a barrier toward cooperating on a new story that

transcends mimicked antagonism.

Case 1 - Excerpt 9
437 A: See it kind of worries me that now you know that, because half the time I think that's

438   the <u>only thing that restrains you.</u> It's the reason that you're here. <u>It's not because you</u>

439   <u>think you're wrong, it's because you're worried that I'm gonna get you thrown out of the</u>

440   <u>department for it.</u> <u>You just debated with me, you didn't think it was stalking because it</u>

441   <u>didn't last long enough.</u>

Amy continues to direct her integrative tactics of disclosure to Nick, expressing

that her frustration is that the only thing keeping him in line (i.e., "restraining" him) is the

possible threat of his academic destruction (Lines 438-441). She points back to his

argument (Lines 318-320) that his behavior was not "stalking" because it didn't last long

enough. Their conversation moves back to the meaning of the term "stalking." They are

not able to construct a shared view of what is, or is not, appropriate behavior; what is a

character problem or just a temporary moment of acting out; what assurances exist that

the behavior will not happen again; and what in fact is currently preventing the behavior

from happening. From Cobb's (2010) perspective, the disputants are struggling to construct a thicker conflict narrative.

Amy's Meanings. Amy finds Nick's presence very unpleasant. While he is not currently a threat to her, Amy did find his previous behavior to be threatening. Amy labels his behavior as "stalking" which merits filing a restraining order. While she is not certain of whether she wants to actually follow through on filing, it is the one thing now that is preventing the possibility of his future behavior being threatening to her again. Making the issue semi-public – so that some people do know about his behavior and others do not –allows her to manage the boundaries of the information. As a result, Nick ceased what Amy saw as inappropriate behavior, yet she has not yet put his academic career in jeopardy. Amy's view that Nick's behavior has to be "restrained" is supported by his previous abstract promise, "try to do what I can …" that followed his qualified apology (Lines 320-321).

Nick's Meanings. Nick does not express any comfort from Amy's statements. In Nick's narrative, Amy previously used a distributive tactic of prescription with a conditional statement about not filing a restraining order unless he "stalks" her again (Line 302). If her current integrative tactic is put within the sequence of that previous distributive tactic, we see how he concedes he does not find this "100% assuring." Nick feels threatened by Amy, since she could destroy his academic career, particularly by using the word "stalking" which he thinks is an inaccurate label to put on his inappropriate behavior. There is currently no break in the potential cyclical pattern of antagonism.

Reciprocated attempt to make the other the bad guy

Since Amy asserts that Nick is debating whether his problem is an issue, and that her semi-public disclosure of his behavior is the only thing restraining him, she seeks clarification on steps he's taking to resolve the problem more internally – or as she asks, by how often he has seen a counselor.

The attempt to make Nick the *bad guy* is met with a reciprocated attempt from him to make Amy the *bad guy* in the narrative. Yet, he is hesitant to do so. There are several back and forth turns before he shares that Amy had been cutting herself. In Amy's narrative, Nick has a character problem and needs to talk to a counselor. The moral claim is that seeing a counselor is the *right* thing to do because he is acting in a way that is not socially appropriate and in fact caused her to feel threatened. While Nick is willing to accept responsibility for his bad behavior, he is not willing to buy into her form of the narrative that puts his character into question. He reciprocates her attempt, and makes a counter-accusation that Amy is *bad* too because she is a "cutter" which is another socially taboo behavior and called for a response from him.

When Amy presses Nick on how often he has seen a counselor, he mentions that his counselor suggested seeing both of them together. Amy rejects the thought of joining him for counseling. While Amy had been accusing Nick of being a stalker up to this point, he tried to dodge the label; however, for the most part he was accommodating to her position by apologizing for his behavior. However, at this point in the mediation, he seems to be less apologetic and more concerned about her understanding his horrible behavior from a more objective standpoint. From an objective standpoint, Nick suggests Amy was doing some things wrong too (i.e., a mimicked moral claim on behavior).

Amy asserts some control over the flow of the conversation by appealing to the

rules of mediation – don't interrupt. She focuses on the *right* and proper procedures for

this session. The mediator offers the floor to Amy, but she defers to Nick. She does not

construct new meanings for her bad behavior. Nick jumps in to makes his counter-

accusation. He suggests that if she wants to continue placing a horrible label on him (i.e.,

"stalker") then he must place a horrible label on her (i.e., "cutter"). His statement that her

behavior of cutting herself caused him to worry about her helps build his character – or

stands in contrast to him being a *bad guy*. Amy responds to Nick's disclosure that his

counselor wanted both of them to come in together:

Case 1 - Excerpt 10

538 A: I don't know what kind of moral high ground you're trying to claim or what kind of…

539

540 N: I'm not trying to claim any high ground.

541

542 A: Don't interrupt. You agreed not to.

543

544 N: Were you finished speaking then?

545

546 M_1: Did you want to continue Amy?

547

548 N: Yeah, uh, Amy, I don't know, we both behaved pretty inconsistently for awhile after

549   we broke up. But I was, I was really worried about you, concerned about you. No, in

550   the same period. Amy, at the end of the summer you were cutting yourself with knives,

551   on more than one occasion.

When Nick suggests that Amy, too, has some issues to deal with, she makes a

presumptive attribution (distributive tactic) about his motives (Line 538). Nick's

correction of this presumption is met with her avoidant tactic of process focus (Line 542).

At the beginning of the mediation, one of the ground rules that the mediators set is "no

interrupting." Here Amy focuses on the process of mediation which avoids a direct

response to his previous turn. Amy's turn draws attention to the original ground rules set

for mediation; and additionally allows Amy to control the flow of the conversation.

However, when Nick and the mediator both offer an opportunity for her to continue, she

does not take it. Instead, Nick makes an attempt at an integrative tactic of accepting

shared responsibility that they both behaved "pretty inconsistently" after the break-up

(Lines 548-549). This attempt at shared responsibility is repeated again later (Lines 557-

558). Yet in between these comments, he accuses Amy of being in the *bad guy* role for

cutting herself (Lines 550-551). In essence, their discourse sets up a dichotomy where

either they share responsibility or they both get called *bad guys* by the other.

Case 1 - Excerpt 11

553 A: That's still technically after we broke up.

554

555 N: Yeah, I mean it had a lot to do with….   Huh……I had no end of worry about you.

556   And it ended horribly. And what I did…..leaving nasty messages and trying to make

557   you talk to me, those are my responsibility and I …. Uh…..they….uh….we were both

558   in pretty much a mess. I can't, like, I can't   I kind of feel like we're both responsible,

559   and if you're going to stick some horrible word on you, some horrible word on me, then

560   <u>I have to turn around and stick some horrible word on you, and it's not, it's not going</u>

561   <u>to help</u>. I   huhhh… I'm sorry.

Mimicked antagonism is demonstrated as Nick turns the table on Amy to identify a label for her that points to equally unacceptable social behavior. He concurs that the "nasty messages" he left were his responsibility. However, he argues that if she is going to put a bad label on him then he has to turn around and do the same to her (Lines 559-560). Again, if he is a "stalker" then she is a "cutter." He suggests that this labeling is probably not going to help in their attempts to resolve this dispute. "Stalker" and "cutter" are flat character references here, in that each disputant is being identified by one label. Amy put a label on Nick but works to avoid discussion that an equally bad label could be put on her. Her only clarification was that technically she was cutting herself after they broke up (Line 553). This turn points toward a lack of temporal complexity in the narrative. Most noteworthy here is that when the disputants cannot cooperate on shared responsibility in the conflict story, the alternative is mimicked antagonism.

Amy's Meanings. Stalking behavior merits a need for counseling. In her narrative, Nick putting her on the same level as him – the suggestion that they both should go to counseling – is an attempt at taking a "moral high ground." Furthermore, her behavior that Nick has labeled as "cutting" occurred after they broke up and so should not be a focus of discussion in the current mediation session.

Nick's Meanings. Labels are not helpful for resolving this dispute. He was worried about Amy's behavior of "cutting herself with knives" which influenced his own uncharacteristic behavior. He takes responsibility for leaving nasty messages, but in general he is a good guy that was concerned about Amy. Even though he could, he is

84

trying to avoid putting a thin character reference on Amy because it is not going to help.

However, Amy does not seem to be cooperating with him to remove the "horrible" labels.

Lack of temporal complexity minimizing shared responsibility

The discourse of Amy and Nick shows lack of temporal complexity. Nick tries to

bring up some of Amy's behavior in the relationship that may have contributed to the

reason he was acting "crazy for a few days." Amy is quick to point out that talking about

what happened during the relationship is not the purpose of the mediation. She states that

they brought out the worst in each other, which Nick agrees with. He suggests that it

makes sense, then, that their bad behavior would extend beyond the ending of their

relationship as well.

Case 1 - Excerpt 12

571 A: We are not here to talk about what happened during the relationship. I think it was a

572   terrible relationship and we both behaved very badly, and I'm not going to deny that,

573   we made each other intensely miserable and it was a very bad idea and the only

574   emotional intensity was bad, but I'm, and I'm not, I would never think of blaming you

575   for how bad that relationship was because I agree that we were both far worse people in

576   that relationship than we are usually, we just, for some reason, brought out the worst in

577   each other and, after that, I guess there was no prospect of friendship either.

578

579 N: Yeah, well, it would extend us both being pretty bad to the period after the

580   relationship ended.

Amy expresses acceptance of shared responsibility for the mutual negative impact

the disputants had on each other (Lines 572-573). Amy is animator, author, and principal

for this integrative tactic. She also argues that she is not blaming Nick for how bad the

relationship was (Lines 575-577). So she seems to offer both an integrative tactic of description and of accepting responsibility. Nick agrees with this statement. They have constructed and agreed upon a piece of their narrative – that they were both worse people when they were together. However, instead of continuing with constructing a narrative of shared responsibility, Amy turns toward a balance sheet of whose threat is worse.

Case 1 - Excerpt 13

582 A: But I didn't make threats against you like, I wasn't making you fear your physical

583   safety, I wasn't, I repeatedly said that I just wanted nothing to do with you, and I mean,

584   that would have been the best.

585

586 N: No, Amy, what you did was you, what you did was you lied to me, and what I did was

587   I threatened you. And the second of those, yeah, that probably is worse, but I, uh,

588

589 A: What did I lie to you about?

Antagonism continues onward as Amy draws attention to the unique way that Nick was the *bad guy*. She has not cooperated with his previous explanation that he was showing up at her place unexpected because he was worried about her cutting herself. She does not validate the comment that lying could be put in the same balance as being threatening. Amy focuses on his threat to her physical safety (Lines 582-583) which she argues (and he offers as well) is worse than lying to him.

So, while Amy does acknowledge some shared responsibility for the bad relationship she still places blame on Nick for the aftermath and their continued troubles. He in fact is still to blame for threatening her physically. The antagonism is perpetuated by Nick when he wants to place unique blame on her too. If he is at fault for threatening

her, then she is at fault for something too - for lying to him (Lines 586-587). In response, Amy asks what he is referring to (Line 589). Amy does not cooperate with his claim that her lying should be in the same conversation as his physical threat to her.

Case 1 - Excerpt 14

593 A: I think this is pathetic, I think

594

595 N: Amy, Amy, if you want

596

597 A: Excuse me I was talking

She prevents discussion of balancing his physical threat with her lying by offering an avoidant tactic of pessimism (Line 593). Additionally when Nick attempts to talk again, she invokes procedure focus of following the mediation rule of not interrupting. Nick's attempt to share his perspective is stopped by Amy as she references the fact that he has to follow the guideline of no interruptions (similar to Line 542). In essence her contribution is the interruption of his original turn, yet she invokes the "no interruption" ground rule to focus on faulting Nick during the turn when he is attempting to place some of the blame on her.

Amy's Meanings. Amy's turns contribute to constructing Nick as the *bad guy* in the narrative. She (with some qualification) accepts that they were both worse people together. However, she will not accept equal fault with Nick for the dispute. Nick's attempt to put her lying on par with him being a physical threat is "pathetic." For her, they were both miserable in the relationship together. Nick is to blame for his horrible

behavior, and she cannot accept that she was bad in and of herself. Following the rules of mediation is a way to maintain procedural focus when the discourse becomes "pathetic."

Nick's Meanings. In Nick's narrative, he and Amy bring out the worst in each other now (after the relationship) because they brought out the worst in each other during the relationship. The end of the relationship does not necessarily end the problems. While he offers that he acted inappropriately toward Amy, the conflict story also includes that Amy lied to him, which while not as bad, was still a part of the problem. He is unwilling to accept that he is a threat to her or that he is the only one who did wrong.

Negative affect perpetuating beyond a change in behavior

Underlying negative affect emerges in the mediation discourse of Amy and Nick. Attempts to redefine character references have failed. The best alternative presented by the disputants is to "be civil" with each other and let go of the negative affect they currently have toward each other. Girardian perspective holds that the intense dislike will continue to look for something to sink its teeth into. Amy seems to share a view in line with this perspective that the *thin veneer* of civility can crack if *pushed in the least*. Nick has already mentioned that it makes sense that their negative influence on each other has continued even after the relationship was over. Amy also shares that underlying negativity exists and emerges at unexpected times.

The mediator checks in with Nick and Amy about the scope of the resolution they are hoping for during this session. Amy suggests that she would like to eventually be at a point where they both could talk about the readings in a graduate seminar that they might take together; however, at this point simply being civil to each other in the office and

ceasing glaring looks is the goal. Amy suggests that the root of their problem is intense

dislike and hostility.

Case 1 - Excerpt 15

861 A: I think it's more like, I think the basis of the problem is more that to say that Nick and

862   I intensely dislike each other, despise each other is a bit of an understatement, and that

863   given that, it's quite, it's gonna be quite hard for us to exist, <u>I mean in a sense the</u>

864   <u>problem with the agreement is that it's regulating our manifest behavior, but, while</u>

865   <u>there are these underlying emotions involved</u>, I mean, <u>the most you can hope for is a</u>

866   <u>thin veneer which will, or might crack if it's pushed in the least.</u> I mean, I would kind of

867   like to resolve some of the underlying issues because, I mean, it's plainly obvious to me

868   that Nick dislikes me at least as much as I dislike him, maybe more because it's a while

869   since I've been scared of him <u>whereas apparently he's still quite threatened by me.</u>

While Amy attributes negative affect to history of the dispute, and mimicked

antagonism is constructing in the mediation discourse, the future is still unknown. Amy

provides a quite astute insight when she addresses the limitation of an agreement in

regulating behavior at the neglect of underlying emotions (Lines 863-865). Most

pointedly she states, "the most you can hope for is a thin veneer which will, might crack

if it's pushed in the least" (Lines 865-866). This turn could be seen either as an avoidant

tactic of pessimism or as an honest disclosure of Amy's perception of the situation – an

integrative tactic. Indeed, Amy is the most pointed of all the disputants in this study of

clearly articulating a Girardian perspective. She then ended with a distributive tactic of

presumptive attribution about Nick (Line 869). Nick begins to refute but then stops

himself:

Case 1 - Excerpt 16

871 N: I don't…..never mind

872

873 A: What, dislike me less, or?

874

875 N: Ok, I…

876

877 A: I mean <u>I think it would be better if we agree to let go of some of the hostility that's</u>

878 <u>causing the glaring and the feeling of threat and the animosity</u> rather than,   I mean,

879 I'm not sure how effective a band aid solution is going to be.

The disputants struggle to complete a sentence in these few turns (Lines 871-875), and then Amy offers an integrative tactic of initiating problem-solving to try to let go of some of their hostilities (Lines 877-878). For Amy, letting go of the negative affect is a better idea than attempting to change behavior. However, as the disputants' history has demonstrated – indeed as their mediation discourse has revealed – they are unable to "let go" of that hostility. That negative affect is simmering and has staying power. Interestingly though, they do have a plan in place for bringing about a chance that could represent a break in the pattern of mimicked antagonism. More specifically, they have done so without constructing a thicker narrative and without scapegoating to a substitute victim.

Amy's Meanings. In Amy's narrative, the driving force of their conflict is their intense dislike for each other. In fact she says, "to say that Nick and I intensely dislike each other, despise each other is a bit of an understatement" (Lines 861-862). She has faulted Nick for threatening her, yet shares that it has been a while since she's been afraid

of him. She has previously shared that she is not convinced that Nick would not "stalk" her again in the future. She has not accepted Nick's counter-accusation that she is a threat to him. In fact, she suggests it would seem silly for Nick to be threatened by her in light of her previous disclosure that she was not going to try to destroy his academic career (Line 396). She acknowledges that Nick seems to feel threatened by her; however, she does not make an explicit promise that eases Nick's concern.

Nick's Meanings. Nick begins to dispute something that Amy has said, but does not contribute a complete thought during his turn. In this section of the mediation his lack of involvement is a lack of construction of a new narrative concerning the intense dislike, hostility, and animosity Amy has mentioned. He has shared that he feels threatened by Amy and has not heard anything from her that provides 100% assurance that he should no longer feel threatened.

Expressed staying power of negative affect

To "let go" of hostility may be difficult. Even after all the work that has been done to negotiate meanings of labels and responsibilities for actions, Amy shares that the resolution ultimately rests in them not hating each other anymore. Neither of them explicitly makes a statement of "hate" toward the other, and both dodge the issue. Yet, they explicitly address that they presume hatred from the other. Amy, in particular, mentions her struggle with internal animosity and vengefulness that seems to be resting below the surface, waiting to emerge at any moment.

Case 1 - Excerpt 17

997 A: I mean, I guess that I would like it if we, <u>if we stopped hating each other</u>, but, as Nick

998   pointed out...

999

1000 N: You said you didn't want to know if I hated you or not.

1001

1002 A: I know you hate me. Ok, I don't know if you hate me, I get the feeling that you hate

1003   me. And, I kinda thought I was alright with you, but then I've been sitting in this room

1004   with you and it gets more and more difficult. Um, I mean in some ways, um,

1005   everybody else around me, everyone around me has been hearing me bitching about

1006   you for a long time – . . . [personal], my friends – um and I've been taking it out on

1007   them, and I think it would be better if you heard about it instead of them; I mean, just

1008   because, it's nothing to do with them. And I thought, like in some ways I can see of

1009   you telling me what you think, just because if it got it out of your system, or whatever,

1010   then I hoped it would get it out of mine. And what you miss…

The staying power of negative affect is discussed, and Amy's disclosure that she

does not view Nick as threatening does not resolve the negative affect. She corrects her

presumptive attribution (a distributive tactic)… "I know you hate me" with a clarification

that she actually doesn't know that, but provides an integrative tactic of disclosure when

she says, "I get the feeling that you hate me" (Line 1002). Nick has an opportunity to

provide clarification for Amy in regards to her presumptive-attribution-turned-disclosure.

Case 1 - Excerpt 18

1012 N: And what you, I know, you just said that you hate me.

1013

1014 A: I might. I don't really know. Sometimes. I had this whole series of night mares with

1015   you in them.

Instead, he reiterates the presumptive attribution to say, "You just said that you hate me" (Line 1012). Amy neither confirms nor denies (Line 1014). Later she does disclose that she has been surprised that her vengefulness still emerges at times.

Case 1 - Excerpt 19

1034 (A:)   I

1035   mean I wanted him to be all right. And, I went home for Christmas. <u>I thought that I</u>

1036   <u>wasn't vengeful, and I didn't, I wasn't feeling animosity. But sometimes it sort of</u>

1037   <u>surfaces and like really, you know, when you see me glaring at you, you know what</u>

1038   <u>I'm thinking.</u>

Although focused on her vengefulness, this is an integrative tactic of disclosure that Amy brings to the table. Amy is very forthcoming with the staying power of the negative affect of this conflict.

Throughout these excerpts Amy and Nick are animator and author, yet struggle over the principal to attribute the ideas to. By producing their turns as animator and author, they attribute thoughts to the other as principal. Perhaps not owning the vengefulness as principal is the beginning of a move beyond their impasse. Alternatively, they could have provided clear and direct disclosures to help clarify where they each stand, similar to what Amy has done with her direct disclosure about vengefulness (Lines 1035-1038). So, Amy may come closer to providing direct disclosures than Nick, albeit disclosures of feeling vengeful. Nick's lack of disclosure may be due to Amy exerting influence on the flow of the discussion, by invoking the mediation rule of no interruption, when he makes an attempt to do so.

Amy's Meanings. For Amy, she wanted to share her feelings with Nick instead of "bitching" to her friends, and in turn thought if Nick got his feelings out, it would help too. However, in Amy's narrative the mediation has not been the cathartic experience she thought it might be. Amy shares that she still has some confusion about whether she hates Nick or not. Therefore, her attempt to get frustrations out of her system by doing the mediation with Nick was not successful.

Nick's Meanings. In Nick's narrative, he will only disclose his feelings toward Amy if she wants to know. He suggests that Amy said she did not want to know if he hated her or not. He does presume that Amy hates him, because *she just said it*. Interestingly she has never explicitly stated that she hates him during her turn.

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor

Looking at the discourse of Amy and Nick through Cobb's (2010) treatment of a Girardian lens brings interesting features of tenor of the discourse to light. Amy's guiding narrative is that Nick is a "stalker" that acts unpredictably when not contained by the external threat of a restraining order and damage to his future career. Nick's guiding narrative is that he only acted inappropriately for a short period of time, in part because Amy was cutting herself. For him, the restraining order is an unjustified threat to his academic and professional success. The recognition of complexity of interdependence of both the timing of events and the behaviors of the disputants is not readily evident in the discourse. The tenor of the discourse is summed up by shared expressions of intense dislike, hostility, threat, and animosity.

The relationship between Nick and Amy is quite contentious. Within their discourse are mentions of a possible restraining order, threatening behavior, intense dislike and animosity, and stalking behavior. References to mood, attacks, and threats are part of the interpersonal meanings that constitute the tenor of discourse.

Interpersonal Meanings:
- Amy animates Nick's relational reference, "Fuck you bitch"
- Amy continues to argue that Nick is a stalker and acts as the authority on his need for counseling.
- They debate over who is more of a threat to the other.
- Amy identifies the underlying animosity that leaves them in a position of having a thin veneer of civility.

Amy brings the extent of Nick's threatening behavior to light. Nick has shared that he left nasty messages, but it is Amy that animates the message – "they're very unpleasant, I mean, it's not nice to get home and hear 'fuck you bitch' on your answering machine" (Line 160-161) – and also describes other behavior that was threatening to her. For example, she mentions, "the time when I was in the office and you were trying to get in, and you wouldn't leave, you were banging on the glass trying to get in and saying you wanted to talk to me" (Lines 163-165). This is not only a disclosure of the event, but also a revelation of the wound that Amy incurred from the threatening behavior that constituted Nick's weapon. "I mean, for me, those were more particularly threatening" (Lines 165-166). In turn, the potential weapon wielded seemed to result in self-defense, which appeared in the form of Amy's threat for a restraining order when saying, "you were scary, quite frankly. I mean I was very serious about filing for a restraining order. (Lines 170-171). By drawing upon the litigation system, Amy has increased her power over Nick and carries a new weapon that could wound him.

The self-defense move in turn is a weapon that has the potential to inflict a wound on Nick. The significance of the label "stalker" emerges since it is a term that provides justification for filing a restraining order. Nick reveals his realization of how much harm Amy's weapon could inflict when he states, "I'd like clarification, I'd like a formal indication that something bad isn't going to happen to me if I say something to you…..I feel threatened if any communication at all occurs (Lines 298-300). Nick's turn to refute the 'stalker' label could serve to disarm Amy, "I don't know, I mean to me, the word connotes a longer, at least a long term or middle term pattern of behavior. I was out of control for a few days" (Lines 318-320). Another turn could be seen as an attempted negotiation. "I don't think I pose any of a threat to you at this point. I feel, I feel threatened, ironically because of the situation we are in now" (Lines 324-325). This legitimizes the power position that Amy has over him thus legitimizing the weapon she holds to potentially wound him further.

Amy's wound seems to coincide with the struggle to trust that Nick will not wield his weapon again. She reveals that Nick has a power position over her because of the physical threat he poses. They are unable to cooperate on equal interpersonal relationship ground. Amy suggests Nick is the greater threat, "But I didn't make threats against you like, I wasn't making you fear your physical safety" (Lines 582-583). And even Nick agrees that he likely had the bigger weapon with greater potential threat, "No, Amy, what you did was you, what you did was you lied to me, and what I did was I threatened you. And the second of those, yeah, that probably is worse" (Lines 586-587).

The mood of the discourse includes a struggle over control of the conversation (e.g., Amy calls upon rules of no interrupting), hierarchy (e.g., who is more of a threat than the other), and underlying emotions contained by a "thin veneer" (Lines 865-866). Even creating a thicker story cannot account for the underlying antagonism that Amy has referenced. A thicker story may not be able to provide the assurance that Amy needs of Nick ceasing any inappropriate and threatening behavior. His qualified promise is not enough for Amy to fully drop her weapon of the potential restraining order. Thickening the story may still not give her the assurance she is looking for that Nick can be trusted in the future. In turn, Nick is lacking the clear indication that he has nothing to be threatened by. These are interpersonal issues of trust that are emerging through the analysis of the tenor of discourse that cannot be remedied through the construction of a thicker conflict story. In essence the weapons and wounds in the discourse of a case that likely had physical violence present represent the symbolic communicative violence between the two disputants.

Communicative Violence

This case makes the distinction between physical and intangible weapons and wounds particularly salient. The findings problematize Cobb's application of Scarry's (1985) conception "language of agency" that takes the subjective experience of pain to objectify it in terms of *weapons* and *wounds*. In this case, those subjective experiences of pain, or threat of pain from potential weapons, are not only objectified, but also remain subjective. Looking through the lens of Cobb's (2010) application of Girard, we begin to

see weapons and wounds within and underlying the discourse. The following can be gleaned from the analysis:

Weapons: Amy – potential restraining order; and making Nick the bad guy ("stalker").

Nick – threatening behavior while intruding Amy's space.

Wounds: Nick – academic/professional suicide; and receiving label of being a "stalker."

Amy – feeling a loss of sense of security; and being hurt by unworkable situation in graduate school.

Nick is seen, by Amy, as a physical weapon that could harm her. He has shown up to her house unannounced and has left hostile messages on her phone. Amy's threat of a restraining order is seen, by Nick, as a weapon that could be the source of destruction of his career. Amy holds information about Nick, that if shared with particular people could cause long-term damage for him. While he does concede that being a physical threat is "probably worse" he is adamant that she is a noteworthy threat nonetheless.

The wound that Amy has incurred is loss of safety, resulting from Nick wielding his weapon of threat by invading her physical space by showing up unannounced. The wound that Nick has incurred is being called a "stalker" along with the potential impending loss of his academic success. Since the disputants do not cooperate to narrate a story where neither is the *bad guy*, or where there is an increased understanding of temporal complexity, they do not help each other mend their wounds.

Girardian perspective holds that the hostilities shared by the disputants need something to sink their teeth into. Therefore, while the suggestion to simply "let go" of those feelings is offered, neither disputant is truly disarmed. Yet, the mediation

culminates in an agreement to "be civil" with each other in an attempt to move forward. There is no formalized commitment that the other will not wield their weapons again in the future. In the meantime being civil will serve as the "thin veneer," as Amy put it, which "might crack if it's pushed in the least." Still, the disputants have found a way to move forward without constructing a thicker conflict narrative and without scapegoating a substitute victim, challenging Cobb's (2003) application of Girard's (1977) perspective to the mediation context.

MIMICKED ANTAGONISM PERPETUATED

Girardian Narrative of Rumi and Tom (M31 – Marriage and Co-parenting)

Rumi and Tom are married with a 3-year old son, Sam. The disputants have been involved with the litigation process concerning a divorce and the custody of their child. Rumi has just returned to the United States from India where her family still lives. Rumi and Tom had each previously filed for divorce and withdrew before following through in court. Tom's parents had argued that the relationship between Rumi and Tom was unhealthy and therefore went to court to gain custody of Sam, which was granted. This court decision prompted Rumi to return to her home in India. Recently, Tom encouraged her to come back to the United States so that the two of them could work on improving their marriage with the agreement that they would work on regaining custody of Sam. Their continual fighting has prompted their pursuit of mediation.

In Rumi's narrative Tom is a good father, but not a good husband. Since Tom does not fully cooperate with her, or follow through on the promises she remembers him making, she would just prefer to file for divorce, and fight for custody of Sam alone. Her

moral claim is that the courts should always give custody of the child to the mother. In Tom's narrative Rumi should stay as his wife; however, she has been acting "suspicious" lately, and therefore he feels she is taking advantage of his financial support. His moral claim is that the right thing for a wife to do is accommodate to her husband's requests. The disputants both attempt to position the other as the *bad guy* in the narrative, and their discourse constitutes continued moves of mimicked antagonism.

Constructing a thin conflict narrative

The analysis of specific excerpts from this case follows to demonstrate how Rumi and Tom continue on in a cycle of reciprocated antagonism. This case draws particular attention to the ways pronoun use emerges in the discourse as disputants shift footing. The key moments in the narratives of these disputants that are relevant to a Cobb's (2010) treatment of the Girardian perspective are: a) counter-accusation of *bad guy* role; b) lack of interdependence and *flat* moral claim; c) lack of temporal complexity and perpetuating attempts to construct *bad guy* role; d) *flat* plot line and moral claim that externalize responsibility; and e) lack of interdependence. Ultimately, the disputants do not accommodate to each other's proposed options and furthermore do not negotiate a shared agreement on the issues of the right to establish address, splitting their current rent, or strategizing for the courts. When the mediator asks them if they see value in continuing the mediation, Rumi expresses that she wants to end the mediation; while Tom expresses that he wants to keep on going. Without both willing to participate in continued dialogue about the issues, they decide to at least write an agreement that they will not bring up what was said during the mediation session with each other outside of

this room. In all, they have not cooperated to construct a narrative that allows them to move beyond their impasse.

Counter-accusation of bad guy role

Semantic focus on one word was used to create a counter-accusation against the other disputant as the *bad guy*. At this point in the mediation, Rumi has just finished telling Tom that she thinks the court will give him supervised custody. She uses an integrative tactic of disclosure to let Tom know that she trusts him when she says "you're not a good husband, but you make a good father. There's been whole world telling me, 'this guy has an abusive history, don't trust him,' but I trust him" (Lines 322-323). Rumi begins as the animator, author, and principal when she directs her statement to Tom that he makes a good father. Then she becomes the animator-only for who she calls the *whole world* as the author and principal that she should not trust him. Next she comes back to being animator, author, and principal again when she finishes with "but I trust him." Rumi goes on to argue that since she is trusting in Tom they should have fifty-fifty custody of their son, but that she wants the right to establish address. The mediator then asks Tom what his thoughts are:

Case 2 - Excerpt 1

344　　M₁: Okay. Do you have any thoughts on that?

345

346　　T:　Um, I, my thoughts are that um…I don't agree with her at all on any of those topics

347　　　　basically.

348

349　　M₁: Uh huh

350

351 T: Um, I think the…her citing history is just a, a tri, like a trick or a way for her to justify her

352   position. She herself, um, has a history. And she always says "let's not talk about history"

353   She says that with my parents that "why should they look at my history, they should

354   look at the current event." Everybody knows that everybody change…that things change

355   and people change and what we are today is different from what we were four years

356   ago….

Tom's response shows that what could potentially be an integrative tactic of disclosure from Rumi is to him a *trick*. He says he thinks "her citing history is just a, a tri, like a trick or way for her to justify her position" (Line 351). Tom provides a counter-accusation that, "[s]he herself, um, has a history" (Line 352). For this statement Tom is the animator, author, and principal. He then shifts to animate Rumi (as author and principal) when he says "she always says 'let's not talk about history'" (Line 352) and in regards to his parents, "'why should they look at my history, they should look at the current event'" (Lines 353-354). His avoidance tactic of semantic focus on the word 'history' is produced through the footing of Rumi as author and principal rather than himself. He remains animator-only in this move. He uses an indirect tactic through animating Rumi's previous communication to avoid engaging in problem-solving. He continues:

Case 2 - Excerpt 2

360 T: …So, it's really ridiculous to talk about things from like years and years ago. That's

361   not gonna, that's not gonna, um, I don't think that that's going to um, do anything

362   constructive. Um, cuz as far as histories go there's, there's quite a bit there. What we're

363   <u>wanting to do now is… and as far as this, this thing about her um "supervised visits" and all</u>

364   <u>that, um. I'm, I'm actually helping her, you a lot…or, should I talk to you, er, about her?</u>

365

366   M₁: You can talk to her

Tom reiterates that it is not helpful to talk about the past (Line 360) and then uses what could be an attempt at an integrative tactic of initiating problem-solving when he says "What we're wanting to do now is…" but cuts himself off and focuses on the idea of "supervised visits," redirecting the discourse to another semantic focus (avoidant) tactic. Rumi had previously mentioned that she believed the court would give him "supervised visits" of Sam. Tom's turn shows how a disputant can get tripped up in footing as he questions whether to direct his statements toward the mediators or directly to Rumi. He has shifted to avoid responding to Rumi's turn through the animator-only position. Once he shifts back to author, animator, and principal to direct the agenda for the discussion, he questions who he should direct his turn to.

Rumi's Meanings. While Rumi is talking to the mediators, through the use of pronouns "he" and "him," she is focuses on the problem-solving task at hand of the custody of their child. She uses the pronoun "you" when she directs the statement to Tom about his abilities as a father versus his abilities as a husband. Trusting him as a father is further strengthened as she suggests she is going against the "whole world" that seems to have a shared belief about Tom's history. Quoting the "whole world," Rumi shares that she has heard "this guy has an abusive history, don't trust him" but assures the mediator that she does trust him (at least as a father). This assurance uses the pronoun "him" - the disclosure is directed at the mediator rather than Tom.

103

Tom's Meanings. Tom directly disagrees with Rumi. His relational and identity concerns arise in the discourse that precedes discussion of problem-solving about custody. For the majority of the turn he talks to the mediators about "her" and "she," about these concerns with his identity. Tom does not seem to have picked up on Rumi's integrative tactic of disclosure, nor does he explicitly recognize her comment of trusting him as a father. Instead, he focuses on the accusation in "history," treating her reference to "history" not as integrative but as distributed – a way to say something bad about him. Tom tells the mediators why it is ridiculous to talk about "history." Tom directly quotes what Rumi has said at some point outside of the mediation session. Here, he challenges her use of bringing up his history against him by quoting a time when she did not want someone (i.e., his parents) to bring up her history against her. When Tom gets back on track with the problem-solving of the custody issue, he finds himself in an interesting challenge trying to figure out to whom to direct his communication. This is evident when he says "I'm actually helping her, you a lot…" and then asks the mediator "should I talk to you, er, about her?" The animator-only footing used for direct quotations in this instance served as an aside from the problem-solving perspective. The relational and identity perspectives are not addressed directly between the disputants. Getting back on track with the issue required a shift in footing for Tom. This interaction demonstrates the complexity disputants may experience while negotiating multiple participation statuses.

Lack of interdependence and flat moral claim

Lack of interdependence in discourse limits ability to construct a thicker conflict narrative that transcends negative reciprocity (Cobb, 2010). The disputants' discourse in

this case shifts away from the focus on fifty-fifty involvement with their son and instead gains momentum toward a cycle of antagonism. In Tom's narrative, Rumi should look at her role as a wife rather than accuse him of being a bad husband. At this point in the mediation he has just mentioned that Rumi should pay for her part of the rent, because as he says, "[i]t's not like a charity that I'm running here" (Line 376). In the following excerpt, Rumi refutes Tom's claim of running a charity.

Case 2 - Excerpt 3

378   R: OK. Can I say something? <u>It's not charity that you are doing Tom. It's just fifty-fifty</u>.

379   And I'm not bringing any (?) right here, right now. I'm, I'm, I'm, <u>I'm the one who's</u>

380   <u>telling you that I'm trusting you for Sam</u>. And I make sure about you you being Sam's

381   father, now why you have to start that you come up with …

382

383   T: No, I, I….

384

385   R: <u>I didn't even say anything about the past. I'm just saying we just have pretty much</u>

386   <u>fifty-fifty. That's it…</u>

387

388   T: No, I, look…

389

390   R: I cannot take a decision as long as you're not agree about Sam ya know…<u>so it's pretty</u>

391   <u>much fifty-fifty. So I don't know what your problem right now.</u>

The avoidant tactic of semantic focus on "charity" by Rumi redirects the focus of the discourse on fifty-fifty involvement with Sam (Line 378). Rumi reiterates her integrative tactic of disclosure that she trusts Tom with their son by saying, "I'm the one who's telling you that I'm trusting you for Sam" (Lines 379-380). In this instance the

disclosure is directed to Tom through the use of the pronoun "you" rather than "him" (i.e., speaking with him rather than reporting to the mediators). Rumi says she is focusing on being "fifty-fifty" (Lines 385-386) with the custody of Sam, and questions what Tom's problem is with that (Lines 390-391). Tom does not elaborate on this interdependence, but instead mimics Rumi's tactic of asking the same question. The aggressive tone of these questions (as heard in the video) points toward them being more antagonistic than an attempt to solicit disclosure.

Case 2 - Excerpt 4

393   T: <u>So, if…the same goes for you. What's the problem for you then? If I have the</u>

394   <u>establish, the right to establish address. What's your problem?</u>

395

396   R: <u>No because, I think it's, the mother should have that,</u> establish to, ya know, not father.

397

398   T: So you said you didn't want, <u>you said that you didn't want to talk about history, but</u>

399   <u>you said "you're not a good husband." You should look at yourself as talking about</u>

400   <u>who's a good wife.</u>

Tom's move leans toward a distributive tactic of hostile questioning, when he asked "what's your problem then?" However, as Tom re-authors the question he adds in the point of gaining the right to establish address – the one issue that seems to tip the fifty-fifty scale in the direction of one of the parents or the other. It is here that Rumi responds with the disclosure that she thinks the mother should have the right to establish address and not the father (Line 396) – which brings her moral claim to light. Rumi expresses that the mother has priority in court decisions involving children – here in terms of the right to establish address, and later referenced in terms of gaining custody. In

other words it is right for the mother to have custody of her child and anything that gets in the way of that is wrong. Tom does not address it, but instead uses avoidant tactics of both semantic focus and topic shifting when he directs the discourse back to "history." All together the use of semantic focus mixed with a lack of interdependence and a flat moral claim constructs a discourse that resembles mimicked antagonism when viewed through a Girardian lens.

Tom says, "[s]o you said….that you didn't want to talk about history" and continues to topic shift, saying "but you said 'you're not a good husband.' You should look at yourself as talking about who's a good wife" (Lines 398-400). Here he animates a previous line from Rumi, to set up a reciprocated personal attack – a distributive tactic. His use of "you said" cues the direct quotation – followed by "you should look at yourself." He has circled back to the statement Rumi made previously (Line 322) concerning history. Again, her statement disclosing that she trusts him could have originally functioned as an integrative tactic, but the sequence in the discourse shows that it does not build momentum toward constructing a narrative that transcends the antagonism. Not only does Tom avoid her attempt at an integrative tactic, but he furthermore uses a distributive tactic of personal attack ("you should look at yourself") to reciprocate what he apparently perceived as an accusation. It appears that the discussion of "history" has not yet been resolved. The continued focus on the reference to history is a nod toward the possibility of Tom's underlying sense of being wronged. According to Girard, the triggered frustration of Tom should be looking for something to sink its teeth into. Tom does not attack directly, but instead positioned himself as the animator-only for

Rumi as the author and principal for the avoidant tactic and set-up for distributive tactic of prescription. He attacks indirectly. His frustration does find a way to sink its teeth into Rumi, and he does it through footing that uses her own words against her.

Rumi's Meanings. The excerpt includes repeated references by Rumi, to the involvement with Sam being "fifty-fifty." Her appeal for fairness focuses on the issue of parental involvement with Sam as the function of their current discussion. The struggle over the meaning of "history" appears when she says "I didn't even say anything about the past" (Line 385). She had previously produced the word "history" from the footing of animator-only for "the whole world" as author and principal who said he had a history. Her turn sets this statement up in contrast to her integrative disclosure that she trusts him. In the excerpt above, she questions why Tom is not engaged in problem-solving to create interdependence for parenting Sam. In Rumi's narrative, Tom's focus on the past is functioning as a barrier to moving forward with solving the problem of the "fifty-fifty" involvement with parenting Sam. Her move to show trust in reference to his role as father is exacerbated by the broken flow of discussion. She discloses that she doesn't know what his problem is right now – wrestling with what is keeping them from resolving the issue.

Tom's Meanings. In Tom's narrative, Rumi has accused him of being a bad husband. Rather than cooperating to build interdependence for parenting Sam together, Tom perpetuates antagonism. As seen in the discourse, he has shifted his pronoun use to "you" so is talking to Rumi rather than reporting to the mediators. He expresses that he wants the right to establish address for Sam. When Rumi questions why the issue of

establishing address should be a problem, his reciprocated re-authored question functions as a request to have that right. By mimicking Rumi's tactic of asking a question, he avoids discussion of interdependence. Rumi's resistance to that idea emerges in a *flat* moral claim that the mother should be given that right. Rather than engage in discussion of this moral claim, he returns to the issue of "history." In Tom's narrative, Rumi saying he *is not* a good husband overshadows her saying he *is* a good father. He reciprocates her statement (albeit one that came from the whole world that she has animated) with an accusation in the form of a prescription that "you should look at yourself as talking about who's a good wife." An alternate move could have been for him to agree that she *is* a good mother. Instead he focuses on her being a bad wife. This directness carries some hostility that is no longer buffered through the mediators – as evidenced by the pronoun shift from *she* to *you*.

Lack of temporal complexity and perpetuating attempts to construct bad guy role

Lack of temporal complexity emerges as the disputants focus on what they can agree to "right now" in the mediation session (Line 427). Interestingly, the discourse in the previous excerpts focused on the "past" and "history." In the upcoming excerpt Tom suggests talking about "right now" and the agreement that he and Rumi can make. The mediator intervenes to look forward to the future. Tom shares that the future outcome would be that his parents maintain custody of Sam. The disputants do not acknowledge the complexity of how the past has led to the present, which is directing the projected future outcome. The discussion of how these time periods are mutually influencing each other is missing.

Case 2 - Excerpt 5

427   T: And I just, I just want to talk about right now, if, I will cooperate with your plan to get

428   Sam back as long as I have it in writing that if we do a divorce I have, we have fifty-fifty

429   custody, but I have the right to establish address.

430

431   R: No, I'm not writing it…I'm not writing it.

432

433   M₂: It seems today that you both feel that, uh, if it goes to the courts that…you feel that

434   you'll get the right to establish address and you feel that you'll get the right to establish

435   address…

436

437   T: Well no..

438

439   M₂: or that you're parents will…

440

441   T: if it goes to the courts it will remain with my parents.

Tom's turn could function as an integrative tactic of initiating problem-solving,

because he offers a conditional statement of cooperation (Lines 427-429). Rumi's

response is a distributive tactic of outright rejection when she expresses her stance, "I'm

not writing it…I'm not writing it" (Line 431). The next contribution in this sequence

comes from the mediator who tries to paraphrase the disputants' views, acting as the

animator and author for both Tom as principal and Rumi as principal of their respective

stances. Tom offers that the future custody decision is more certain than the mediator has

suggested when he shares, "if it goes to the courts it will remain with my parents" (Line

441). There is a striking contrast between this statement and Rumi's forthcoming statement (In Lines 488-489) that the court will grant custody of Sam to her.

The lack of temporal complexity is followed by perpetuated accusations of the *bad guy* role. In Rumi's narrative, Tom is the *bad guy* who is threatening her with an ultimatum. In Tom's narrative, Rumi is the *bad guy* who does suspicious things.

Case 2 - Excerpt 6

445   R: But if it remains on, with his parents then eventually he's going to get it, cuz his

446   parents doors are always open for him, but not for me. So eventually he's going to get it.

447   It's just like that, ya know. So he's basically threatening me right now that, ah "you help

448   me, you give me Sam's custody otherwise I'm not going to help you to do all these

449   things." That's the way that I see it…

450

451   T: Well yeah, that's…I mean you do lots of suspicious things that make, don't make

452   sense to me.

When Tom clarifies that custody now stands with the grandparents, Rumi's comment reveals that, in her narrative, Tom's turn does not function as an integrative tactic of initiating problem-solving. She says "he's basically threatening me right now that, ah 'you help me, you give me Sam's custody otherwise I'm not going to help you to do all these things.'" This reiteration by Rumi places Tom's turn as a distributive tactic of prescription. Rumi is animator and author for the previous turn Tom was animator, author and principal for. In her turn, Rumi explains that Tom is threatening her. Her turn constructs a distributive tactic of presumptive attribution that she animates and authors to put Tom in the *bad guy* role with his own statement that he was principal of. Tom follows with an avoidant tactic of topic shifting, saying "I mean you do lots of suspicious things

111

that make, don't make sense to me" (Lines 451-452). He does not refute that he is threatening her, but instead reciprocates her accusation with a counter-accusation, thus constructing mimicked antagonism.

Rumi's Meanings. Tom's parents don't like her. His parents having custody of her son is difficult because Tom can see Sam whenever he wants, but she cannot. If Tom is not going to cooperate with her, but instead issue threats, it may be best to file for divorce and fight for custody on her own. Her guiding narrative is that the courts will always grant custody of a child to the mother. Therefore, she is not going to write an agreement that gives Tom the right to establish address for Sam's custody.

Tom's Meanings. Rumi should not focus on the past. The best thing to do is to focus on what they can do right now. The custody of Sam is with his parents, and he would prefer to get custody back with Rumi. However, if their strategy with the court does not work, he can still see Sam often since he lives right by his parents. He does not want Rumi to allow his history to impact their current discussion. Additionally, the future seems to be fairly fixed with his parents maintaining custody of Sam. In Tom's narrative, Rumi is doing suspicious things – and his meanings emerge as prescriptive tactics in the discourse.

Flat plot line and moral claim that externalize responsibility

Tom's narrative includes a flat plot line that externalizes responsibility to his parents. Tom demonstrates using someone external to the mediation, namely his parents, as principal. So, the responsibility for thoughts and production are distributed beyond Tom himself when he acts as the animator and author while his parents are collectively

given the status of principal. Rumi's first attempt to respond is as animator, author, and

principal. Then in her next turn she mimics Tom and uses someone external to the

mediation as principal as well. Tom's use of his parents as principal provides a claim

about how he believes they will react to the current case of custody. On the other hand,

Rumi's use of the court as principal provides claim that a ruling would go in her favor.

Additionally, her guiding narrative holds that the *right* way to handle a custody dispute in

court is to give custody to the mother, which externalizes responsibility, and limits

constructing a shared narrative between her and Tom.

Case 2 - Excerpt 7

478   T: But here's the bottom line. Like um, the, um, <u>if you want my parents to drop the case I</u>

479   <u>think they might be, ah, willing to do that if they know that I have the right to establish</u>

480   <u>the address of Sam after the divorce</u>. <u>Otherwise they won't drop the case</u>.

481

482   R: <u>Aghh.</u> So you mean to say they will drop the case because they think oh future there's

483   going to be divorce happening….

484

485   T: If…if there's a postnuptial agreement that says that. <u>Otherwise I don't think they're</u>

486   <u>going to drop the case</u>. They don't have a… They, <u>They suspect you a lot</u>.

487

488   R: <u>Yeah they suspect me a lot because they think that I am a mother, and in the world</u>

489   <u>there is no court that not gonna give son to mother…</u>

        Tom begins to use what may appear to be an integrative tactic of initiating

problem solving when he suggests his parents might drop the case if Rumi gives him the

right to establish address (Lines 478-480). Here he is serving as the animator and author

113

for his parents as principal. Although it initially seems that he is opening up discussion about how to approach a settlement about the right to establish address (Lines 478-480), Tom quickly follows with a distributive tactic of prescription when he continues "Otherwise they won't drop the case" (Line 480). Rumi's response shows us that Tom's turn does not function as an integrative tactic, but instead as a distributive one as she gives an exasperated "Aghh" (Line 482).

Tom repeats that if Rumi does not agree to give him the right to establish address for Sam, he does not think his parents will drop the case. He reiterates, "Otherwise I don't think they will drop the case" because they "suspect" Rumi a lot (Lines 485-486). Rumi's response shows mimicked antagonism as she meets Tom's distributive tactic of prescription with a distributive tactic of presumptive attribution. She says, "yeah they suspect me a lot because they think that I am a mother, and in the world there is no court that not going to give son to mother…" (Lines 488-489). In Rumi's narrative, Tom's parents are motivated to not drop the case because they know she will be granted custody if they go to court. Her moral claim is that the *right* decision for any court to make is to grant custody of a child to the mother therefore she has an upper hand with Tom. We gain further insight into Rumi's narrative in a subsequent turn when she says, "So, in the moment that we divorce they (Tom's parents) know that the mother is always going to get son and I'm going to live with my son happily ever. So that's why they want that there's something in written paper that Tom has custody…so they are safe…they have their grandson" (Lines 499-501).

Tom has given authority to someone external to the mediation (i.e., his parents as principal). Rumi responds by using someone else external to the mediation (i.e., the court as principal) to communicate her belief that custody will always be given to the mother. Rumi mimics Tom's production format of using someone external to the mediation as principal. They have constructed a *flat* plot line that externalizes responsibility and limits cooperation on the construction of a thicker conflict narrative.

Rumi's Meanings. Rumi is oriented toward her role as a mother. In addition to focusing on problem-solving, she is aware of her relationship to Tom, their son, and his parents. She brings a party outside of the mediation in to contribute to the discourse. While Tom serves as a spokesperson for his parents who are external to the current mediation session, Rumi continues to stay engaged with their contributions that Tom has brought into the discourse – even though the parents' contributions cannot be validated. When attacked as being suspect, she attributes the concern of Tom's parents resulting from the claim that the court will rule in her favor. In the discourse Rumi uses the court as principal. The claim that the court will rule in the mother's favor functions as the supporting assumption in Rumi's narrative for her option to divorce Tom and go to court to gain custody of Sam. More specifically, for Rumi, the principal of the court trumps Tom's parents as principal which he has animated and authored to bring them into the discourse.

Tom's Meanings. Tom is seemingly focused on problem-solving in this excerpt. However, a closer look shows that he is serving as the spokesperson for his parents – in other words is presenting how he *thinks* they will approach the case. He is in some sense

reporting on his parents to fill in information that is missing in the discourse between him and Rumi. Through the production format of animator and author for his parents as principal, he is disclosing to Rumi and initiating problem-solving. Specifically, offering the insight on his parents, he demonstrates attempted cooperation. He also shares with Rumi that his parents *suspect* her. In Tom's narrative, Rumi should cooperate with him so that together then can reverse his parent's interference. Therefore, resolving the custody concern through the use of a written agreement is the best solution.

Lack of interdependence

The discourse lacks acknowledgement of interdependence. Rumi makes an accusation toward Tom. In turn, Tom indirectly makes a counter-accusation of Rumi by directing his comments toward the mediators. While it is possible that the disputants could have clarified each other's concerns or provided additional disclosure to resolve their dispute, they instead move further away from interdependence. The discourse constitutes a disengagement from dialogue with each other to instead direct their talk to the mediators. The opportunity to develop a thicker narrative is missed and mimicked antagonism continues onward.

Case 2 - Excerpt 8

523   R: <u>You set me up Tom. You set me up.</u> There was no reason that (?) comes there and….

524   he don't even know me and he just come <u>and say that "oh, mother is not logical"</u> ya

525   know.

526

527   M_1: What's…

528

529   T: <u>She's got all these conspiracy…</u>

530

531   M₁: (mmm hmmm)

532

533   T: <u>…theories that um, she believes so much, passionately. She'll even cry about it she</u>

534   <u>believes it so much. And there's really nothing you can do because she believes these</u>

535   <u>conspiracy theories</u>

Rumi's turn appears to be a distributive tactic of presumptive attribution when she says, "You set me up" (Line 523). She shifts to animator-only for the psychological evaluator that she referenced who said, "that 'oh mother is not logical'" (Line 524). She attributes blame to Tom for mandating the evaluation that was included as a part of the litigation process for Sam's custody. Tom reciprocates the presumptive attribution of Rumi, yet does so indirectly by talking to the mediators by being, in a sense, the *authority* on her behavior. The mimicked presumptive attribution illustrates yet another way the cycle of antagonism is constructed in discourse. Tom reports to the mediator about Rumi saying, "she's got all these conspiracy… theories" (Lines 529 & 533). Rumi had previously made a presumptive attribution and directed it to Tom, providing an opportunity for him to respond in turn. Tom shifts footing to direct his turn to the mediators, serving as the authority on Rumi's meanings, limiting her opportunity to respond. The lack of interdependence in the discourse prevents the construction of a thicker narrative.

Rumi's Meanings. Tom has set her up to lose custody of Sam. The psychological evaluation worked against her in Tom's parents' case to get custody of her son. In her

117

narrative, it is a bad idea to make agreements with Tom because he has not always had

her best interests in mind.

Tom's Meanings. Rumi has conspiracy theories and always thinks the worst of

him. He explains Rumi's tendencies and patterns to the mediators to explain Rumi's

meanings. He doesn't directly reciprocate Rumi's attack, but does provide a counter-

attack indirectly by talking to the mediators in front of Rumi.

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor

The tenor is particularly interesting in this case as the discourse is constructed by

disputants currently holding the role of *spouse* who have a tendency of making the other

out to be the *bad guy*, while at the same time attempting to cooperate on a strategy to

regain custody of their son as *parents*. Additionally, the use of pronouns was particularly

salient in this case as disputants shifted between directing their turns toward each other

and the mediators. In particular, Tom tended to explain events and make presumptive

attributions about Rumi directed to the mediators. Tom's guiding narrative is that Rumi

should cooperate with him and stay loyal to him as his wife. Rumi's guiding narrative is

that Tom is a good father but not a good husband. She will work with him to parent Sam

together, however if he is not willing to work with her, she will file for divorce and fight

for custody of Sam. In her narrative, the court always gives custody of the child to the

mother. The tenor is explicitly negative with claims of threat, suspicion, and distrust in

the disputants' discourse.

Tom and Rumi have a longer history with each other than any of the other

disputants in the cases analyzed. We don't have the luxury of knowing all of the context

features of the current dispute, yet the discourse reveals some insights from the past. The

disputants struggle to cooperate over decisions regarding their son. Within their discourse

are mentions of previous petitions to file for divorce, threatening behavior, a history of

abuse, and negative emotional outbursts.

Interpersonal Meanings:
- Tom has abusive history – Rumi will not trust him as husband, but will as father
- Tom counters suggestively that Rumi is a bad wife
- Rumi sees Tom's presentation of cooperative efforts as threats or ultimatums
- Is the expert on Rumi (she has had a psych evaluation through the litigation process)

The tenor of this discourse includes references to the parental role that become

part of the construction of weapons between the disputants. Rumi's attempt to cooperate

with Tom on parenting their son Sam is met with resistance as Tom picks up on the

reference to his abusive history as a husband. Rumi shares, "you're not a good husband,

but you make a good father. There's been whole world telling me, 'this guy has an

abusive history, don't trust him,' but I trust him" (Lines 322-323). Tom reveals his

wound when he focuses on not being a good husband rather than on being a good father.

In discussing the right to establish address, the focus on the parental role creates

contention between the disputants - who are unable to maintain their spousal roles well.

Rumi's weapon and Tom's wound coincide with a counter-attack response rather

than further negotiation or articulation of co-parenting. Tom aggressively asks, "So,

if…the same goes for you. What's the problem for you then? If I have the establish, the

right to establish address. What's your problem?" (Lines 393-394). Rumi justifies her

position with reference to the parental role, "No because, I think it's, the mother should

have that, establish to, ya know, not father" (Line 396). Tom's wound from being called

a bad husband trumps further discussion of parental roles, "So you said you didn't want, you said that you didn't want to talk about history, but you said "you're not a good husband." You should look at yourself as talking about who's a good wife" (Lines 398-400).

Rumi reveals the power relationship Tom has due to financial provisions. She points toward the weapon he is using in this fight. The turn, "It's just like that, ya know. So he's basically threatening me right now that, ah 'you help me, you give me Sam's custody otherwise I'm not going to help you to do all these things.' That's the way that I see it…" (Lines 447-449) suggests the previous turn from Tom was actually feigned cooperation - in fact a threat or ultimatum. Tom's weapon is financial provision that is wielded in an attempt to control Rumi's decisions. Furthermore, the parental role comes into play as Rumi acknowledges Tom's power relationship over her due to the fact that it is his father and mother that currently have custody of Sam.

Acting as authority on the other is another way that the power relationship is exerted rather than the cooperative spousal relationship. It is difficult to envision discourse where Rumi could cooperate equally with her spouse when she has already been put in the role of the *patient* in need of Tom's expert evaluation. He has put himself in the position of the authority that has accurate insight on her behavior. Through shifts in footing, both disputants direct some statements to each other and some to the mediators (as mentioned, there was a point where Tom got tripped up with this). Rumi reveals her wound inflicted by Tom when she says, "You set me up Tom. You set me up. There was no reason that [doctor] comes there and…. he don't even know me and he just come and

say that 'oh, mother is not logical' ya know" (Lines 523-525). Tom acts as authority over Rumi with condescension, "She's got all these conspiracy…theories that um, she believes so much, passionately. She'll even cry about it she believes it so much" (Line 529- 534).

The mood of the discourse is accusatory. The focus is on the negative evaluations of the other rather than the compliments that are shared. The disputants do not trust each other's attempts at cooperative efforts. Both reference saying a lot of mean things. There is an opportunity to construct a thicker narrative, yet wounds still exist that may be preventing the movement toward constructing a shared account of their experiences. Additionally, the weapons each disputant holds (Rumi's potential for filing for divorce; Tom's financial control and threats) are still present in the discourse which seem to serve as a deterrent of cooperation. Unless both disputants lay down their weapons, the other either counter-attacks, avoids, or maintains defensiveness.

Communicative Violence

Mimicked antagonism is in the mediation discourse. Additionally, wounds emerge in the discourse that both disputants have incurred due to weapons that they have wielded against each other. Looking through the lens of Cobb (2010), and extending her application of *weapons* and *wounds*, the following can be gleaned from the analysis:

Weapons: Rumi – filing for divorce; Saying mean things to Tom

Tom – making threats; Using financial help to control; Relationship with parents who have custody of son.

Wounds: Tom – hurt by lack of loyalty from wife.

Rumi – not being able to go forward with life; Loss of strong mother-son relationship.

The context of the litigation system directly works against interdependence in this discourse. If the disputants do regain custody of Sam from Tom's parents and then get a divorce, the court would offer joint-custody with one parent being granted the right to establish address. This tipping point in the direction of one parent over the other contributes to a more accusatory discourse during a mediation session that limits the cooperative nature of the discourse when the disputants consider negotiating a strategy to parent their child together.

A Girardian perspective holds that hostilities can be contained within proper channels for some time. In this case, those hostilities are being contained by going through the litigation process. Drawing from the data, the disputants have at least interacted with a lawyer, a guardian ad litem, and a psychological evaluator. There are formal procedures in place for expressing their concerns and frustrations. For instance, according to Tom, if he and Rumi do not cooperate then custody of their son will remain with Tom's parents. Although the mimicked antagonism is going through the proper channel it is not being resolved. In that same vein, the only agreement the disputants wrote down from this mediation session is that they would not talk about the issue discussed that day outside the mediation room – another attempt to contain their frustrations.

Interestingly, in the sequence of the discourse a mediator's intervention coincided with disputant's shifts in footing at times. By engaging in this discussion in front of

mediators, the disputants had unique communication resources available when the third person is brought into the sequence. Mediation discourse contains additional complexity with shifts in footing because there are increased combinations in positions available in terms of the production format. For example, the third party (i.e., mediator) could add a move which is followed by a disputant's shift in footing. Additionally, the mediators provided a unique resource as an available means for subtle blaming. As seen in Tom's discourse, he acted as the expert on Rumi's thoughts and behaviors when he directs presumptive attributions about her toward the mediators. In a sense he blamed Rumi by telling the mediators what was wrong with her.

The wounds of Rumi and Tom are not mended. Tom was not given any assurance of Rumi's loyalty. In fact, quite the contrary as she suggests that she will "just" file for divorce and fight for custody of Sam on her own. Rumi is currently being held back from moving on with her life in India because Tom's parents, living in the United States, have custody of her son. Additionally, she was not given any assurance that Tom would work with her to strengthen her relationship with Sam. In fact, she instead expresses that Tom was making threatening prescriptions for her behavior.

Both disputants have strong grips on their weapons. Rumi is still considering filing for divorce, and according to Tom is not being a good wife. Tom still holds control of financial resources for helping Rumi. Since she came back from India she is dependent on him which makes his prescriptive remarks that much more threatening. Additionally, he has a slight upper hand on the custody issue of Sam. Since it is his parents that have

custody, he can spend time with Sam. That freedom to see Sam whenever he wants perhaps has the greatest potential to harm Rumi.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Disputants have innumerable communicative resources available to them when mediating their dispute. The Girardian lens sharpens our understanding of any antagonism that may be present between parties in conflict. The analysis of the discourse of these two cases shed light on the complexity of meanings disputants construct through various production formats of conflict tactics. More pointedly, the antagonism in these cases is being constructed within a context of violence (or threat of) that occurred in the not too distant past. The Girardian lens holds that violence triggered needs something to sink its teeth into. Cobb's (2010) delineation of elements of thin narratives seems to be a helpful step forward in our understanding of mediation discourse. Indeed, these elements were constructed in both cases analyzed. Some examples included disputants using distributive tactics to blame, the production format of animator-only to use each other's own words against them, and avoidant tactics of semantic focus to limit construction of a thicker narrative. Cobb (2003, 2010) might suggest that a narrative approach that thickens the conflict narrative could be an avenue out of the Girardian pattern. Yet there seems to be another way to construct discourse that abandons the mimicked antagonism.

The Girardian lens holds up very well for examining the discourse in the case of Rumi and Tom. Not only do disputants mimic antagonism, but some also mimic each other's tactics and production formats at times. The disputants were unable to scapegoat a substitute victim and did not cooperate to construct a thicker conflict narrative. It is likely

124

then, when projecting through the Girardian lens that the conflict will perpetuate onward. The disputants showed no steps toward moving past their impasse as seen through the retention of their weapons and lack of cooperation in agreeing upon a narrative that integrates both of their own meanings and overarching narrative.

While one case is characterized by perpetuated mimicked antagonism as we might expect through the Girardian lens, the case of Nick and Amy culminates in an agreement to "be civil." The disputants agree (albeit tentatively) to "let go" of feelings of animosity in the workplace. In essence, the discourse is constructed as an agreement to not wield weapons again in the future. A scapegoat was not identified. The mediators did not serve as a substitute victim. A thicker narrative was not constructed. Yet, the movement forward appears in the agreement for a "thin veneer" of civility, which "might crack" but holds promise for moving past the impasse. The disputants' stories did not change, but they did agree in a sense to set those stories down when they went into the workplace. While the Girardian lens provides clarity on some pieces of the discourse that are characterized by mimicked antagonism, it does not hold up as well when we see that disputants can construct the agreement to abandon that pattern in preference for civility.

MEDIATION DISCOURSE OF CASES WITH
NO VIOLENCE APPARENT

As mentioned, the first two cases used for the analysis likely had violence present at some time. The following three cases lack any sings of physical violence. Yet there are ways through discourse that the disputants are constructing weapons to wield, and inflicting intangible wounds upon each other. Across the board, the analysis reveals weapons and wounds that have been constructed in the discourse of all the cases, which is discourse that could be characterized by Girard's perspective of mimicked antagonism.

In the first case, the disputants do not accommodate to each other's narrative, yet are able to work past their weapons and wounds to negotiate an agreement that they express satisfaction with. In the second case, the disputants express a lot of past frustration with their communication style, yet never practice a new style that might represent the new desired interaction. The mediation comes to a close without an agreement. In the third case, the disputants coach each other on the structure and form of potential future communication. The Girardian lens sheds light on the discourse in all of the cases; however, there seems to be a change in the mimicked antagonism that challenges the view that violence triggered will always be perpetuated, even without a scapegoat or a thicker narrative (Cobb, 2010).

ANTAGONISM ABANDONED THROUGH SHARED OPENNESS TO A SECOND CHANCE

Girardian Narrative of Bob and April (M1 – Advertisement for Proofreading)
The two disputants met when Bob responded to April's tear-off advertisement posted on a kiosk on university grounds seeking someone who could proofread her

papers. This is a public location where anyone could have seen the advertisement. Since there is no prior relational history, the disputants essentially approach this event as a business transaction – one in need of proofreading, the other responding to advertisement to do the work.

Drawing from excerpts within the transcript, a moral claim by Bob becomes evident. In Bob's narrative, April is a foreign student who is trying to take advantage of him. He says the way she has approached this business transaction is the *wrong* way, and wants to teach her the *right* way the situation should have been handled. The moral claim of April seems to be that Bob is an unreasonable man who does not fully understand what proofreading is and has an unreasonable expectation that she should have to train him how to do it.

The plot of the conflict progresses from an initial trial for work to an unmet need for high quality proofreading and thus unmet pay for the time and energy put into the work. Additionally, there has been an interaction that both feel may have caused harm, which occurred when Bob came to turn his work back in to April. Bob expresses that it is the confusion in the text of the advertisement that April created that has led to this problem. Bob accuses April of creating this problem and attempts to make her take all responsibility, to accept all blame, and to apologize to show that she accepts the fault. However, April attempts to counter Bob's accusation by showing that no one else has demonstrated a problem when they responded to her ad for proofreading in the past. In the end, she offers a slight concession (i.e., externalizing responsibility) that someone

"could" have been confused by the advertisement, to accommodate Bob's accusation.
Yet, she refuses to take full responsibility.

Constructing a thin conflict narrative

The analysis of excerpts in this case demonstrates the construction of mimicked antagonism of Bob and April. The key moments in the discourse of these disputants that are relevant Cobb's (2010) treatment of a Girardian perspective are: a) construction of *bad guy* role; b) lack of interdependence and *flat* plot line; c) accusation of *bad guy* reciprocated; and d) *flat* moral claim evident in qualified acceptance of doing *wrong*. Ultimately, this case ends in the disputants' agreement for a "second chance" to proofread. The disputants depart from mimicked antagonism and move forward with the construction of a qualified apology and abstract assurance for another opportunity to work together in the future. The discourse does not represent a thicker conflict narrative, yet does characterize a change out of an antagonistic pattern.

Construction of bad guy role

Bob states that he is being put into the bad guy role by April, when it was in fact her fault for not disclosing that the proofreading was needed for PhD-level written work. April says that the work Bob did for her was not helpful. Bob argues that there is a problem with April's advertisement for proofreading, because it does not signify the education level needed for the person who does the proofreading. To Bob, April failed to provide specific guidelines for proofreading. Therefore, she put him in the position of the *bad guy* for not filling the role of proofreader correctly. He states, "You have made me look like the one who made the mistake" (Line 115). He places the fault on the fact that

she is working on her dissertation and he didn't realize from the advertisement that he would have to proofread at a PhD level. April states that level of education does not matter because proofreading guidelines are standard, and in fact she has had other students do proofreading for her that was done very well. In April's narrative Bob is not a helpful proofreader. In Bob's narrative he did not proofread appropriately because of the undisclosed context of the work being done at the PhD level.

Case 3 - Excerpt 1

279 B: Well... to reiterate I know what a dissertation is. <u>A dissertation is a Ph.D. student's...</u>

280   <u>paper, final paper... in application for... the degree called Ph.D.</u> The problem... that I see

281   and that I have... is in the lack of specification... of proofreading. You didn't ask me...

282   since it didn't make any difference to you uh, that I, that I only have two bachelors

283   degrees. Okay. No problem there. <u>But you're talking about... the guidelines, the uh, uh,</u>

284   <u>symbols and so forth.</u>

Bob offers an avoidant tactic of abstractness about what a dissertation is (Lines 279-280). His attempt to show that he knows what a dissertation is seems out of place with his argument that April should have provided proofreading guidelines (Line 283) for him. He goes on:

Case 3 - Excerpt 2

284   <u>Well, I've done proofreading, just informally, not for pay. And</u>

285   <u>the person thanked me. Saying that "you've uh, you've seen some things that I've written,</u>

286   <u>grammat-, that I've written that are grammatically incorrect. Thank you."</u> (7 second

287   pause) The key problem is the lack of qualification, the lack of specification thus the

288   lack of guidelines that you did not provide to me. <u>If, if I had, if you had given me... a</u>

289   <u>copy of this... and said, "This is what I'm looking for", then I would have practically</u>

290   <u>memorized... or made copies of this, and line-by-line I would have done, just like this...</u>

291   um... line-by-line... 'cause uh, here's the guideline. <u>I asked you... for some guidelines...</u>

292   <u>and you didn't produce them.</u> So, the problem is in the... lack of understanding... to

293   proofread... by my guidelines, my papers.

He bolsters his role as a proofreader when he shares an integrative tactic of disclosure of his past experience with proofreading and then switches footing to animator-only to bring another voice into the discourse. Bob shares that he does have experience with proofreading in the past (Line 284), and then switches to animate another person he proofread for to say, "[a]nd the person thanked me. Saying that 'you've uh, you've seen some things that I've written, grammat- that I've written that are grammatically incorrect. Thank you'" (Lines 284-286). When Bob is animator-only, he brings another voice into the discourse to further support his point.

Bob assures April that he could have followed her instructions clearly if she had only provided guidelines for him (Lines 288-290). He again uses the animator-only position to demonstrate an alternative hypothetical phrase she could have used, "this is what I'm looking for" (Line 289), which would have allowed him to properly edit her work line-by-line. He then shifts back to animator, author, and principal to accuse her with a distributive tactic of faulting (Lines 291-292). He resists the *bad guy* role that April attempts to put him in.

April's turn could be identified as a distributive tactic of avoiding responsibility, or as an integrative tactic of description. She says:

Case 3 - Excerpt 3

302 A: <u>Um, I don't have a guideline um... I really don't, because uh, this is um, this is uh, this</u>

303   is, you know, pretty standard uh, symbol and marks that the proofreader has been using.

304   I don't have that one, but I do recognize when they use those mark in my papers. Um,

305   because you want meet today…that's, that's, that's how I get this guideline for you

306   today. I mean I assume if I'm looking for a type of uh, uh, if, if, if, I'm looking for

307   somebody who type my dissertation, I don't give the specific guideline tell them how to

308   type. I guess that's the whole issues here.

She is author and animator for her initial statement (Lines 302-303), with a slight leaning toward using the objective role of "proofreader" as principal. By placing the role of "proofreader" as principal, it is not her that puts Bob in the *bad guy* role, but instead his work that does not meet the "pretty standard" guidelines of a proofreader. The use of the role of proofreader suggests she is not trying to avoid responsibility for the undisclosed context of the PhD nature of the work, but is in fact describing that a general assumption of skills within the role of "proofreader" is fundamental to her narrative. The perspective that general skills can be assumed of particular roles is further supported by her integrative tactic of disclosure about typing (Lines 306-308).

April does not cooperate with Bob's claim that she has made him out to be the *bad guy*. April continues on by using past proofreaders as the principal for the integrative tactic of disclosure (Lines 310-312) when she says:

Case 3 - Excerpt 4

308   I don't, I don't know that I, I need to give you

309   a guideline, because according to my past experience nobody asked for guideline to

310   proofread my paper. They realized, they realized what proofreading means, and then,

311   you know, they just proofread for me. So, I have never encountered with this kind of

312   problems before. And, you know, which is a good point, but still, I'm, I'm still, I'm still

313   a little bit confused... um, if I'm looking for people doing anything do I need specific

314   guideline for everything? Because I really don't think that's my responsibility. Uh, to,

315   to tell you what kind of, you know, how to proofread. But, obviously, I'm sorry,

316   obviously you do know how to proofread, but the problem is what you proofread for

317   me isn't what I was expecting... right?

 April makes a shift back to author, animator, and principal for an integrative

tactic to initiate problem-solving (Lines 312-314). Overall, her use of "proofreader" as

principal constructs Bob - who did not meet the standard level of skills as a proofreader -

as the *bad guy*. In his attempt to get out of that role, he accuses her of making a mistake

on the advertisement. She does not accommodate to his attempt.

Bob's Meanings. For Bob, the fact that April is working on a PhD seems to be the

one factor that is contributing to this conflict. He has had no other trouble with

proofreading in the past. If she had clarified the level of proofreading needed, he could

have avoided the negative impact he has experienced from this situation. Bob's narrative

holds that April has not cooperated with him because she did not give him guidelines or

warn him off by stating the proofreading was needed for PhD level work. His shift to

animator-only positioning offers an additional person's voice in the discourse to support

his point that others have appreciated the work he has done. April's disappointment with

his work is the exception to the rule.

April's Meanings. For April, needing to give guidelines and showing a

proofreader how to proofread is unnecessary. She handled this business agreement

correctly. In April's narrative, Bob was just not a good proofreader. If she hires someone

to type for her, she should not have to give them guidelines on how to type. Similarly if

she hires someone to proofread for her, she should not have to give them guidelines on how to proofread. Her production format keeping "proofreader" as principal bolsters the stance that printing "proofreader" on the advertisement was sufficient enough for people to know what was expected, without a need for guidelines. In other words, Bob is the exception to the rule.

Lack of interdependence and flat plot line

Bob continues to fault April's advertisement as the cause of this conflict. There is lack of interdependence in the discourse as Bob pushes for April to take full responsibility for creating a bad advertisement. The disputants have diverging meanings of money as each pushes their narrative forward. Since Bob's proofreading work was not the type of work April had been expecting, she did not want to pay him the total of $32 for the 4 hours of work he completed at the posted rate of $8 per hour. Instead, she paid him $10 total for his time (additionally, he had showed up late to bring his work to April, which caused her to lose valuable time).

During the mediation, Bob said that although the issue of money did not technically get resolved, he is willing to forget about it – he reiterates he wants to be clear that he is helping to resolve the money issue because he is willing to forget about it. The condition Bob sets for forgetting about the money is that April should state her advertisement was the problem. He pushes for her acceptance of fault for being both confused when creating the ad and that as a result her ad could have created confusion to anyone that may have read it while walking by. For April, negotiating money is a means

for reaching a fair settlement. For Bob, money is a means to bolster the weight of his attempt to fault April. Their subsequent discourse follows:

Case 3 - Excerpt 5

761 B: Yes, <u>if she can again say to me, what the confusion, what the element of confusion</u>

762   <u>is…</u>.

763

764 A: <u>I feel like this is a test….. yes please go ahead.</u>

765

766 B: <u>Can you tell me what the element of confusion is?</u>

767

768 A: <u>I guess there are too many conflicts, so I don't remember</u>

769

770 B: <u>According to this ad, what is the, what is the, what is the confusion?</u>

Bob begins by shifting positions to direct his talk to the mediator, and uses a distributive tactic of prescription (Lines 761-762), a statement that he does not finish before April makes a subtle side comment about feeling tested by Bob (Line 764). She does not fully accommodate his attempt to fault her. The excerpt reflects semantic focus on the term "confusion." The word "confused" was initially brought up by April when she said she was confused about whether she had to provide guidelines for everything whenever she is looking for someone to do work for her (Line 313).

Bob's use of the semantic focus on confusion may at first appear to be an avoidant tactic, but the sequence quickly moves toward distributive tactics of hostile questions from Bob. From the beginning of this sequence Bob has taken the term "confusion" out of context to interpret it as April's acceptance of fault for being the

catalyst of the conflict. In Line 766 he asks, "Can you tell me what the element of confusion is?" Rather than seeking disclosure, he is using leading questions to fault her. He has maintained his accusations through continued repetition of questions (Line 770). The sequence continues with an attempt by April to create shared responsibility.

Case 3 - Excerpt 6

772 A: Oh, we have a degree, uh, we have misunderstanding on certain things, but it's not

773   necessarily, no, it's, we misunderstand each other, and we are paying the price right

774   now.

775

776 B: Yes, and who pr…who, who, who initiated, or who established….

777

778 A: We both initiated, I think, I think we both participated.

779

780 B: Well, I did ask, do you remember that I did ask.

781

782 A: About the guidelines?

783

784 B: Yes ma'am.

April offers answers to Bob's question that suggest shared responsibility (Lines 772-774 & 778). Bob continues with leading questions to fault April (Line 776 & 780). The disputants do not cooperate to construct a thicker conflict narrative of interdependence. April has previously acknowledged Bob's persistence when she stated that she felt like this was a test (Line 764). Perhaps her response would have been different if she interpreted his questions as solicitation of disclosure. Bob uses full

production format (animator, author, and principal) to ask leading questions rather than making explicit accusations to guide April to admission of fault.

April does not willingly accommodate to the interpretation of the term "confusion" that Bob has used to frame this sequence. Her turns progress from an avoidant tactic of joking (i.e., "I guess there are too many conflicts, so I don't remember" - Line 768), to an integrative tactic emphasizing commonalities (Lines 772-774; and 778). Next April mimics Bob's tactic of leading questions:

Case 3 - Excerpt 7

786 A: Do you remember that I also said over the phone that this job would be a trial…

787

788 B: No ma'am.

April's avoidant and integrative attempts do not change the sequence and Bob continues his persistent questioning. In turn, she then mimics his distributive tactic of hostile leading questioning (Line 786). In essence, Bob's lack of uptake on April's attempted responses that did not offer complete admission of her fault turned into counteraccusation from April. She used the same type of conflict tactic that Bob had been using. In turn, he does not accommodate to her reciprocated accusation that he is at fault for creating the current conflict (Line 788), perpetuating the mimicked antagonism pattern.

Bob's Meanings. In Bob's narrative, the conflict was caused by a mistake on the advertisement that April created and posted. Bob does not acknowledge their interdependence in this conflict, but instead attempts to resolve the problem in his *flat* plotline by getting April to admit to her fault. To be sure she knows how important her

admission of fault is to him, he has offered to forget about the money if April will simply articulate that she was confused about the advertisement she created. While he will not directly fault her when in the animator, author, and principal format, he indirectly attempts to do so with leading and condescending questions.

April's Meanings. April attempts to acknowledge their interdependence by framing the conflict as a shared misunderstanding that has led to negative consequences for both her and Bob. In April's narrative, the questions from Bob feel like a test rather than solicitation of additional information for understanding the conflict. April's initial turns are failed attempts at *thickening* the plot line of the mediation discourse. Granted, we do not know her intentions, but we see how this was an opportunity to move toward a thicker conflict story that did not materialize. The lack of cooperation from Bob to construct a thicker plot line with interdependent characters is followed by April mimicking the tactic Bob had been using against her when accusing her for being at fault.

Accusation of bad guy reciprocated

Bob makes a counter-accusation that April is the *bad guy*. The tangible nature of money seems to have some holding power in the discussion. Again, in Bob's narrative, not accepting money adds weight and impact to his point that April made a mistake. In April's narrative, money is a potential way to seek a resolution to the current conflict. Bob has mentioned he is willing to forget about the money if April can explain how she created this conflict. April has offered to split the difference on what Bob expected to get paid - $32. Since she already paid him $10, she offered an additional $6.

137

After the mediator paraphrased what April offered, Bob reiterates his previous point about either getting all of the money he deserves or forgetting about the money altogether. He mentions that he wants to forget about the money to make April away of her role as the *bad guy*.

Case 3 - Excerpt 8

829 B: Um……<u>I wanted to have such a strong impact on your thinking</u> (10 second pause)

830   <u>so that you won't use the international student to take advantage of me as a native,</u> I, uh, I

831   ….

832

833 A: <u>That's not really cool, that's not really nice for you to say that…</u>

834

835 B: <u>Well, I have to.</u> If I were to go to your country, if we were in your country – where

836   are you from?

837

838 A: [states country]

   Bob begins with what could seem to be an integrative tactic of disclosure (Lines 829-830). However, we quickly see April has not taken this as a disclosure in her response (Line 833) which points toward his turn fitting closer to a presumptive attribution (a distributive tactic) that April was using her international student status to take advantage of him as a "native." Bob's turn is a counter-accusation that April is the *bad guy*. She does not accommodate to his attempt to make her status as an international student the cause of the conflict, so Bob pushes futher:

Case 3 - Excerpt 9

840 B: <u>If I were to go to [your country], and I were to try to do something, academically….</u>

138

841

842 A: <u>You see, I'm really getting a headache….can we just go back</u>

843

844 M₂: Yeah, uh, is this part of our focus?

845

846 B: Well, uh, I uh

847

848 A: <u>Just tell me that you still don't feel happy about $16 right?</u>

849

850 B: Yes

Bob tries to set the story in the context of her country. April does not cooperate. In sequence, she has first tried an avoidant tactic of process focus for her statement about going back to the main point of the mediation (Line 842). This contribution from April is the one situation of all the cases analyzed that point to a physical effect that this mediation has had on her – a headache. April redirects the focus to the issue of money (Line 848) and that her proposed solution is not acceptable, to which Bob agrees. Here she has used an integrative tactic of soliciting disclosure from Bob which was effective for getting a clear response. Her turns have redirected the discourse away from constructing her as the *bad guy*. The function of money as an avenue for reaching a settlement is rendered ineffective in their exchange. The divergent meanings of money come to light as April is using it as an avenue to resolve the dispute and Bob is using it as a tool to add weight to his construction of April as the bad guy.

Bob's Meanings. Bob not only has taken April's Ph.D. student status as the contributing factor to this conflict, but states that her international student status is being

used against him. April is the *bad guy*. In Bob's narrative, his refusal to accept money further bolsters his perspective on how much this situation has injured him, and furthermore that he is not a bad guy. He shares that not taking the money will make such a strong impact on April to force her to understand his perspective on how business relations should be handled in the United States. The use of money in a symbolic way contributes to supporting the moral claim of his narrative, too (i.e., April handles business relationships the *wrong* way).

April's Meanings. April has picked up on Bob's accusation that she has taken advantage of him and treated him unfairly. She states it is not nice for him to make the accusation. She attempts to move past his continued presumptive attribution with disclosure about a headache. While we do not know whether she actually experienced a headache or not, interestingly the recognition of a physical symptom has been brought into the mediation discourse. April does not cooperate with Bob's attempt to construct her as the *bad guy* in the narrative. Instead, she focuses on the failed attempt to negotiate a resolution on the tangible issue of the money.

Flat moral claim evident in qualified acceptance of doing wrong.
The accusation of being *wrong* is side-stepped through a qualified apology. Bob's *flat* moral claim is not constructed into a thicker piece of the story. April somewhat accommodates to him by offering a qualified apology for her behavior, yet does not admit fault for creating this conflict. Up to this point in the mediation, Bob has mentioned that he just prefers not to take any money at all because that will allow him to get his point (that his way of doing business is right) across to April in a clearer way. Also,

140

April's attempt to compromise on the money by splitting the difference and giving Bob a total of $16 was unsuccessful. The disputants do not work to construct a thicker moral claim

As an alternative to getting more money, Bob had mentioned that he wanted an opportunity to show that he can proofread. The mediator focuses on Bob's request for the opportunity to proofread and asks Bob if he is looking for a second chance. Bob agrees that he does want a chance to show that he can follow the guidelines of proofreading. He then explains what he means by getting a second chance.

Case 3 - Excerpt 10

923 B: Well, <u>instead of her saying "well now that I've got that problem solved, I hope I never</u>

924   <u>see Bob again" when we walk out the door;</u> or if we see, happen to see each other that we

925   won't wave, uh, you know, smile, or have, have continued good relations between   …..

926   uh, your friends and my friends, etc….   <u>in the hallway, between, between, during the</u>

927   <u>break, you came up to me and apologized to me for the way you acted   ……   at our</u>

928   <u>second meeting. I accepted it, and,   but that was outside in the hallway, that hadn't</u>

929   <u>gotten recorded until now. And…</u>

Bob begins by being animator-only for an imagined statement that April might say as author and principal when he says, "instead of her saying 'well now that I've got that problem solved, I hope I never see Bob again' when we walk out the door" (Lines 923-924). He brings a hypothetical voice into the discourse that represents the meaning he could draw from April. He then shifts from talking to the mediator to talking directly to April by reminding her of what she had said out in the hallway while they were on a break from the mediation session (Lines 926-929). Bob draws attention to the apology

141

from April that was given in private – specifically that it wasn't recorded. Given that

Bob's guiding narrative places fault on April for making him out to be the *bad guy* and

his moral claim that she has handled a business relationship in the U.S. incorrectly, the

meaning of a recorded apology to him is amplified. April creates a nuanced apology in

response to Bob's reminder of their conversation. Even though the apology is not about

the ad, he treats it as if this is the apology he needs.

Case 3 - Excerpt 11

931 A: Yes I would like to say in this room that <u>I owe you an apology</u> that uh, the other day

932   when we met<u>, I was so upset because you were late and uh, you know, you didn't give</u>

933   <u>me something that was useful for me, so I was a little bit upset, so I told you that I really</u>

934   <u>don't want to talk to you,</u> <u>I apologize for that.</u>

935

936 B: Thank you.

937

938 M$_1$: That's on the record.

     April seems to have taken Bob's reminder as a request – a request that she

accommodates by repeating the apology (Line 931 & 934). She has not addressed the

original concern that Bob framed the conflict around in terms of her having a bad

advertisement or for not providing guidelines, though. Instead, she pulls an integrative

tactic into the discourse that seeks to acknowledge acceptance of shared responsibility for

both parties in terms of their behavior during their previous face-to-face encounter (i.e.,

she was upset and said she didn't want to talk with him; and he was late and didn't

provide useful work) in her turn (Lines 932-933). Bob has offered a distributive tactic of

avoiding responsibility for the conflict by suggesting that April should accept full

responsibility while in front of the video camera. April's qualified apology is the beginning of moving beyond the mimicked antagonism. Yet, this move is still not enough to end the mediation. Next, Bob seeks out a second chance.

Case 3 - Excerpt 12

940 B: And, would you be willing to give me a second chance, later on, if you need

941   to…because if I ca, if I …

942

943 A: I have to be honest with you, that if you don't mind, I can give you a second chance,

944   but it'll be something that I have more time to work on, that I'm not really in a hurry, so

945   maybe we need to work back and forth a couple times together, I think yes, I think I can

946   do that, I think I can do that, but … you were saying that you don't want to take any

947   money from me for this project, is that correct? Rather, you would like to have another

948   opportunity in the future that we can work this out…

April's video-recorded apology for being upset is not enough to fully accommodate Bob's narrative, as he not only accepts the apology with a "Thank you" (Line 936) but further requests a second chance to do her proofreading. April provides an avoidant tactic of abstractness when she shares that it may be some time before she has more work for Bob to do (Lines 943-944). Bob is content with this opportunity. It seems that April's qualified apology coupled with the avoidant tactic of abstractness provides the turning point in the negotiations.

Bob's Meanings. For Bob, messages *on the record* carry meaning. He drew attention to April's apology in the hallway that "hadn't gotten recorded until now." Furthermore, hearing that April would consider to work with him again is sufficient for him, even if she has not explicitly committed to providing future work. In fact, he

143

confirms that there is no need for a stronger promise or commitment from April. While

the settlement does not include a guarantee for future work, Bob is content with the

statement there is even a possibility he could be *considered* for a second chance. That on-

the-record possibility for a second chance may be an opportunity for him to demonstrate

that he is not the *bad guy* and is instead capable of being a good proofreader.

　　April's Meanings. In April's narrative, she did not act appropriately toward Bob

when he returned the proofreading work he had done. She has been able to apologize for

how she behaved, while also contextualizing the event within the plot line. In essence,

she is attempting to construct a *thicker* plot line. This attempt is not met with cooperation

from Bob. So, through abstraction April avoids committing to work with Bob in the

future by only opening up the *possibility*. In turn, the sequence shifts away from Bob's

continued accusations against April. In other words her qualified apology and avoidant

abstraction removed the opportunity for Bob's further accusations.

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor

　　Looking at the discourse of Bob and April through Cobb's (2010) treatment of a

Girardian lens brings interesting features of the transcript excerpts to light. To

summarize, Bob's guiding narrative is that April is a foreign PhD student who is trying to

take advantage of him by not following what he considers to be standards for business

relations. He has a *flat* view of her character (i.e., she is the *bad guy*) to say she

approached this business partnership in the *wrong* way, and takes this mediation as the

opportunity to teach her a lesson. April approaches the mediation from the perspective

that Bob is an unreasonable man who doesn't know how to proofread (i.e., he is the *bad*

guy). While she wants to make an apology for behaving inappropriately when they last talked in person, she is not willing to take the blame for the situation. Her frustration emerges as she is unable to negotiate, and mentions that she feels that Bob is testing her and getting off track with accusations that are "not cool."

In this case no feelings of interpersonal animosity or negativity are explicitly expressed by either disputant. However, there is some strong antagonism in the way that the disputants communicate. Bob is quite accusatory in presenting his case for mediation (including holding the print advertisement up in front of April's face to see and tossing a $10 bill on the table in front of her). April has acknowledged that her previous communication with Bob was not nice and offers an apology for that. Within the current discourse, the negative tenor emerges in claims of power positions and in a mood of attack.

Interpersonal Meanings:
- Bob is a stranger who did not do work that April needed. In the mediation he is leading/hostile
- April is a foreign student using her role as a PhD student to make Bob feel inferior
- Bob's questioning creates a headache for April
- April was mean in her confrontation with Bob.

April's status as a PhD student may be seen as a power position she holds over Bob. In fact, Bob argues that it is April's lack of specification in the ad for proofreading needed at the PhD level that has made him out to be the bad guy. His turn declaring that he holds two bachelor degrees hints at the wound he experienced from April not accepting his proofreading work. He says, "You didn't ask me...   since it didn't make any difference to you uh, that I, that I only have two bachelor's degrees" (Lines 281-283).

145

Bob suggests they can move forward with resolving their dispute if April will acknowledge that her confusing advertisement created this situation that ultimately led to his wound.

Bob exerts a power position over April to teach her how business relations work in the United States. He has removed the discussion of money from the table so that he can have a bigger impact (i.e., make a strong point) to show April that she was wrong. Bob's focus on April's international student status is another aspect of the tenor. In his power-over relationship his turn discloses his attempt to teach her a lesson. He states, "Um……I wanted to have such a strong impact on your thinking (10 second pause) so that you won't use the international student to take advantage of me as a native, I, uh, I …." (Lines 829-831). April's response reveals that this was an unfair attack. She responds, "That's not really cool, that's not really nice for you to say that…" (Line 833). April does not legitimize Bob's claim. She has not incurred a wound because she deflects his attempt to wield the weapon. So her wound is not from his weapons directly hurting her, but instead from the way in which he aggressively communicates with her through accusations and through condescending questions.

Leading and hostile questions take on the form of a weapon in the discourse. Bob tells the mediators, "Yes, if she can again say to me, what the confusion, what the element of confusion is…." (Lines 761-762). The turn by April, "I feel like this is a test….. yes please go ahead" (Lines 764-765) further substantiates that the questions lean more toward weapons than tools of negotiation. Bob presses forward, "Can you tell me what the element of confusion is?" (Line 766), and this time April side-steps direct

confrontation of the weapon Bob is using with, "I guess there are too many conflicts, so I don't remember" (Line 768).

Accusations and hostile questions inflict wounds on April. Bob pushes the international student status and offers a scenario that places the conflict in Taiwan. He begins to make an argument, "If I were to go to [your country], and I were to try to do something, academically…." (Line 840), but gets cut off. April refuses to cooperate with the claim that she is in a power relationship over Bob and deflects engagement in the discussion by disclosing a wound that has resulted from him wielding his weapons. She prefers to focus on the more tangible aspects of the dispute. "You see, I'm really getting a headache….can we just go back… Just tell me that you still don't feel happy about $16 right?" (Line 842 & 848).

Even if April has denied wielding any weapons against Bob, a need for an apology points toward a wound that he has incurred from her. When he asks her to repeat her hallway apology in front of the camera, she complies, "Yes I would like to say in this room that I owe you an apology that uh, the other day when we met, I was so upset because you were late and uh, you know, you didn't give me something that was useful for me, so I was a little bit upset, so I told you that I really don't want to talk to you, I apologize for that" (Lines 931-934). She has not apologized for a mistake on the advertisement which was the issue originally put forth by Bob. In fact she does not address being a PhD or international student at all in the apology, which were both part of the negative tenor of power relationship Bob was suggesting. Yet, he is satisfied with her attempt to apologize for being upset and for telling him she didn't want to talk with him.

147

He simply says, "Thank you" (Line 936). The indirect qualified apology alleviated Bob's wound.

Communicative Violence

Cobb's (1997) development of the argument for avoiding simple distinctions between mental and physical violence, between objective and subjective experience of pain is extended when we look at cases that have less explicit expressions of antagonism, but instead have mimicked antagonism inherent in the tactics and production format of the disputant contributions. The weapons and wounds are indeed intangible, yet play significantly into the development of the conflict mediation session, and can be identified in the discourse constructed by conflict disputants.

While this conflict may not feel violent overall, if we look through the lens of Cobb's application of weapons and wounds we begin to see the negative tenor that is underlying the discourse. The following can be gleaned from the analysis:

Weapons: April - status as foreign PhD student & being mean in confrontation.

Bob - accusations of the bad advertisement & leading/hostile questions.

Wounds: Bob – wounded as he was made to look like a fool for not proofreading correctly (more pointedly that he wasn't able to proofread at a level that was satisfactory to a PhD student).

April – wounded as she felt belittled having to make an apology; experienced a headache after being tested.

If April's status as a PhD student is perceived by Bob as a weapon that inflicted a wound to his ego, we begin to understand why it was so important for him to get an

148

apology from her – furthermore that the apology be recorded on video. In his eyes, Bob has not had any trouble proofreading in the past, therefore the lack of clarification in the advertisement that this work was for a PhD student set him up for failure. He might have been able to avoid this wound if the advertisement were clearer in terms of the qualifications required for the work.

Bob's weapon of continual accusation of the bad advertisement (in the form of leading questions) is met with April's resistance to be fully belittled. She receives the wound of being tested and resists it at first since no other proofreader seemed to have had a problem with her advertisement. Additionally, April experiences a wound in the form of increased uncertainty about what is expected in terms of guidelines when you hire someone to do work for you in the United States. In the wake of her failed attempt to *thicken* the plot line, she mimics the weapon used by Bob – namely accusation through the use of leading questions. In the end however, she complies with Bob's request for an apology which is a turning point toward bringing the mediation to a close. More specifically, she may have been seeking to alleviate the pain of her headache, which may be a wound incurred from Bob's accusations.

Overall, Bob has an opportunity for his wound to mend, since the perceived weapon of April's PhD and international student status has been disarmed. He received an apology and a vote of confidence that he is a capable proofreader expressed through an opportunity to work with her again. We do not know that April will follow through on that opportunity. While April's wound may not have had the chance to mend, she has found a way to disarm Bob's weapon of his continual accusations toward her. In essence

she has removed the opportunity for him to further accuse her through the qualified apology and the avoidant tactic of abstraction when she said she *might* have work for him to do.

Ultimately, a resolution where both parties fully *understand* each other has not likely been reached. However, the disputants have at least been able to disarm each other by neutralizing the perceived weapons at play. The mediation culminates in an apology that does not fully acknowledge the complexity of the conflict between the two parties, but does allow them the opportunity to move forward beyond the breach. The disputants did not cooperate in constructing a thicker conflict narrative, yet were able to move past their conflict. In this case, the movement forward came from instead maneuvering around each other's weapons, responding to inflicted wounds, and sidestepping much of the additional hurt that could come from continuing to wield their weapons.

MIMICKED ANTAGONISM PERPETUATED

Girardian Narrative of Tamra and George (M14 – Long-distance Romance)

Tamra and George are currently in a long-distance relationship. Tamra lives and goes to school at the local university. George lives and goes to school at a university two hours away, and drives to visit Tamra on the weekends. They believe that the context of being in a long-distance relationship is a contributing factor to their problem. Tamra also mentions that their plan to move in together next semester is adding additional stress. Recently the two of them have been arguing increasingly more. George's concern is that Tamra does not really talk much with him. Tamra's concern is that George tends to say things to her with an accusatory tone. They both speak of "blowing up" at times, which

leads to extended arguments. They are not demonstrating the pattern of communication problems they are describing in the mediation, but are rather sharing past examples of times when they've had problems. In other words, the conflict narrative is being shared with the mediators, but it is not necessarily being enacted here during the session. There is some leaning toward *flat* character descriptions as George says Tamra will treat him like an "enemy" when they are arguing, and Tamra says George is accusatory and always wants to talk about problems.

Neither disputant explicitly expresses that the mediation structure may be the reason that their current discourse does not fully reflect the negative pattern that they are describing. Perhaps the audience of the mediators is influencing their decisions. Tamra mentions that she does not usually disclose much to George because he has blown up in the past and he speaks in an accusatory tone. George continues to argue that Tamra takes things the wrong way because of the way her parents talk to her. Tamra has shared that she does not like talking with her family because often they use things against her, and that in some ways she thinks that George will do that too.

There is a lack of acknowledgement of interdependence between the disputants. Tamra mentions that they talk too much about problems in their relationship and that she wishes things could be a bit more peaceful. George wants to be able to talk about anything that might be bothering them, but wants to keep those conversations short. He mentions that their arguments have recently been going on for hours. Tamra has mentioned that she is confused about what is creating the 3-hour arguments and increased fighting. She shares that her first reaction is to say "let's just break up." However, she

says she loves him and he loves her, and if they can learn to deal with problems more peacefully and more quickly then she would not want to break up. The mediation discourse shows lack of interdependence as George does not pick up on Tamra's narrative that she would talk more if he changed his accusatory tone and ensured her that he would not react by blowing up, even if *she* does blow up a little bit at him.

Constructing a thin conflict narrative

The analyses of specific excerpts from this case demonstrate how Tamra and George construct a perpetuated mimicked antagonism. The key moments in the narratives of these disputants that are relevant to Cobb's (2010) application of a Girardian perspective are: a) *flat* moral claims evident in divergent meanings; b) lack of interdependence and *flat* plot that externalizes responsibility; c) reciprocated *bad guy* accusation; d) lack of interdependence and *flat* plot that minimizes attempt at shared responsibility; and e) expression of *flat* moral claim rather than interdependence.

The case ultimately ends with a "list" of concerns that were raised during the mediation session (e.g., communicating stress, cool down time, tone) and an offer from the mediators to schedule a follow-up session. George expressed uneasiness about needing a mediation session for him and Tamra to talk with each other in the future. The final comment from Tamra expresses hopefulness in the "list" of things to think about, but a sarcastic "I guess I don't talk" in reference to George's accusation that she has not previously (i.e., outside of mediation) shared things with him that she has shared here during the mediation. The disputants have not constructed a thick conflict narrative.

152

Additionally, they have not found another avenue for getting out of their dispute. Their discourse is characterized by a perpetuated mimicked antagonism.

Flat moral claims evident in divergent meanings

There is a punctuated plot line in the narrative, such that there is increased importance on shared activities and conversation while Tamra and George are together in contrast to the times they are apart. The plot line contributes to different meaning for phrases such as "don't want to go" and "I'm not interested" to the disputants. The discourse reveals a bit of wrestling over meanings which reveal flat moral claims. That is, there is one *right* way to be in a relationship. The mediator has paraphrased that it seems the two of them want to work on their communication and preserve the relationship. George raises the challenges he faces when communicating with Tamra:

Case 4 - Excerpt 1

91 (G:)   But, I still think those – I mean it's just

92   communicating. If we get to talk about it then I'm sure I think it'd be resolved or

93   whatever. I just don't know how to tell, to communicate, and like, tell her like, "look,

94   I'm not trying to hurt you, I just have stuff to do and I don't want to, it's not that I don't

95   want to go but" I don't know. And even if I didn't want to go just because I wasn't

96   interested, I still think we, I should be able to say that, like just to say "ok, I'm not

97   interested" and she should be able to say it.

George provides an integrative tactic of disclosure that he does not know how to tell Tamra he is not interested in doing something without hurting her feelings (Lines 93-95). He animates a direct quotation that he might say to her in that situation. In George's narrative, he and Tamra have different interests and each should be able to clearly tell the

153

other what they are interested in or not. He provides an example of the exact way that he might say that to Tamra. He animates a potential line that Tamra could author to be more in line with his communication style.

Case 4 - Excerpt 2

97   Like, right now, like, like, like I'm into

98   computers - I'm an engineering major and she's in film - and right now, like and like I

99   could start talking about film, and she could tell me, look - I mean about computers

100   and she could tell me, like, "I'm not that interested", and I'm like, I understand. She's in

101   film, I'm in computers, I understand, and I do exactly the same thing to her, but she

102   tends to take it personally, like I don't want to talk to YOU or whatever, and it's not I

103   don't want to talk to her, its I don't want to talk to her like sometimes I'm not in the

104   mood to talk about film and no matter what she takes that to mean that I don't want to

105   talk to her. And that's not it at all, it's just that I don't want to talk about film at maybe

106   that particular time or something, and I mean, I don't know, so.

Both George and Tamra provide their own context through which they are putting meaning on the phrases "don't want to go" or "not interested" that they animate. In the excerpt above, George starts by animating the way that Tamra could say she is not interested (Lines 100-101), and quickly moves to make a presumptive attribution (a distributive tactic) about what meanings she draws from the phrase (Lines 101-102). He continues with presumption saying that when he discloses that he is not in the mood to talk about her interests that she takes it to mean he does not want to talk with her (Lines 103-105). Tamra has an opportunity to clarify his presumptions:

Case 4 - Excerpt 3

108 M$_1$: Tamra did you have anything you wanted to say?

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110 T: Well a long time ago, I was going to say that we had a number of stupid fights over

111   like where someone's sock is, or who had the sock last, who um..or just <u>like he said,</u>

112   <u>I'll be like, "you don't want to go?" and then I'll be all upset.</u> But the thing, it doesn't

113   really have to do with that I think he's gonna hurt me, I mean that doesn't. <u>Like we're</u>

114   <u>long distance, you know, he lives at [university] and I live in [town], so if he wants to, so if I</u>

115   <u>have to do something I want him to go with me,</u> because we only see each other like,

116   but now we see each other every weekend, but um, and <u>he stayed during the spring</u>

117   <u>break, but um, it kinda hurts me, it's like, "you don't want to do something?" because we</u>

118   <u>don't really see each other that much.</u>

Tamra provides some context for understanding her reaction to what George says. She creates a bridge to offer a disclosure by first referencing one of George's previous lines (Lines 111-112). She animates a question she might ask to George and then offers an integrative tactic of disclosure that she is upset when he does not want to do things with her. In Tamra's narrative, she and George are in a long-distance relationship and so should spend as much time together as possible (Lines 113-115). Again she animates a phrase to offer more context for her meanings when she adds, "he stayed during the spring break, but um, it kinda hurts me, it's like, 'you don't want to do something?' because we don't really see each other that much." (Lines 117-118). The disputants are both animating questions that they might ask to each other as they are describing their conflict to the mediators. However, their discourse is not a direct question-answer sequence. They continue to share competing narratives driven by their moral claims for the right way to do a romantic relationship without constructing a shared narrative that

addresses the complexity of their differences or moving into a question and answer sequence during the mediation session to clarify each other's concerns.

Animating a particular phrase shows how the disputants are wresting over what the phrase means to each of them. By continually animating reiterations of "don't want to go" or "not interested" George and Tamra provide increasing clarity on the meanings they are pulling from that phrase. They reveal fairly *flat* moral claims about the *right* way to do a relationship in their explanations for what "don't want to go" means to each of them. For George, it is a disclosure of interest, or lack thereof, which should not be taken personally to mean he does not care about Tamra. For Tamra, it is hurtful, because George is not taking advantage of the time that they do have together. In other words, George saying he is not interested in doing something or that he does not want to go somewhere with Tamra hurts her.

Tamra's Meanings. In Tamra's narrative it is *right* to spend as much time as you can with your long-distance partner. Even though she may not share similar interests with George, she would be willing to attend an event he was interested in to spend the time with him. In essence, she acknowledges a moral claim that in a long-distance relationship you should do as much as you can with each other when you are together.

George's Meanings. In George's narrative it is *right* to be open and honest about what you want to do and what you do not want to do - what you are interested in and what you are not interested in. Expressing lack of interest in various topics does not link directly to lack of interest in Tamra. His narrative does not acknowledge a moral claim

156

concerning long-distance relationships specifically (as Tamra's does), but instead concerning relationships, generally.

Lack of interdependence and flat plot that externalizes responsibility

The plot line remains *flat* as George externalizes responsibility by attributing the cause of arguments to Tamra's family. In addition to the divergent meanings of phrases concerning time together, an additional cause for arguments is the level of stress that is present. George's narrative externalizes responsibility by focusing on the stress that Tamra's parents put on her. George states that Tamra transfers that stress onto him. It is this stress that leads to "blow ups" in the relationship. Tamra does not fully accommodate to his explanation. There is also a lack of interdependence as Tamra cites George's accusatory tone as the problem, while George attributes the problem to the stress from her family.

After George gives a specific example of a recent fight over a lost sock, the mediator asks if they've talked about the impact of their families on their relational problems.

Case 4 - Excerpt 4

167 G: Yeah, we've talked about that. I don't know. We've talked about it before. And well

168   lately I haven't wanted to get involved there because her mom puts a lot of stress on

169   her and actually at this point I think she shouldn't talk to them anymore and I know I

170   can't say that because it's her parents or whatever, but it's just like, I don't want to get

171   involved anymore because I'm kind of sick of it because they put stress on her and she

172   puts stress on me. And, just like a ban or whatever, I'm just like, "don't talk to them

173   anymore," cause I don't want to like, relieve her stress from them whatever I don't have

174   the patience anymore to do that, so I'm just like "stop talking to them because every

175   single time you talk to them it's something new", I'm just kind of sick of it.

George attributes stress in the relationship to Tamra's parents. He provides an integrative tactic of disclosure, when he says he does not think Tamra should talk with her parents anymore. He qualifies that he does not have the authority to tell Tamra what to do, or what not to do (Lines 168-170). He also offers the negative affect he is experiencing with being sick of the stress (Lines 170-172). He shifts to animate what he tells Tamra, "I'm just like, 'don't talk to them anymore,' cause I don't want to like, relieve her stress from them whatever I don't have the patience anymore to do that, so I'm just like 'stop talking to them because every single time you talk to them it's something new.' I'm just kind of sick of it" (Lines 172-175). Through the position of animator, George is repeating what he has told Tamra outside of the mediation by directly quoting himself here in the mediation. There is an opportunity to build interdependence and thicken the plot line by authoring additional contributions to the discourse that does not materialize. While the repetition through animation is informative, the chance for the disputants to construct a new discourse that moves beyond replaying the discourse that is characteristically antagonistic is lost.

George externalizes responsibility by faulting her parents for why he and Tamra "blow up" in their relationship. There is an opportunity here for the disputants to engage in a discussion about how they might handle the stress that is coming from Tamra's parents. They do not engage in that discussion, though. Instead, George continues to share that his distancing behavior is due to that stress.

158

Case 4 - Excerpt 5

175   Now I'm

176   just trying not to get involved that much. Personally I also think she should resolve it

177   more with them, I could give her advice, but like, I've been too involved in things

178   between her and the family and <u>I kind of need to distance myself a little bit its causing</u>

179   <u>too much stress – I can't even – it's hard on the relationship because like if I'm taking to</u>

180   <u>take away some of her stress from her family I kind of get stressed out and when we</u>

181   <u>end up having a fight I end up blowing up and we end up blowing up to like a three</u>

182   <u>hour argument or whatever instead of a fifteen minute altercation</u>, or something, I

183   don't know.

He offers a description (integrative tactic) when he shares that the stress is

difficult on the relationship and leads to blowing up and three-hour arguments (Lines

179-182). He identifies the external source of stress and the mimicked antagonism that

results within the relationship. In other words, the stress from Tamra's parents results in a

fight, which results in him blowing up, which is met with Tamra blowing up, which

results in 3 hours of arguing. Tamra does not accommodate with George's narrative that

externalizes responsibility to her parents and instead focuses in on George's tone:

Case 4 - Excerpt 6

185 M$_2$: Let me ask Tamra. What do you need from George to preserve the relationship?

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187 T: <u>Basically the only reason I take a lot of the stuff , to me it seems his tone, it's more</u>

188   <u>than one point in what it says, like the way he talks to me</u>, it's like

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190 M$_1$: You can use the sock example

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192 T: If he says "where's my socks", that seems so stupid. <u>If he says it like, it sounds like he</u>

193   <u>says it like you already did something with it, you know, from his tone</u>. <u>Maybe I'm</u>

194   <u>making it up because of my family, because they always talked to me that way, but I</u>

195   <u>don't think I'm totally making it up, because I think I'm not insane</u>, or something.

For Tamra there is more to the story than just the external source of stress from her family. She introduces George's tone as a contributor to the arguments in their relationship. When the mediator asks her to share what she needs from George in the relationship, she starts right off with mentioning his tone. Tamra does not clarify or correct anything George had previously mentioned about stress from her family. Instead, she offers an integrative tactic of disclosure saying that it is George's tone that causes a problem for her (Lines 187-188). In essence, it is more than just what George says; it is also how he says it. She does offer some concession that she could be misperceiving tone ("making it up"), but does not allow the entire fault for the relationship problems to be placed on her family's influence.

When the mediator suggests that Tamra use a specific example of a conflict that was previously brought up, she uses another integrative tactic of disclosure. She says, "If he says 'where's my socks,' that seems so stupid. If he says it like, it sounds like he says it like you already did something with it you know, from his tone" (Lines 192-193). As she serves as animator for George, "where's my socks" she does not reenact it how George actually asks the question in an accusatory tone – perhaps because she thinks this is a "stupid" example. However it is noteworthy that this is one of many examples where tone is discussed but not demonstrated. It appears there is a ripe opportunity here for the disputants to construct a thicker narrative of: a) how Tamra's parents are influencing the

160

level of stress in the relationship; and b) how George uses tone when talking with Tamra. Yet, the discourse does not represent expressed interdependence or a *thickened* plot that acknowledges shared responsibility for stress.

The disputants' individual narratives about problems in the relationship bypass each other. Tamra attempts to focus on George's tone which is something that is internal to the relationship. George externalizes fault to Tamra's parents and she does not cooperate with discussing that issue. Tamra puts responsibility on George for his tone and he does not cooperate to focus on how he might use a different tone with her.

Tamra's Meanings. In Tamra's narrative George says things with an accusatory tone. She does entertain considerations of the influence the stress from her family is having within her relationship. However she does not fully accept that all the responsibility lies there. For Tamra, if George were to understand the impact his tone has on her, they might not have the "blow ups" in the relationship.

George's Meanings. George's narrative includes "too much stress" that is coming from involvement with the difficulties between Tamra and her parents. Therefore, to reduce stress in the relationship, Tamra should distance herself from her parents. If she is not going to distance herself from them, he has to distance himself from her. The stress causes "altercations" that would previously have been 15 minutes to go on for hours now because of the reciprocated "blow ups" (i.e., mimicked antagonism).

Reciprocated bad guy accusation

The accusation and counter-accusation cycle is evident in this discourse. George accuses Tamra of being the *bad guy* during their arguments and reveals a moral claim

161

that the way she acts is not *right*. Tamra reciprocates the claim that "he says a lot of mean things." George has previously shared with the mediators that he has tried to listen to what Tamra tells him to do in terms of communicating with her, but that he feels he has to be perfect otherwise she "blows up." He expresses that he wishes she would see that he is doing the best that he can; but that she does not. In other words, he is not trying to be mean. The mediator asks him how he feels about that.

Case 4 - Excerpt 7

323 G: At first it makes me upset. And I used to like, about 3 weeks ago I would blow up back

324   at her and it would go crazy or whatever. And lately I've been like, I've been able to

325   control it. No matter what she says, not matter what she does, I'm still going to be calm.

326   I mean, cause she has a tendency to say really mean stuff when we're arguing.

327   Everything, there's nothing held back anymore. "We're arguing so you're my enemy, so

328   I'm gonna say the meanest thing; I know your secrets, and I'm gonna say as mean, use

329   everything against you." Despite all that, I'm still trying to stay calm, but it's hard. Cause

330   like she knows everything about me so she can say some really mean stuff, and she does

331   say some really mean stuff. I think I think like, and when she says it hurts me a lot.

The Girardian perspective is especially poignant when George discloses (an integrative tactic) to the mediators how easy it is to "blow up" at Tamra (Lines 323-325). He further defines what he means about her "blowing up" when he faults her, a distributive tactic, accusing her of saying "really mean stuff" (Line 326). He repeats this phrase a couple of times (Line 330 and 331). In George's narrative, Tamra becomes the *bad guy* during arguments. In fact, to bolster his placement of her in this role, he animates the presumptive attribution, a distributive tactic, of Tamra when he creates an imagined direct quotation from her. He suggests she would say, "'We're arguing so you're my

162

enemy, so I'm gonna say the meanest thing; I know your secrets, and I'm gonna say as mean, use everything against you'" (Lines 327-329). His contribution positions him as a relatively good guy that has been able to stay calm, yet acknowledges that even that strategy is not working anymore.

Case 4 - Excerpt 8

331   And
332   before I haven't been able to control it. When she said something like that, it's like I use
333   control. I'm like all right, that's it. Like that's not fair or whatever. But now when I
334   calmly talk to her, it still doesn't work all that well. And that's another thing I think
335   about arguments. I think there's things that shouldn't be said, and that she has a tendency
336   not to control herself whatsoever in an argument. She feels like "ok we're both enemies
337   now, we can say whatever we want and whatever." I don't think that's right. She should
338   still realize that we've been going out for a while and she should not say some of the
339   stuff. Because she has a tendency not control herself like when we're talking, and I think
340   that's really bad.

George asserts that he tries to stay calm in the midst of arguments, but that it's hard, particularly because Tamra does not control herself (Lines 335-336). This distributive tactic of faulting is repeated a few lines later (Line 339).

George's guiding narrative is that he and Tamra have been in a relationship for a while now, so she should avoid some of the things she says. To demonstrate the contrast between what he sees as the *right* way to be in a relationship and the reality of their relationship, he animates another presumptive attribution, a distributive tactic, to share the meaning he takes from Tamra during arguments. He says, "She feels like, 'ok we're both enemies now, we can say whatever we want and whatever'" (Lines 336-337), which

is a reiteration of his previous presumptive attribution (Lines 327-329). The mimicked antagonism is perpetuated. Tamra responds with a counter-accusation.

Case 4 - Excerpt 9

342 M$_2$: Tamra, is anything that George said sound new or would you like to?

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344 T: <u>Well he also says a lot of mean things.</u> <u>And sometimes when I know that I need him to</u>

345   <u>go away, like I'll tell him, "just go away, leave</u>," like cause he's. Like when we're, he's

346   been staying probably, well he's been here all week, but usually he comes on Thursday

347   and leaves on Monday or something like that. And, and <u>it seems like I can't get away</u>

348   <u>from him, because he's staying with me.</u> You know, and so I'm just like, "<u>go somewhere</u>

349   <u>or leave.</u>" Because I don't want to argue like that really. I know that I'm too upset to argue

350   or something like that. <u>And he doesn't leave and I get really frustrated, so then I blow</u>

351   <u>up</u>. And it's not like there wasn't that period before that when I told him he should leave

352   and at least give me a few minutes to calm down or something.

Instead of clarifying or correcting George's presumptive attributions, Tamra turns his accusation into a counter-accusation. She mimics the distributive tactic of faulting by saying, "Well he also says a lot of mean things" (Line 344). She also uses animation to demonstrate what she says while they are arguing. Tamra directly quotes herself to show what she says to George when she needs him to go away (Line 345). She does not directly address or correct what George has presumed she says by animating her. Instead, she offers a counter-accusation and provides an alternative animated phrase that she might say to George (Lines 348-349). The discourse is not only characterized by mimicked antagonism, but also mimicked tactics and production format for perpetuating the antagonism.

The *bad guy* accusation is mimicked. The disputants are in an accusation-counteraccusation cycle. George mentions that when Tamra blows up it causes him to blow up. Tamra mentions that when George does not go away it causes her to blow up (Lines 350-351). Interestingly, the two disputants continue to attempt to make presumptions about how each other interacts outside of the mediation session. Neither directly negotiates the meaning of what is going on between each other while they are arguing. Since much of the discourse is produced from footing directed toward the mediators, each disputant is disclosing information, making presumptive attributions, and continuing the accusation-counteraccusation cycle without gaining clarification from the other. In other words, Tamra and George are not directly talking to the other as the *bad guy*, but are making the other the *bad guy* in the account of their arguments they are giving to the mediators.

Tamra's Meanings. Tamra's guiding narrative is that when she is too upset she cannot argue. It is time away from the other that provides the opportunity to cool down. In her situation, she can cool down best if George goes away. Since she is in the context of a long-distance relationship where George comes to visit her, she cannot get away from him, because he is staying with her at her place. Since he has nowhere to go to give her time to cool down, she blows up. She may say some mean things while arguing, but George also says a lot of mean things.

The context of their long distance relationship shapes the meanings drawn from the text. Tamra has previously cited the long-distance nature of their relationship as an explanation for wanting him to come to do things with her (i.e., why it hurts her that he

165

"doesn't want to go"). Now, Tamra cites the long-distance nature of their relationship as the point of frustration. She says, "it seems like I can't get away from him, because he's staying with me" (Lines 347-348).

George's Meanings. George's guiding narrative is that people in a romantic relationship should not treat each other like enemies while arguing. Since there is increased disclosure in relationships, each person knows secrets about the other that should never be used against them while arguing. Tamra does this. She says mean things and uses his secrets against him, which hurts – particularly during arguments. He labels this as not being able to control herself, which he says is *bad* and causes additional difficulty for him. Staying calm has been successful for him in the past, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to do that. His attempts to talk calmly no longer work. The perpetuated mimicked antagonism seems to trump his attempts to be calm. They have many more "blow ups" than they used to.

Lack of interdependence and flat plot minimizes attempt at shared responsibility

Lack of interdependence minimizes shared responsibility in the discourse. Additionally, the punctuated plot line of spending time away and apart, due to the context of the long-distance relationship, keeps stress present. Tamra offers a qualified acceptance of blame for the difficulties in the relationship. George makes presumptive attributions and externalizes responsibility. George says that he thinks he and Tamra have different personalities. He says they should talk about problems that come up. He says that he thinks that Tamra thinks that a lot of the stuff he wants to talk about are really

166

"small" and doesn't want to talk about them, which he says is the root of their problem.

Tamra constructs a qualified acceptance of fault.

Case 4 - Excerpt 10

722 T: Yeah, I know, I know I've gotten like kind of bad, but I don't think that it's completely

723   my fault or that I, my reaction is unfounded or something because it does have, there's a

724   reason that I acted like that, it's not completely like things always have to do with him. I

725   think, well we're moving in together next semester, and that caused a lot of stress too.

726   Just the fact that like we're going to be living together and. So when I say I think we'll

727   see each other, like I miss him when he's gone, and I need to see him, like I want to see

728   him, but, it's just like when we're together arguing for like 3 straight days I want him to

729   go away.

While Tamra is willing to accept responsibility, an integrative tactic, for some of the arguing (Line 722) she does qualify that she is not willing to accept the entire fault. She adds that she does not think that her reactions are unfounded (Lines 722-723). Her narrative holds that it is George's accusatory tone that creates relational problems. Additionally, her narrative for relationship involves being able to spend time together with your significant other, but not to argue a lot. For her, relationships should not involve always talking about problems. She constructs an integrative tactic of disclosure that the decision for them to move in together next semester "caused a lot of stress" (Line 725) in the discourse. Her point of tension is expressed in her disclosure that she misses George when he is gone, but then when they are together and argue wants to get away from him (Lines 727-729).

George had previously mentioned that Tamra did not want to talk about everything, which she concedes as true. She does not want to deal with all the things

George brings up, because there are too many problems. However, George's interest in being able to talk about any problems overshadows Tamra's interest.

Case 4 - Excerpt 11

729   Because that's like, he's there, but maybe I'm like have some sort of like fant,

730   like a fairy tale sort of thing, but <u>I just think that a relationship shouldn't be all arguing.</u>

731   <u>Or even all problems, talking about problems</u>. There's too many people like that. <u>If you</u>

732   <u>have that many problems then why are you even going out</u>. But I do, so I do react like

733   that, just, or <u>I do not want to deal with all the things because it seems like there are way</u>

734   <u>too many things to even be dealt with</u>, you know.

Tamra provides an integrative tactic of disclosure concerning her view of relationships (Lines 730-732). She does not cooperate with George's view that couples in relationship should talk about any problems that come up. Their discourse lacks interdependence as they do not address this divergence in their view of relationships. They dig into their stance on relationships rather than discussing their shared responsibility in creating their current relationship conflict or imagining a change. The mediator's attempt to seek common ground is rendered ineffective by George's distribute tactic.

Case 4 - Excerpt 12

740 M₁: Was there, both of you mentioned your escalation point, that you don't mind talking as

741   much, but when it turns into an argument, you both

742

743 G: Well see <u>the thing is, she just said, she does mind talking, though</u>. She thinks certain

744   things like, I don't know, in her opinion aren't worth talking about. <u>I think that's, one of</u>

745   <u>our problem right there though</u>. <u>I feel like certain things are worth talking about, she</u>

746   feels like no they're not worth talking about and so then it turns into an argument because

747   she doesn't want to talk about it. And I'm like, "ok, I think it's worth talking about." If I

748   feel it's worth talking about, it's probably worth talking about. And she feels like, "oh

749   well that's just a small thing, who cares"

In response to the mediator, George digs in deeper with a distributive tactic of faulting when he focuses on Tamra's statement that she does not want to talk all the time (Line 743). His subsequent comment could be interpreted as an integrative tactic of description when he attempts to identify their problem – namely the divergence in their views on relationships (Lines 744-746). The discourse may either be showing mutual responsibility or faulting, a distributive tactic, as George shares the different view that he and Tamra have in terms of talking about certain things.

George shifts to animate his own direct quotation, "'Ok, I think it's worth talking about" (Line 747) which further augments his stance contrasting the line he animates for Tamra, "she feels like, 'oh well that's just a small thing, who cares'" (Lines 748-749). His turn is a presumptive attribution, a distributive tactic produced from the animator-only position. He does not check in with Tamra on the accuracy of his presumption. In sum, George puts the fault for the conflict on their different views regarding talk about problems in relationships. He constructs the perpetuated antagonism by animating contrasting lines, rather than discussing the interdependence of his communication with Tamra which could pave the way toward constructing a thicker narrative.

Additionally, a *flat* plot minimizes the attempt at shared responsibility. Tamra has mentioned that she takes offense to some of the things George says, not just because he brings it up, but because of the "tone or the way he says something" as if it is fact and not

169

open to her opinion. The mediator asks if they might be misunderstanding what each other is thinking during those interactions. George shares that if he does not word things perfectly, or if he slips, that Tamra "totally goes on the defensive." Once triggered, he shares there is no way to "get back to that because like I messed up." He mentions that he wishes she would not automatically take everything he says in the wrong way.

Case 4 - Excerpt 13

899 (G:)   She shouldn't like automatically take it that way, and I think that right

900   now she takes no matter what I say automatically in the wrong way. Like as mean as

901   possible, just in case to try and protect herself from me. And I think that she shouldn't do

902   that or whatever. Like try to protect herself that way because <u>I'm not trying to hurt her</u>

903   <u>like usually</u>. <u>I admit sometimes I'm really bad, but 99 percent of the time I'm not trying</u>

904   <u>to hurt her</u> in any way, but I think she takes that like maybe it's because of her family or

905   whatever, like <u>she's used to people that she loves and that love her hurting her or</u>

906   <u>whatever</u>. Her parents have been divorced several times and all that. <u>So she thinks that</u>

907   <u>people, and then like, try to get her on their side or whatever, so I think that that's the main</u>

908   <u>cause of that</u> whatever. So I don't know.

George qualifies his acceptance of fault, and integrative tactic of accepting responsibility, stating that most times he is not trying to hurt Tamra (Lines 902-904). However, he quickly moves toward externalizing responsibility. George does not acknowledge that Tamra could be hurt by the 1 percent of the time that he is really bad, but instead externalizes responsibility to her parents. He acts as a bit of an expert on Tamra when he offers the explanation that, "she's used to people that she loves and that love her hurting her or whatever" (Lines 905-906).

There is a consistent pattern in the discourse of George speaking for Tamra, directing his statements to the mediators. In essence he offers his expert evaluation on her for why she acts and interprets his communication the way she does. He constructs a flat plot through a presumptive attribution when he offers, "So she thinks that people, and then like, try to get her on their side or whatever, so I think that that's the main cause of that" in reference to defensiveness (Lines 906-908). George speaks as if what he shares is the truth. Tamra has previously shared that it is George's tone (Lines 187 & 193) that is primarily the issue, in addition to the fact that there are just too many problems to talk about (Lines 730-734). Instead of accommodating to Tamra's guiding narrative, George's presumptive attributions contribute to perpetuated mimicked antagonism that minimizes shared responsibility and keeps their narrative thin.

Tamra's Meanings. In Tamra's narrative relationships should not involve a lot of discussion about problems. Tamra says that there are too many things to deal with. Even in comparison to other relationships, hers seems to have a significantly higher amount of arguing. She makes a qualified acceptance of responsibility that recently she has gotten bad about arguing. So, she is partly to blame but not completely. Moving in together with George is a point of stress which may be spilling over into her relationship with him. She has stress when he is away because she wants to see him, but then has stress when he is there because she does not have the space and time she needs to cool down. Additionally, when George always wants to talk about a problem and says things with a particular tone it hurts her.

George's Meanings. In George's narrative, he likes to talk about any issue that comes up. He can be hurtful while they are arguing, however 99 percent of the time he is not trying to hurt Tamra. In George's narrative she is easily hurt by him because her parents have been hurtful. He attributes blame for the current relationship problems to her parents. From his perspective, Tamra thinks some things are "small" and do not have to be discussed. For him, that is a problem. Interestingly he does not spend time acknowledging that she is, in fact, there right now for three hours for the mediation session. In turn, her time in mediation could be a sign that she does think the relationship is worth talking about; however George does not attach that meaning to her time in the mediation session.

Expression of flat moral claim rather than interdependence

The expression of a *flat* moral claim prevents the construction of interdependence. The mediator mentions that they are running out of time. George asks if they will give some advice on what he and Tamra should do to improve their communication and their relationship. The mediators address that their role is not to give advice, and share with the disputants that resolving disputes can be a long process. The mediators ask the disputants if they would like to schedule another mediation session to continue their discussion.

Case 4 - Excerpt 14

1015 G: Well I mean, no offense to anyone here, but <u>I just rather not come here</u> because like it's

1016   cool and all and I feel like, <u>you're not giving us advice, you're just talking with us, and</u>

1017   <u>that's cool and all, but I want to I mean, just talking, I think we can talk together, cause I</u>

1018   <u>don't have any problems talking I always want her to share her feelings with me, but it</u>

1019 seems like she can't share her feelings with me, she has to talk to someone else. Like

1020 everything she told me today I've wanted her to tell me before and I've asked her to tell

1021 me before and like she wouldn't talk about it.

George shares a paradoxical view of the mediation session. Since the mediators
are not giving advice (Note: not giving advice is a *best practice* of mediation), George
provides an integrative tactic of disclosure stating, "I just rather not come here" (Line
1015). He directs his comments to the mediators when he says that he wants Tamra to
share her feelings with him, but that it seems like she can only do that with someone else
(Lines 1017-1019). It seems that this would be an ideal opportunity for George to shift
footing to direct his concern to Tamra. He acknowledges that she has told him things here
that she would not talk about previously. Yet, he does not acknowledge the mediators'
attempt to point toward the facilitating, or coaching function, they could fill to help
change relational discourse for him and Tamra. The mediator makes another pitch for the
service mediation can provide:

Case 4 - Excerpt 15

1023 M_1: Well that's one of the reasons why mediation can be helpful because it's facilitating,

1024 we just facilitate communication, so there's things that you wanted to hear from her that

1025 you heard today, it's probably beneficial to your relationship in the long run, that's kind

1026 of the purpose. I can understand what you're saying about talking, but if she wasn't

1027 talking before, maybe you heard something new. Do you think that might be helpful in

1028 the future?

The mediators have offered to further help Tamra and George work through the
difficulties they are having with communication in their relationship. George shows lack
of interest:

Case 4 - Excerpt 16

1030 G: Yeah, yeah, <u>I just think, I always think that if you can work it out like on your own then</u>

1031   <u>it's not, wouldn't be necessary to come here.</u> But I think that's that's like, I don't know.

1032   Personally I don't get, like I went to one of these with my roommate and I didn't get all

1033   that much out of it because like we didn't like talk at all or whatever. I didn't really get

1034   that much out of it because I felt like he didn't say anything that was really different. She

1035   did say something that was different, it's not just cause she had never said anything

1036   before, like I kept asking her, so I don't know, I just think that's like wrong or whatever.

1037   I don't know if this will help outside or whatever. <u>I mean it's good and all for now, but if</u>

1038   <u>we have to keep going to mediation for her to talk to me, that's not good.</u>

And shortly after:

1131   T: <u>And this list will help too. Because I guess I don't talk</u>

George places an indirect prescription on relationships when he says, "I just think, I always think that if you can work it out like on your own then it's not, wouldn't be necessary to come here" (Lines 1030-1031). He shares his moral claim that Tamra not sharing something with him when he asks her to is *wrong* (Lines 1035-1036). Tamra has shared (Lines 187 & 193) that when he asks a question his tone is accusatory. Yet, the two do not discuss the interdependence between George's frustration that she won't share information with him; and her sensitivity to how he asks questions (i.e., distributive tactic of hostile questions). He sees temporary value in the current mediation session, "I mean it's good and all for now," yet again shows his separation of *good* and *bad* when he adds, "but if we have to keep going to mediation for her to talk to me, that's not good" (Lines 1037-1038).

174

Tamra has picked up on George saying that she doesn't openly talk with him and that she has shared things here in mediation that she has not shared before. The last line of the mediation session comes from Tamra. She ends the session with a compliment about the list of important issues the mediators have written down followed by a comment with a sarcastic tone, "because I guess I don't talk" (Line 1131) – which suggests she felt George was making an accusation.

Tamra's Meanings. In Tamra's narrative, leaving the mediation with a list of issues that they have discussed is helpful. Mediation is a place where George does not speak with an accusatory tone, which has allowed for more discussion of issues than usual to emerge. However for Tamra, George mentioning she shared more here in the mediation than she typically has done is not a compliment but an accusation. She does not actively push for another mediation session when George shows resistance to coming back.

George's Meanings. In George's narrative, the mediation was not particularly helpful. He acknowledges that Tamra has shared more than usual here, and sees that as different from their typical conversations. For him, that's *wrong*. His guiding narrative is that he and Tamra should be able to talk about anything in their relationship. If the only time Tamra can really do that is during a mediation session, then their relationship is in jeopardy. For George, mediation is a good place to get advice on how to communicate better, not a place to construct new patterns of discourse.

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor

Looking at the discourse of Tamra and George through Cobb's (2010) treatment of a Girardian lens brings interesting features of tenor of discourse to light. Tamra's guiding narrative focuses on the long-distance nature of her relationship. Being away from George is stressful, and then his visits to see her create additional stress. George is accusatory with his tone, and always has a problem to talk about. George's guiding narrative focuses on a more general view of their relationship, rather than the long-distance aspect. According to him, to do a relationship *right*, you should always be able to talk about anything and express what you are interested in or not. There is a salient contrast between the tenor of their discourse outside of the mediation, which they are here to discuss, and the tenor of their discourse during the mediation.

The discourse includes talk about tone, stress, thinking the worst, communicating as "enemies", and blowing up. But here in this mediation session they have not practiced any new ways of communicating with each other. Essentially, they talk about some of the communication problems they are having, but do not actually demonstrate for each other the change they would like to see. There is limited mention of "we" in the discourse, but instead accusatory remarks about the problems in the relationship. Mimicked antagonism has won out in this case.

Interpersonal Meanings:
- George is in lower power position because of stress from Tamra's family (he is outnumbered)
- Mood – Tamra hears George's questions in accusatory tone
- Tamra withholds info from George (he is wounded – concerned it is not a good relationship)
- Tamra treats George like an enemy in arguments (says the worst thing possible)
- Both "blow up" at each other

George expresses a lower power position due to getting stress from Tamra and her family loaded on him. The discussion of "we" focuses on "blowing up" rather than on how "we" could cope with the stress in the relationship. The stress has been set up by George as an issue between Tamra and her parents, and then as an overflow from there to being dumped on him. Therefore, he discloses that he distances himself – which suggests that the stress does wound him. He says, "I kind of need to distance myself a little bit its causing too much stress – I can't even - its hard on the relationship because like if I'm taking to take away some of her stress from her family I kind of get stressed out and when we end up having a fight I end up blowing up and we end up blowing up to like a three hour argument (Lines 178-182). The interpersonal relationship in the discourse is that between two people fighting as a result of stress. Alternatively, the interpersonal relationship *could* be two people cooperating to handle stress in a way that supports the healthy relationship. The discourse does not focus on how "we" can handle the stress.

Questions asked with an accusatory tone can take the form of a weapon. Tamra shares that, "If he says it like, it sounds like he says it like you already did something with it, you know, from his tone. Maybe I'm making it up because of my family, because they always talked to me that way, but I don't think I'm totally making it up, because I think I'm not insane" (Lines 192-195). George has said that Tamra takes what he says the wrong way due to her family's way of talking with each other. Tamra's turn here addresses that statement and offers some validation, yet suggests that George still uses a weapon of accusatory tone.

Tamra blowing up at George is met with reciprocity. George's turn, "At first it makes me upset. And I used to like, about 3 weeks ago I would blow up back at her and it would go crazy or whatever. And lately I've been like, I've been able to control it" (Lines 323-325). George reveals the wound he incurs from Tamra's blow-ups when mentioning that she treats him like an enemy. In his words, "she has a tendency to say really mean stuff when we're arguing. Everything, there's nothing held back anymore. 'We're arguing so you're my enemy, so I'm gonna say the meanest thing; I know your secrets, and I'm gonna say as mean, use everything against you'" (Lines 326-329). There is a tension between Tamra communicating with George in an explosive and mean way, and not communicating with him at all.

George looks at not talking as a weapon used against him, too. This weapon inflicts a wound that his relationship may not be as healthy as he hopes. He says, "the thing is, she just said, she does mind talking, though. She thinks certain things like, I don't know, in her opinion aren't worth talking about. I think that's, one of our problems right there though (Lines 743-745).

George turns down the opportunity for further mediation because he looks at the lack of communication outside of this formalized setting, and the talk within it, as a bad thing. He says, "I mean it's good and all for now, but if we have to keep going to mediation for her to talk to me, that's not good. (Lines 1037-1038). This is actually taken by Tamra as an attack. She reveals her wound from the attack when the very last thing she says in the mediation session is, "And this list will help too. Because I guess I don't talk" (Line 1131). Her comment comes after a previous turn of George, "it seems like she

178

can't share her feelings with me, she has to talk to someone else. Like everything she told me today I've wanted her to tell me before and I've asked her to tell me before and like she wouldn't talk about it" (Lines 1019-1021). Tamra's reference to not talking shows that she has picked up on his statements about that concern.

The extent of weapon use is highlighted in the discourse. Earlier in the session, George has addressed that he does "blow up" at times. In particular his "blows up" is mimicked antagonism of Tamra's initial "blow up." The presumptive attribution from George, "she's used to people that she loves that that love her hurting her or whatever" (Lines 905-906) minimizes the responsibility placed on the way his communication does in fact hurt her. He discloses, "I'm not trying to hurt her like usually. I admit sometimes I'm really bad, but 99 percent of the time I'm not trying to hurt her" (Lines 902-904). This turn leaves room for the chance that there are times, even if minimal, where he is trying to hurt her. Even if Tamra's familial influence is removed from the discourse, George acknowledges he has a weapon that can cause a wound to Tamra.

Communicative Violence

This case makes the impact of tenor in terms of weapons and wounds salient. The disputants make frequent reference to "blowing up," a nod toward the violent tenor of their discourse. Through Cobb's (1997) application of weapons and wounds, the following can be gleaned from the analysis:

Weapons: Tamra – Stress from family being transferred to George; being mean; silence or lack of engagement in conversation.

George – Constantly talking about problems; sharing things that bother

him about Tamra; accusatory tone of voice

Wounds: George – he is not important or at least not top priority to Tamra.

Tamra – she always does something wrong; Injury from George's tone of

voice.

Tamra and George talk about how they talk with each other during this mediation

session, yet do not demonstrate the tenor of that discourse. In this session, the structure of

mediation and mediators' management of the communication climate created space for

Tamra to share things she would not share when she is alone with George. However, the

disputants do not discuss how they might transform their discourse so that their patterns

one-on-one could be more reflective of the discourse in the current session.

The mimicked antagonism is perpetuated. The disputants do not construct a

thicker narrative. The disputants do not find another avenue to get out of the negative

pattern. George identifies the source of underlying frustration – the catalyst for the "blow

ups" in the relationship – as the stress Tamra's family puts on her. In turn, that stress is

transferred to him in the relationship. From a Girardian perspective we know that

differences do not go away, but instead are perpetuating in new roles. In other words, the

negativity in the relationship between Tamra and her parents can be perpetuated in the

relationship between Tamra and George. Additionally, while Tamra attributes fault to

George's tone, she does not explicitly demonstrate the change in tone she would prefer.

The discourse contains many instances where tone is discussed but not

demonstrated. It would be interesting to hear how they might discuss a conflict example

from the footing of animator-only to demonstrate the tone that perpetuates the mimicked antagonism and a preferred alternative. It may be beneficial for Tamra to help George identify what part of his tone has the greatest impact on how she reacts to it (see for example, Case 5 where the two roommates actually do practice animating phrases to clarify how the other is perceiving tenor). In the current case, the underlying frustrations are still present that could emerge next time Tamra's stress or George's tone fuel the flame.

The disputants are talking about their difficulties communicating with each other, but are not necessarily using a lot of conflict tactics directed to each other. So, in some ways the mediators, or at least the mediation structure, have disarmed their weapons. However, the disputants have missed an opportunity to construct a thicker conflict story and transform their discourse. Their wounds have not been mended, nor is there any sign that future wounds could be avoided. Since there is not an example of the way they argue, but instead talk about the way they argue, the wounds they have inflicted go unattended to.

The disputants do not *thicken* the plot line, or acknowledge interdependence of how the current mediation discourse is different from the ways they have wielded their weapons in the past. The disputants do not acknowledge how this mediation session constitutes time specifically dedicated to talking about their relational problems, in contrast to previous times where problems spontaneously pop up (e. g., Tamra is upset that George often brings up a problem when she just wants to have fun and enjoy their time together). They side-step the construction of a shared narrative of the long-distance

181

context of their relationship. Since they only have short periods of time together, they have expressed that the weapons each uses against the other (even if unintentionally) cause greater wounds.

In the end both disputants expressed that their current relationship falls outside their individual expectations for a romantic relationship. For Tamra, arguing all the time is outside the realm of her ideal relationship. Therefore, the thought of moving in together in the spring creates stress. For George, if they need to go to mediation to actually be able to talk with each other, there is a problem, which he expresses through resistance to coming back for another session. A Girardian perspective suggests that the disputants will continue to have arguments in which they "blow up" because Tamra will either not want to talk or pass stress from her family onto George; and George will either continue to bring up problems or saying things with an accusatory tone.

GOOD MIMETIC DESIRE AS REHEARSED FUTURE DISCOURSE

Girardian Narrative of Julie and Marci (M23 - Difficult Roommates)

The two disputants are college roommates that live together with a couple of other girls. Julie and Marci have not been getting along in the house. Julie mentions being disrespected in the house. She doesn't talk much to Marci, because she is not confident that she can say anything nice. Her expressed concern is that Marci picks apart anything she says and takes it the wrong way. Marci mentions that Julie does not talk with her much. Marci's expressed concern is that Julie talks with a negative tone. Marci mentions that there is underlying animosity between her and Julie.

This is the second time Marci and Julie have come to the CRC for mediation. In the past, all of the girls that live in the house came to the CRC for a mediation session because they were having a hard time getting along with each other. Drawing from the current transcript, they had apparently discussed their frustrations while living together, and had left with a list of rules and responsibilities for living together in the house.

While there is acknowledgement that things are better now with the rules, the two disputants are still having interpersonal communication problems. The discourse helps point toward moral claims in the narrative. Marci mentions that Julie does not address problems and is concerned that if they do not address problems then they will just get bigger. Julie discloses that she *does not hate* Marci, but that she *does not like* her. Julie mentions that she knows Marci has been talking behind her back. Talking behind one's back is seen as *wrong* by Julie. She shares that she feels if she does not say anything to Marci, then Marci will not have anything to say behind her back. She mentions she just wants to live her life, which she says is hard to do when people do not respect her. There is some talk between the disputants on implicit versus expressed animosity. In Marci's narrative, she presumes there is underlying animosity, which Julie does not fully accommodate to. Instead, Julie focuses on changing outward communication to ensure she doesn't express animosity. Accusations of communicating the *wrong* way are reciprocated between the disputants through their discourse.

Constructing a Thin Conflict Narrative

The analysis of specific excerpts from this case follows to assess the mimicked antagonism constructed by Julie and Marci. These excerpts represent the *how* of the

183

mediation discourse, through the lenses of conflict tactics and production format. The key moments in the narratives of these disputants that are relevant to Cobb's (2010) application of a Girardian perspective are: a) reciprocated accusation of *bad guy* role; b) lack of expressed interdependence; c) *flat* character description and plot line; and d) reciprocated accusation highlighting divergent *flat* moral claims. Ultimately the case ends after the disputants have practiced how to communicate with each other. The disputants do not construct a thicker narrative. They have not scapegoated an alternative victim. Yet, Julie and Marci move forward with the construction of a general agreement to talk with each other a certain way.

Reciprocated accusation of bad guy role

Julie resists being constructed into the *bad guy* role. Marci has painted the picture of underlying animosity in their relationship and a presumption that Julie hates her. The following excerpt comes right after Julie and Marci had met with the mediators individually in a caucus. The mediator mentions that there was a lot of consensus discovered from talking with the disputants individually. According to the mediator's summary, Julie and Marci seem to be trying to decide on ways to communicate with each other when problems come up in the house. The mediator opens the discussion back up by allowing Julie to share something with Marci that she had previously disclosed to the mediators during the caucus. Julie shares that she does not hate Marci and they talk back and forth about what that means.

Case 5 - Excerpt 1

316 J: Sure. I don't hate you. I don't like you, but I don't hate you.

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318 M: <u>What does that mean to you? That you don't hate me.</u>

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320 J: I don't hate you.

321

322 M: Like

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324 J: I don't hate you.

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326 M: <u>But you're angry and upset</u>

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328 J: <u>How do you know that? You're not in my body, are you?</u>

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330 M: I'm just asking

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332 J: <u>You're not in my body, so</u>

333

334 M: <u>I'm asking if you are, I'm not saying that you are.</u>

335

336 J: No I'm not.

Julie provides an integrative tactic of disclosure saying, "I don't hate you. I don't

like you, but I don't hate you" (Line 316). Marci provides an integrative tactic soliciting

additional disclosure, asking, "What does that mean to you? That you don't hate me"

(Line 318), which does not bring any additional information from Julie, but instead

repetition of the phrase. Marci then uses a distributive tactic of presumptive attribution

when she says, "But you're angry and upset" (Line 326) which is neither confirmed nor

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denied by Julie. Instead, Julie leans toward ambivalence (an avoidant tactic) or shifting statements about the presence of conflict (Lines 328 & 332) even when Marci clarifies, "I'm just asking" (Line 330). Marci's attempt to understand Julie's meanings is not immediately met with exposition, but instead repetition.

Marci modifies her previous distributive tactic of presumptive attribution (Line 326) to solicit disclosure – "I'm asking if you are, I'm not saying that you are" (Line 334). She then follows up with an additional question when Julie shares that she is not angry or upset.

Case 5 - Excerpt 2

338 M: You're not angry and you're not upset?

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340 J: No. I ignore you because that's my best way to be nice to you, so that I don't say

341   anything that will upset you, I do not say anything at all. And that is the best I can do.

Julie's response is an accommodation to Marci's request for further information. Julie mentions that sometimes she ignores Marci because that is the best way she can be nice to her. Julie's expressed concern is that she might say something that upsets her roommate, so just stays quiet because she says she knows that Marci will go and talk behind her back (Lines 340-341). Julie mimics Marci's distributive tactic of presumptive attribution (Line 326). After providing the disclosure that she knows Marci talks behind her back, she says:

Case 5 - Excerpt 3

353 J: Cause, I know you talk about me behind my back, so it must upset you somehow if

354   you're venting, so rather than giving you an opportunity to talk about me behind my

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355   <u>back, I'd rather not say anything at all.</u> And that way you don't have anything to talk

356   about me about.

Julie did not respond with elaborated disclosure when Marci used presumptive attribution (Line 326). In turn, Marci had modified her tactic to a solicitation of disclosure. Interestingly, instead of reciprocating with a solicitation for disclosure, Julie mimicked Marci's initial distributive tactic of presumptive attribution here (Lines 353-354). So, not only have the disputants reciprocated attempts to accuse the other of being the *bad guy*, but they have also reciprocated the mechanism to do so.

Julie's Meanings. Julie's guiding narrative is in line with the old adage that if you cannot say something nice do not say anything at all. She does not like Marci at least in part because she "knows" that she has been venting behind her back. For Julie, if Marci is talking behind her back there must be something wrong. To avoid giving Marci something to be upset about, she prefers not to talk with her. In her narrative Marci is the *bad guy* because she talks behind her back.

Marci's Meanings. Marci's guiding narrative holds that someone not talking to her means that they are upset with her. She has received some confirmation from Julie that she is not *liked*. Being told she is not *hated* does not seem to be comforting, as seen in follow-up turns from Marci aimed at gaining further clarification. In her narrative Julie is the *bad guy* because she is angry and upset. Both disputants have expressed the attempt to place the other in the *bad guy* role through presumptive attribution.

Lack of expressed interdependence

The discourse constructed by Julie and Marci shows a lack of expressed

interdependence. For example, one of the points of argument between Marci and Julie is

the use of space in the house. The previous mediation session, with the other roommates,

resulted in a list of house rules that are currently being followed. However, Julie

mentions that although the list has helped, it is still hard to live life in the house when she

is not being respected. They attempt to clarify what the issue of respect might be. Marci

interrupts and in response Julie shuts down the discussion of respect.

Case 5 - Excerpt 4

452 J: It's like I'm trying to live my life and it's not easy to do it when people don't respect

453   you.

454

455 M: <u>What do you mean by that?</u>

456

457 J: Things are a lot better now that we have the rules. <u>I ask you to, you know, keep it</u>

458   <u>down or whatever, which I haven't asked you very much because I'm trying not to speak</u>

459   <u>to you at all, you know</u>

460

461 M: I don't feel

462

463 J: <u>You're interrupting me</u>.

464

465 M: Sorry.

Julie draws attention to respect, saying that people in the house do not respect her.

Marci solicits disclosure by asking what Julie means (Line 455). Julie offers an

integrative tactic of description when she mentions that the current house rules are working. She begins with an example of how things are working well (Lines 457-458) and then switches to reiterate (from Lines 353-355) her strategy of not talking to Marci at all (Lines 458-459). Marci turn is met with a turn that could either be labeled as a distributive tactic of faulting or an avoidant tactic process focus, "You're interrupting me" (Line 463). Marci accommodates with an apology. When Julie is given the floor she responds:

Case 5 - Excerpt 5

467 J: I don't remember what I was gonna say anymore anyways so it must have not been

468   important.

469

470 M: Wait, that's the kind of thing like, I know that you just had a concern, like a problem

471   that you wanted to address, but instead of actually addressing the problem, you just said

472   "it's not a big deal, it must not have been important anyway." That's the kind of thing I

473   mean by not addressing the problem, it just gets bigger.

474

475 J: Well that's the thing, I don't remember it, so logically if I don't remember it, it must

476   not be important.

Julie's turn could be seen as an integrative tactic of disclosure that she does not remember what she was going to say (Lines 467-468); however, it is not taken at face value. It fits the pattern of communication in the household, so it is offered as an example of "the kind of thing" she has been talking about that Julie does that concerns her. Marci uses what could be seen as either an integrative tactic of disclosure or presumptive attribution (a distributive tactic) when she says she "knows" Julie had a concern (Lines

189

470-471). Her "I know" suggests the turn leans more toward presumptive attribution, which has not previously lead to elaborated disclosure from Julie, as seen in earlier excerpts.

Marci pulls Julie's discourse into her turn when she produces the next turn as animator and author for Julie's principal contribution. While not a direct quotation from Julie, Marci reiterates what Julie had just said, "you just said 'it's not a big deal, it must not have been important anyway'" (Lines 471-472). She demonstrates here in the mediation discourse the thing that Julie does that is the problem with how they interact with each other in the house - according to her guiding narrative. Julie does not accommodate to this part of Marci's narrative, but instead provides what could either be an integrative tactic of disclosure or avoidant tactic of ambivalence when she says, "Well that's the thing, I don't remember it, so logically if I don't remember it, it must not be important" (Lines 475-476). She does not directly address what Marci brought up as her concern, but instead reiterates her previous contribution (Lines 467-468). Based on Marci's previous turn, it is likely that in her narrative Julie's turn would be labeled as ambivalence. There may have been an opportunity for the disputants to recognize their interdependence in terms of how their communication is constructing the perpetuated mimicked antagonism. Yet instead, presumptive attribution and ambivalence emerge, which recreates the discourse within the mediation session that the disputants seem to be describing as occurring outside of the mediation at home as well. The negative pattern the disputants are describing seems to be in line with the negative pattern they are currently constructing.

Julie's Meanings. For Julie, she is being disrespected in the house, although she does not elaborate. Perhaps here, Marci's interruption is one of those ways that she is disrespected. She explicitly points it out. In turn, the interruption led to her forgetting what she was going to say. While we cannot speculate on whether she has truly forgotten what she was going to say or not, based on the discourse we see that forgetting means that what she was going to say must not be important. In fact, it is "logical" that if she forgot it, then it must not be important. Since Julie's guiding narrative holds that if you cannot say something nice you should not say anything at all, it is possible she is withholding disclosure from Marci and demonstrating that it is Marci's fault.

Marci's Meanings. Marci seeks further explanation about what Julie means in terms of not being respected. When Julie attempts to explain, Marci acknowledges that jumping in to say "I don't feel" may have been an interruption. She offers an apology for doing so. For Marci, Julie's subsequent turn just demonstrates in the mediation what she sees as the problem in their negative communication pattern outside the mediation. Marci's guiding narrative is that you should talk about problems. If those problems go unspoken, then problems "get bigger."

Flat character description and plot line

There is an attempt in Marci's narrative to construct Julie as the *bad guy*. Julie does not accommodate to this narrative, but instead externalizes responsibility to "tone." Marci has shared that to her it seemed Julie was being "sarcastic" when saying she didn't remember what she was going to say in the previous excerpt (Lines 475-476). Julie says that she really meant that she did not remember what she was going to say and Marci

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accepts Julie's meaning. At this point, the mediator acknowledges that both have brought

up "tone."

In Marci's narrative there is an "underlying animosity" between the two of them

that they are not in a position to work on because, in her words, "Julie doesn't like me."

Through this narrative, Julie is the *bad guy* preventing the possibility of getting anything

accomplished in mediation because of the underlying animosity.

Case 5 - Excerpt 6

503 M: I guess that <u>it's the underlying animosity that bothers me the most</u>, and I, <u>I don't feel</u>

504   <u>like we're really in a position to work on that. So I don't know if there's much that we</u>

505   <u>can get accomplished</u>.

506

507 M$_1$: Why aren't you in position, like what is it that makes you think we're not in a

508   position to work on it, that you're referring to.

509

510 M: <u>Because, because Julie doesn't like me and she hasn't liked me for a long time</u>, and

511   <u>she's gonna treat me like she doesn't like me because she doesn't like me</u>. So that's kind

512   of the crux of the argument. So I don't really feel like I can go anywhere from there.

Marci attributes the root of animosity to Julie not liking her (Line 510).

Interestingly, Marci provides her perspective that she and Julie are not "in a position to

work on that" so is unsure "if there's much that we can get accomplished" (Lines 503-

505). In Marci's narrative, Julie does not like her, which is the barrier for being able to

work out any other solutions. As discussed previously, the disputants have not fully

acknowledged their interdependence, and here Marci uses avoidant tactics of pessimism

that limit discussion of possible resolutions that would involve increased awareness of

interdependence. She focuses on a claim that Julie does not like her which leads to being treated as if she is not liked (Lines 510-511). In her narrative, the underlying animosity of Julie influences the way she treats Marci. She has stayed away from using the distributive tactic of presumptive attribution here ("you're angry and upset" as seen in Line 326) to construct Julie as the *bad guy*. Instead, she reiterates, as animator and author, the position Julie took as principal of *not liking* Marci. The avoidant tactic of pessimism here constructs Julie as the *bad guy* that is preventing a resolution to the conflict. The mediator then asks Julie how she feels about Marci's narrative of being stuck due to Julie's animosity toward her.

Case 5 - Excerpt 7

516 J: The reason you think I don't like you was because the things I'm saying or the tone of

517   voice, right?

518

519 M: But you said, you just said a second ago 'I don't like you', right? So that's true.

520

521 J: I don't hate you, but I don't like you.

522

523 M: Yeah.

524

525 J: It's no I don't like you as a friend. I'm saying I don't feel anything about you.

526

527 M: Ok, so you don't dislike me?

528

529 J: I don't feel anything about you. It's like when you meet, or it's like when you pass

530   somebody on the street.

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Albeit a leading question, Julie asks if the reason Marci thinks she does not like her is because of the "tone of voice" she uses. In Julie's turn the root of animosity is externalized to "tone." This turn could possibly be an integrative tactic to solicit disclosure from Marci. However, through Marci's narrative it functions as an avoidant tactic of topic shifting. Marci's next turn points toward the direct meaning she drew primarily from Julie's previous disclosure (Line 316), when she shifts to animator-only saying, "you just said a second ago 'I don't like you', right? So that's true" (Line 519). Julie animates the referenced line authoring it slightly differently by adding, "I don't hate you, but I don't like you" (Line 521), which is a simplified version of her originally animated, authored, and principled turn about her feelings toward Marci (Line 316). Here we see animator-only lines being constructed within the discourse. The production of these lines represents a shift in how disputants are communicating with each other.

In the previous excerpt, Julie clarifies, "I don't feel anything about you" (Line 529). Julie's turn here limits interdependence even further, and constructs affect that is not defined by animosity, but rather neutrality. In Julie's narrative any animosity that Marci may be feeling can be externalized and attributed to "tone." Furthermore, no matter what she says, Marci draws the wrong meaning due to tone. Julie explains why she does not talk with Marci:

Case 5 - Excerpt 8

534 J: Yeah. It's why I don't speak to you.

535

536 M: But, but you don't speak to me on purpose.

537

538 J: <u>Right, cause I don't want to make you mad</u>.

Julie shares an integrative tactic of disclosure that she does not speak to Marci (Line 534) on purpose because she does not want to make Marci mad (Line 538). In Julie's narrative, Marci will talk behind her back if she needs to vent (Lines 353-355). Furthermore, she places fault, a distributive tactic, on Marci for picking apart anything she says, even when Marci claims that it would be fine if Julie just "said something normal."

Case 5 - Excerpt 9

540 M: Oh, but, it wouldn't make me mad if you, if you just said something like that wasn't

541   mean. Like <u>if you just said something normal, that wouldn't make me mad at all.</u> That'd

542   be perfectly cool.

543

544 J: I know it wouldn't. <u>I don't have anything to say.</u>

545

546 M$_1$:   When you say you don't have anything to say, does that mean, why do you feel that

547   you don't have anything to say? As in anything, as in even hello?

548

549 J: <u>Because it's gonna come out the wrong way</u>. And if I try to be nice it's just gonna

550   sound sarcastic, and then, you know, <u>it'll just get scrutinized over and over again</u>.

Julie's guiding narrative is that anything she says to Marci will get "scrutinized over and over again" (Line 550). So, not making Marci mad means being able to avoid being talked about behind her back. Marci has countered that if Julie "just said something normal, that wouldn't make me mad at all" (Line 541). Julie responds that she does not have anything to say (Line 544). Her turn continues to minimize interdependence. In

Julie's narrative, she is never able to say something "normal," as defined by Marci. In fact, she alludes to the fact that she has learned she can never say things with the right tone. In response to a question from the mediator, Julie shares that even if she tries to be nice, whatever she says comes out wrong and gets scrutinized (Lines 549-550).

Julie's Meanings. Julie focuses on the point that everything she says will be taken the wrong way. She does not accommodate to Marci's narrative that places her in the *bad guy* role due to her animosity toward Marci. Instead, in her turn the root of animosity Marci is describing is externalized to "tone of voice." Furthermore, in Julie's narrative whatever she says gets picked apart. Again, her guiding narrative is that if you cannot say something nice, do not say anything at all. Therefore, her reiterations of "I don't have anything to say" in her narrative is a way to avoid negativity (i.e., making Marci mad). She is not willing to construct a story where she is the *bad guy*, and also reciprocates a slight leaning toward a flat character description of Marci, who is constantly *scrutinizing*.

Throughout the mediation she has set up the contrast between hating and not liking Marci. Here, she further clarifies that it is not even that she does not like her, but in fact that she does not feel anything toward her. Her feelings are neutral. Interestingly, the move by Julie to remain silent to avoid negativity is the move that Marci takes to be an expression of negativity.

Marci's Meanings. Julie is the *bad guy* that has underlying animosity and doesn't like her. The animosity becomes evident to Marci as Julie treats her like she does not like her. Additionally, she animates Julie's previous turn where she clearly stated that she did not like her. In Marci's narrative, by Julie specifically not talking with her, she is further

196

perpetuating antagonism. If Julie would just say things "normal" then she would not get mad.

Shift to good mimesis

The disputants have divergent meanings of the *best* way to communicate with a roommate. The discourse is characterized by an accusation-counteraccusation pattern. In essence each disputant believes there is a *right* way to communicate and expresses that by animating reiterations of a request that might be asked of the other while living in the house. Interestingly, this mimicked pattern becomes less accusatory and shifts toward a constructive rehearsed discourse for practicing how to communicate in the future. The disputants agree to practice communicating the way that each prefers.

Shift Away from Mimicked Antagonism

To set some context for the upcoming excerpt, Julie has shared (in Line 646) that she tends to speak briefly and to the point. Marci acknowledges that being brief is okay (in Line 653) as long as she knows Julie is not intentionally being mean. She gives Julie the benefit of the doubt by saying she believes Julie when she says that her communication style is just to be brief – she is not trying to be mean (i.e., antagonistic).

The mediator checks in to see where they want the mediation to go from there. Julie asks if they can talk about a concrete situation so that they know how to approach their communication in the house in the future. They go through a repetitive and reiterative process of practicing the one particular request. Their discourse centers on "tone" as was brought up in previous excerpts. Marci's accusation that Julie usually does

not make the request in the *right* way is met with a counter-accusation from Julie that Marci is not doing it the *right* way either.

Case 5 - Excerpt 10

688 (J:)   Now how would you like me, you don't need to move your

689   car because I'm not going anywhere, but how would you like me to ask you to move your

690   car?

691

692 M: You could just say 'hey, my car's parked in the garage, can you move your car'.

693

694 J: Ok, now let me say the same thing, ok, and think about my tone of voice ok? 'hey my

695   car's', well I'd say 'hey my car's parked in the garage, could you move your car?'

696

697 M: That's ok, just because it was like uplifted at the end, you know, and sounded a little

698   bit happy. But if it was like 'hey, my car's in the garage, move your car'.

699

700 J: Yeah, but if I'm like having a bad day, that's the way I'm gonna do it, you know.

701

702 M: But could you say like 'will you move your car' or like 'please' or something?

703

704 J: Yeah please ok, please. Alright now what about my car's blocking you in ok.

Marci had previously accused Julie of communicating the *wrong* way in the house. In Julie's turn, she initiates problem-solving, an integrative tactic by asking how Marci would like her to make requests (Lines 689-690). Marci provides a suggestion by animating how Julie, as author and principal could make the request, "You could just say 'hey, my car's parked in the garage, can you move your car?'" (Line 692). Julie rehearses

by animating the line almost verbatim, with the exception of changing "can" to "could." In Marci's turn she points out that she did it well because it was "uplifted at the end" and "sounded a little bit happy" (Lines 697-698). Marci further clarifies her preferred tone by demonstrating an animated and authored contrasting example of how Julie might make a demand rather than a request with a negative tone (Line 698).

The disputants continue to negotiate their meanings by focusing on tone. Julie provides an integrative tactic of qualification when she adds that a negative tone may come out when she is having a bad day (Line 700). Marci animates and authors the line again to suggest that Julie make a request rather than demand and asks for at least a "please" to be added (Line 702). Julie agrees. This seems to be a rather cooperative piece of the discourse. Up to this point in the mediation, Marci has continued to fault Julie for her negative communication.

Julie turns the exercise back onto Marci asking her to demonstrate making a request (Line 704). Marci asks if Julie is asking her to demonstrate how she would make the request, and Julie confirms that she would like Marci to practice saying what she would say in the house. Julie has mimicked Marci's request for rehearsed discourse.

Case 5 - Excerpt 11

710 M: I would say 'hey Julie, um my car's parked in the garage, could you move your car?'

711

712 J: Ok, like the thing that kind of, the 'um' you know, I don't know, I can't explain it. It's

713   not with tone of voice but it's kind of like, I can't explain it. I don't know. Can you try

714   not to use the 'um'? Is that possible? Cause you do, you do do that when, like when you

715   ask somebody to do something, you'll state then 'um' then blah. And for some reason, it

716 makes me feel like you're, I think condescending to me, you know what I mean?

717

718 M: Yeah, that's not, I'm not trying to be condescending at all.

719

720 J: But it's just the 'um' so. Oh, I know, it's cause like, it's cause I have some, I know

721 some people who like, when they think someone's being retarded, they're like 'um'

For several turns now, the disputants have continued to animate this request that could potentially come up in the house. Julie has turned the activity back on Marci to animate the line. Marci shares, "I would say 'hey Julie, um my car's parked in the garage, could you move your car?'" (Line 710).

Julie mimics Marci's identification of a problem in the animated line. Marci had previously accused Julie for her negative tone. Here, Julie provides a counter-accusation by picking out an "um" that Marci used in her request (Lines 712-714). She shares that it makes her feel like Marci is being condescending (Lines 715-716). Marci uses an integrative tactic to disclose, "I'm not trying to be condescending at all" (Line 718). She practices the request again.

Case 5 - Excerpt 12

723 M: 'Um could you move your car'

724

725 J: Yeah like that. But the fact that there is an 'um' in there at all, just.

726

727 M: I'll try my best. I can't, I can't, I can't guarantee anything.

728

729 J: Ok, see that's what I'm talking about. You can't guarantee that you won't say 'um',

730   but I can't guarantee that I can change my tone of voice.

In a second attempt, Marci practices animating the line, "Um could you move your car" (Line 723), which is met be Julie's criticism of the "um" again (Line 725). While each disputant could be shifting toward the distributive tactic of prescription focusing on a specified change required in the other's behavior in order to resolve the dispute, the sequence is more characteristic of good mimesis as the disputants are imitating a positive model. In this case, that model is the other's preference for communication style.

Julie's reciprocated exercise then functions as additional support for her point to Marci that the root of animosity should be externalized to "tone." Marci has drawn the meaning that Julie has animosity toward her. Julie seems to be clarifying that Marci is drawing that meaning from her tone, which can be altered through rehearsal. Marci shares that she cannot guarantee that she will not say "um," to which Julie responds that she cannot guarantee she will have the perfect "tone" when she talks. She discloses, "that's what I'm talking about. You can't guarantee that you won't say 'um', but I can't guarantee that I can change my tone of voice" (Lines 729-730). The disputants did not come to a shared agreement on the *right* way to talk. Yet, here they oblige each other to practice.

Julie's Meanings. When Marci has pointed out a problem in the way Julie makes a request in the house, she reciprocates to point out a problem in the way Marci makes a request. In Julie's narrative, if she says something the wrong way it will be scrutinized and taken negatively by Marci. Pointing out Marci's "um" supports her argument to

201

attribute fault to tone rather than an underlying animosity. By animating a line in a variety of ways during the mediation she was able to see what Marci considers to be the *right* way to communicate. Julie was able to express to Marci that it is difficult to promise that she will always use a "happy" tone by pointing toward a part of Marci's talk that could potentially be difficult for her to control – the use of "ums."

 Marci's Meanings. Up to this point in the mediation, Marci has tried to address an issue of underlying animosity she says Julie has. Marci takes Julie seriously when she said she didn't like her. Since that underlying negative affect could not necessarily be resolved, she cooperates with Julie's focus on an illustration of the "tone of voice" that expresses the negativity. Julie has shared that her communication style of being brief does not equate to being mean, and Marci acquiesces to this explanation. Marci prefers requests be made in a happy and uplifted way. With the new meaning for the brief communication style, rehearsing future requests holds promise for getting along better. The back and forth turns demonstrating how to talk to each other neutralizes the negativity.

Rehearsed Discourse within Thin Narrative

 While the disputants continue to construct elements of a thin narrative, the discourse becomes increasingly characterized by good mimetic desire as the disputants rehearse future discourse that is each other's preferred model. Externalizing responsibility for animosity to Julie's "tone" limits interdependence and the construction of a thicker conflict narrative. The two have not established the understanding of how the hurt from the other is, and is not, playing into their current conflict. However, as

momentum toward rehearsed discourse the disputants are able to address not only tone, but also the form of their communication. Since the two have different views on the *right* way to communicate, they work under the mediators' guidance on an agreement for how to share their problem with each other. Julie states that she approaches an interpersonal problem the way she would approach an engineering problem.

Case 5 - Excerpt 13

840 J: I could use that. I had tried to raise anything I could think of and that was not one

841   thing that I thought of, so I could use that. I have written it down. Groovy, ok. And like

842   with me, I like it a different way, where it's like, it's like, it's the way you would

843   approach an engineering problem, which I know you used to be an engineer, so you can

844   understand this. State the problem, why is it a problem, you know, which is like the same

845   way, but it's more, you know it's brief, it's like the same thing. And then the action you

846   want to see happen, you know. But like for instance, I would say 'your car's blocking

847   mine in and I want to go somewhere, could you move it please', you know, that's what I

848   would say.

849

850 M: I think it's ok, like that sounds great, as long it's in the happy tone of voice, and not in

851   the I hate you die tone of voice.

852

853 J: Yeah, but like, I mean, 6 days out of 7 I'm having a bad day, and it's not cause of you.

854   So, it's probably gonna be like 'your cars blocking mine, can you move it please'.

Julie uses an integrative tactic of disclosure to share how she prefers problems to be communicated (Lines 842-843). She shares it would be best to frame the request by stating the problem, why it is a problem, and the action you want to see happen. She

provides an example of how her format would apply to the request to move the car (Lines 846-847). Julie not only animates the line, to demonstrate the "tone" that Marci suggested, but in fact re-authors it to try to incorporate her own format for communicating. Marci shares that the format of the request is fine, "as long as it's in the happy tone of voice, and not in the I hate you die tone of voice" (Lines 850-851).

Julie provides further disclosure that her bad tone of voice results from her often having a bad day that is not because of Marci (Line 853). She animates her phrase again in a less happy tone which she suggests will be the case "6 out of 7 days" (Line 853), and yet includes the "please" that Marci requested previously (from Line 702). Through all of this exercise of repeating and reiterating lines, the disputants have externalized responsibility for the difficulties at home to "tone." In essence, the disputants have agreed to a formula for how to present content through word choice and tone. They construct a style for communicating that they both agree with. The difficulties with controlling tone and word choice (use of "um") are mentioned, yet they have moved beyond mimicked antagonism through constructing discourse that is in fact rehearsed discourse of future interactions.

Julie's Meanings. Julie expresses that she has a lot of bad days. She attributes the negative tone Marci is concerned with to those bad days. In her narrative, Marci should not pick apart what Julie says because her bad days do not have anything to do with Marci. She will add "please" to what she says, but is not willing to commit to having a "happy" tone all of the time.

Marci's Meanings. For Marci, how something is said matters – and saying something in the "I hate you die" tone that Julie has used in the past is *wrong*. Marci prefers to communicate in a "happy" way. Her guiding narrative in which Julie has underlying animosity toward her is clarified though. Julie has disclosed that 6 out of 7 days are bad days that have nothing to do with relationship as roommates.

Weapons, Wounds, and Tenor

Julie's guiding narrative holds that it is best to avoid talking with someone when you cannot say something nice. She "knows" that Marci has talked behind her back before, and so attempts to prevent that from happening again by withholding communication from her. Marci's guiding narrative holds that roommates should talk in "uplifted" and "happy" ways with each other. She takes Julie's lack of communication as an outward expression of underlying animosity. Tenor of their discourse outside of mediation is addressed explicitly in the mediation session as they animate a repeated and reiterated phrase that demonstrates varying tone.

The discourse of Julie and Marci is characterized by a paradox of indirect discussion of frustrations and hurt and direct practice of tone of voice. Through presumptive attributions the disputants bring the feelings of hate into the open. When attempts to discuss latent feelings are not met with much cooperation, the disputants move toward direct practice of how to communicate with each other. The mediation does not feel prone to violence, yet there is a shortness and coldness to the communication that justified its selection for this analysis.

Interpersonal Meanings:

- Julie is in a power position because she withholds communication from Marci who seeks connection with her
- The relationship of Julie and Marci is in question when a view of what a roommate relationship should be like conflicts with the view that Marci talks behind Julie's back
- Marci is in a power position because she "scrutinizes" everything Julie says
- There is overall mood of animosity – albeit underlying

Julie holds a power position in this relationship because she withholds communication that Marci would like to have with her. If Marci did not want to communicate with Julie than she would not necessarily be dealing with this frustration in the house. Julie explains that her lack of communication with Marci is actually the one way she knows how to be nice. She discloses, "I ignore you because that's my best way to be nice to you, so that I don't say anything that will upset you, I do not say anything at all. And that is the best I can do" (Lines 340-341). So, what Marci is taking as a wound is in fact a strategy that Julie is using to not upset Marci. Yet, this is not an entirely altruistic effort. Julie's turn reveals that she has a wound as well. She says, "Cause, I know you talk about me behind my back, so it must upset you somehow if you're venting, so rather than giving you an opportunity to talk about me behind my back, I'd rather not say anything at all" (Lines 353-355). Julie raises concern about whether the relationship with Marci is characteristically a good roommate relationship and, if not then she chooses to ignore Marci.

Marci holds a power position because she scrutinizes whatever Julie says in the house. Julie explains that from her point of view, "it's gonna come out the wrong way. And if I try to be nice it's just gonna sound sarcastic, and then, you know, it'll just get

206

scrutinized over and over again" (Lines 549-550). Julie reveals that no matter what she says or how she says it, Marci seems to dissect it to look for something wrong.

The overall mood of the discourse includes control and claims of animosity that eventually gives way to agreement on how to communicate in the house. Julie exerts power in the mediation session through process focus, such as "You're interrupting me" (Line 463). Marci's subsequent apology reveals that Julie is able to make this claim for control of the conversation. In terms of animosity, Marci uses a presumptive attribution to bring the relational animosity into the discourse. She says, "Because, because Julie doesn't like me and she hasn't liked me for a long time, and she's gonna treat me like she doesn't like me because she doesn't like me" (Lines 510-511). Marci's wound of the loss of a "happy" tone at home is confirmed when Julie shares, "I don't feel anything about you. It's like when you meet, or it's like when you pass somebody on the street" (Lines 529-530). While the tenor of the discourse could be characterized by weapons and wounds in the interpersonal relationship between the roommates, there is a shift away from animosity as the disputants practice "tone" to rehearse how they will talk with each other in the house from this point forward.

Communicative Violence

Looking through the lens of Cobb's application of Scarry's (1985) "language of agency" we see negative tenor emerge as *weapons* and *wounds* in the discourse. The following can be gleaned from the analysis:

Weapons: Julie – withholding communication; and a mean "I hate you die" tone.

        Marci – talking behind back and venting to friends about Julie.

Wounds: Julie – injured by finding out others are talking about her; and loss of respect in her home.

Marci – injured by lack of communication which means she is not liked; hurt by sharp tone of Julie; loss of "happy" tone at home.

The discourse holds a paradox between feelings of animosity and demonstration of animosity. Julie acknowledges experiencing some negativity, and her way of managing that negativity is to not say anything at all. She attributes Marci talking behind her back as the reason for not talking with her. Julie's wound is a loss of respect, knowing that people are talking behind her back. In turn, her withholding communication is the weapon that Marci attributes to inflicting the wound of not feeling liked by Julie. In essence, Julie's strategy for not getting hurt is the behavior that is hurting Marci.

Having everything scrutinized all the time leads to negativity. Julie does not want Marci to constantly draw attention to how she communicates the *wrong* way. However, instead of accommodating to a narrative that constructs her in the *bad guy* role, she is willing to focus on the demonstration of negativity through tone.

It is interesting that they are practicing their talk with each other here during the mediation, to practice how to avoid demonstrating animosity in their relationship. What could be seen as a pattern of attack-counter-attack (i.e., you point out problem with my tone, I'll point out the problem with your 'um'), could also be a way that Julie has been able to provide some clarity on her point about how frustrating it can be to have to be cautious of everything she says in fear it will be scrutinized over and over (Line 550). As Julie expresses to Marci that it may be just as difficult to control saying "um" as it is to

control tone, a mirror is raised which has the potential to show Marci that she is not being

that which she desires to see in others. The discourse reveals a potential window for

Marci to see into Julie's decision that it is just best not to say anything at all.

This case makes the issue of tone particularly salient. The negative impact of

tone or of the use of a condescending "um" may seem petty. However, these weapons are

still illustrated in this discourse. The roommates could perpetuate mimicked antagonism

in the form of communicative violence in their discourse. I contend that for these two

disputants the communication was indeed inflicting wounds. Yet, through a shift to

rehearsed future interactions, the discourse is characterized by a laying down of weapons.

The disputants do not fully mend each other's wounds; however, they do demonstrate

how they will talk in such a way to not inflict any more in the future.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

By analyzing mediation discourse from cases that do not have physical violence

present, the emergence of weapons and wounds as a construction of communicative

violence is made apparent. Girard's (1977) lens for explaining mimicked antagonism

leading toward violence holds up if communicative violence is incorporated as an

emergent construction of the disputants making. Cobb's (2010) framework for

identifying parts of thin conflict narratives is heuristic. The discourse analyzed was

indeed characterized by parts of thin narratives. There were a number of ways disputants

used conflict tactics and footing to maintain thinness in the narrative (See Appendix A for

a summary chart of all of the excerpts analyzed). Additionally, weapons and wounds

emerged in the analysis that illustrate how disputants are acting upon each other in ways

that could be labeled as communicative violence as I have conceptualized as an extension of Cobb's use of "language of agency" (Scarry, 1985). The tenor, or interpersonal function, of the discourse is characterized by wielding of weapons that have and could continue to inflict wounds. However, what does not hold up as well is the claim that disputants must construct a thicker conflict narrative (Cobb, 2010b). While the aim to thicken stories certainly holds heuristic value for approaching dispute resolution, the findings here support the claim that the pattern of mimicked antagonism can change through other means.

In all three of the cases, the disputants construct conflict narratives that are characteristically thin. Yet, while one does remain within a pattern of mimicked antagonism, in two cases the disputants were able to change the pattern in their discourse. In the case of Bob and April, the discourse shifted away from antagonism through disarming of weapons revealed and constructed in the discourse. A qualified apology from April allowed Bob's wound to mend, and a qualified agreement for a "second chance" brought a cessation to Bob's accusatory hostile questioning. Furthermore, April's role as an international PhD student was neutralized – which symbolized a laying down of her weapon – through the avoidant tactic of abstraction with the offer that there *might* be future work for Bob to do.

The discourse of Tamra and George on the other hand remained as perpetuated mimicked antagonism. While the disputants discussed their communication problems they did not work on changes that would constitute a new preferred pattern. Mimicked antagonism is discussed by the disputants as one "blow up" is reciprocated by another.

Mimicked antagonism is demonstrated as the disputants use presumptive attributions without clarifying how the meanings each has placed on the other may be incorrect. Negative tone is another aspect of the antagonism that emerges in the discourse. Yet, while negative tone is discussed, the preferred tone is never addressed or demonstrated. A thicker conflict narrative is not constructed. A scapegoat is not located. The antagonism is not abandoned. Therefore, the Girardian lens shows clearly that the mimicked antagonism continues as disputants use conflict tactics and production format to perpetuate the pattern.

Marci and Julie constructed rehearsed discourse as a shift away from mimicked antagonism. The disputants did not construct a thicker conflict narrative. There seemed to be a point where 'tone' could become the scapegoat for the disputants. However, while the discourse remains characterized by a pattern of mimicry, the disputants shift away from antagonism and toward each other's preferred model for communication. Through the animator and author positions, Julie and Marci repeated and reiterated lines to practice how they will communicate with each other in the future. I argue that this rehearsed discourse represents a good mimesis (Girard, 1996). Therefore, the Girardian lens holds up for this case and the discourse lends support to the claim that disputants could shift away from antagonism toward preferred models for communication.

DISCUSSION

Conflict mediation provides a context where people can resolve their disputes. In the five cases from the university conflict resolution center analyzed for this project, people in conflict have agreed to bring a third party into the interaction to help out. The option for mediation provides an alternative route to the failed attempts of the disputants to reach a resolution on their own.

Focusing on the actual constructed discourse is an approach that cuts across all styles of mediation. It can still be useful to frame mediation as a context in which problems can be resolved (in terms of interventionist styles) or understanding can be achieved (in terms of transformative mediation of empowerment and recognition) or feelings can be heard and understood (in terms of therapeutic styles). However, through the Girardian lens, we locate a deep pattern of antagonism between the disputants. Without this lens, we are at risk of following a structure to coordinate the discussion throughout the mediation session which could be characterized as Girard's concept of properly channeled violence (1977). The current analysis contributes to the more complete story of mediation discourse that plays with the back-and-forth of disputant talk to highlight the meanings that are constructed by the disputants – particularly meanings that construct antagonism. How disputants construct mimicked antagonism is brought to light through explanation of shifts in footing that change meanings drawn from conflict tactics. Additionally, a look at the construction of weapons and wounds in the tenor of discourse reveal the violent nature of some conflict talk.

212

The analysis of production format and tactics revealed how the disputants are perpetuating antagonism which limits the construction of a thicker story. In addition to Cobb's claim to create a thicker narrative, disputants find other ways to construct discourse that breaks the pattern of mimicked antagonism. Discourse can be characterized by a shift out of the negative pattern without scapegoating an alternative victim and without constructing a thicker narrative.

The lack of cooperation toward constructing a new and thicker shared narrative corresponds with perpetuated mimicked antagonism for some of the cases, but not all. The analyses revealed many of the ways disputants break that antagonistic pattern even within a thin conflict narrative. These findings fall in line with a social constructionist perspective, as the disputants and mediators are continually changing the conflict as they talk about the conflict. Therefore the changed discourse is in fact the change in the dynamics of the conflict.

Conflict as a Social Construction

Disputants cannot talk about their issues with each other without, in the process, also engaging in the actual communication which constitutes their relationship. This means that in essence the mediation session has the potential for providing a *new* story. Bakhtin (1981) would refer to this as an opportunity for an aesthetic moment that gives dialogic selves a new glimpse for understanding who they and the others are in the situation. Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia (i.e., diversity of language) and reflexivity play an important role for identifying what is a constructed pattern of antagonism and what a shift in, or abandonment from, that pattern might look like. Language is never a

213

product of a single unified tradition. So the language is in continuous motion. One consequence is that the meaning of words subtly changes within each new context (Gergen, 2001). Although the opportunity for new meanings to emerge in new contexts is present, people do not always cooperate to share these meanings in a way that can transform their relationship with each other. As explored in this study, lack of cooperation on shared meanings can construct perpetuated mimicked antagonism. On the other hand, conflict tactics can be constructed from a variety of production formats in such a way to break the pattern of mimicked antagonism even if meanings are not shared.

Even if disputants are not leaning toward physical violence, the attack-counterattack pattern emerges as communicative violence through weapons and wounds constructed in the discourse. Girard (1977) argues that once violence is triggered it is not easily satisfied. When a reciprocal process of attack-counterattack begins, it continues to gain momentum often in search of a victim to sink its teeth into. Disputants whose talk is characterized by perpetuated mimicked antagonism that seeks blame and retribution may not readily be accommodating to subtle nuances of meanings available to them. The opportunity is there for dialogic selves (Bakhtin, 1981) to get a new glimpse for understanding who they are, and who the other is in the situation as a step toward resolution. Yet, seeking understanding within a context of communicative violence seems hard to do for disputants.

Bakhtin's (1981) sense of transcending the constant state of flux is the aesthetic moment. This moment is a brief time when I see you and you see me. I need you and your differences because you are the only one that can see me as I see the world. Indeed,

214

I may see my attack on you, but only you can see me as I attack you. Therefore you have an insight on me that I cannot access. Disputants do share these insights with each other. Perhaps there are times when disputants have an "Aha" moment and realize how they have been contributing to the conflict and see an alternative way to approach the relationship with the other person. These moments were not apparent in the five cases analyzed here. Instead, there was a strong pull toward the pattern of mimicked antagonism within the framework of thin narratives. Yet, even within the thin narratives, there are ways that disputants construct a break in the mimicked pattern of antagonism in mediation discourse.

Disputants do not *need to* construct a thicker narrative to break the pattern of mimicked antagonism. Creating thicker narratives certainly appears to be a promising avenue for transforming conflicts (Cobb, 2003 & 2010a). To add to the promise for moving past mimicked antagonism, the analyses here shed light on the ways that animator-only footing, indirect communication, and the mediator as an (in)active witness construct discourse that abandoned mimicked antagonism in place of either civility, a second chance, or rehearsed future discourse. Overall, the discourse of all five of the cases contained *weapons* and *wounds* as communicative expressions of violence. In all five of the cases, the disputants produced conflict tactics and constructed tenor of discourse that kept the conflict narrative thin. Yet, while the discourse of two cases could be characterized by perpetuated mimicked antagonism, three broke the pattern. What is especially promising is that the findings from this study could extend to interpersonal communication outside the realm of mediation. Since changes in the antagonistic nature

of the discourse in mediation was found in powerful communicative moves that were not

dependent upon a particular type of mediation structure, then individuals in many other

contexts could benefit from such changes in construction of their discourse.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first discuss three moves in the construction of

discourse that distinguished perpetuated mimicked antagonism from the break in that

pattern: a) animator-only footing; b) presumptive attribution and indirectness; and c)

shifts in footing directing talk between mediator and disputant. Second, I offer the key

contributions of the study in terms of theoretical implications for the theory of mimetic

desire and mediation discourse. Third, I propose implications for mediation practice.

Fourth, I address the limitations of the study. Finally, I offer a couple potential directions

for future research.

Animator-only Footing

Directly citing someone carries new meaning that the original statement or

question did not have. One view of directly quoting another person is that we are, in fact,

giving a demonstration of what he or she has said (Clark & Gerrig, 1990; Wade & Clark,

1993). While replicating the words spoken previously by one participant is a repetition, it

is not exactly the same. Additional meaning is added to the direct quotation which reveals

the subjective perspective of the speaker.

When we speak of being animator-only in the production format, we see that it is

an illusion to solely be the sounding box for oneself or another. Conceptually, being

animator-only would be reproducing the text exactly as performed before. Yet, this seems

nearly impossible as the speaker is performing some aspect of the previous

216

communication (i.e., demonstration theory), within the current (and changing) context of the interaction. Quoting a real or hypothetical line for oneself or another does something different in the construction of the discourse than paraphrasing. The disputant is not simply bringing in other content pieces of the case for the mediator or disputant to understand, but is in fact doing something with that quotation. In these cases, the disputants expressed their meanings or revealed their guiding narratives through animator-only position as they constructed their mediation discourse.

de Vries (2008) proposed that direct speech (e.g., directly quoting someone) can come in different types and argues that this communication resource has surprisingly widespread uses within the language system. Directly quoting carries different functions within the mediation discourse, particularly for contributing meanings to the discourse to perpetuate mimicked antagonism within the context of thin narrative construction. Mimicked antagonism was perpetuated in a variety of ways through animator-only positions in the cases analyzed here. The animator-only position is a unique communicative resource for saying something to the other person, expressing meanings, and articulating the relationship in a unique way. It was a way to use the other disputant's words against them or to bring an additional voice into the discourse to construct mimicked antagonism. Yet, animator-only position also functioned as a key contribution toward breaking the pattern in one case in particular.

Animator-only to Perpetuate Mimicked Antagonism
There are a number of ways that the animator-only production position contributed to the construction of perpetuated mimicked antagonism. The analyses

revealed some turns where animator-only was used not simply as a rejection of a resolution attempt, but in fact to position the other disputant in a more negative light. For example, animator-only was used to repeat a previous statement from one disputant with the lead-in "you said" as a bridge toward reciprocating the attack (Case 2, Excerpt 4). Tom used Rumi's attack as a springboard to launch his counter-attack.

Disputants also directly quoted the other from a time prior to the mediation session. In these situations, the mediator was not a witness to the original performance of that statement or question. The repetition of a previous statement was used as an avoidant tactic of semantic focus when Tom thought it was unfair to talk about "history" given that Rumi had previously said that other people should not look at her history (Case 2, Excerpt 1).

Each disputant may have had her or his own understanding of the original context of the statement, which shaped its meaning. Through animating the other's previous statement, a disputant could bring a fuller and more detailed part of an aspect of their guiding narrative forward (Case 1, Excerpt 2). In one example, Amy revealed how hostile it was to hear "fuck you bitch" on her answering machine. Here she revealed how much the messages Nick left shaped the context of the conflict, and even the attempt to reach a resolution within the current mediation session. Nick had previously attempted to minimize the impact of the messages. The back-and-forth turns of the disputants in mediation reveal their meanings drawn from the other's statement. The direct quotation of the other is a clue that new meanings are being brought into the discourse.

A disputant may also directly quote himself to provide the mediator a window into what he usually says to the other disputant during arguments (Case 4, Excerpt 4). George repeated what he told Tamra – to not talk to her parents because of all the stress they bring to the relationship. This animated line also revealed the aspect of the thin narrative constructed by George as he externalized responsibility for the conflict to Tamra's parents. The animator-only position also functioned to demonstrate a back-and-forth pattern of how conflict emerges when the disputants ask each other questions (Case 4, Excerpt 3). Again, the mediator is given a window into how George and Tamra argue as they reveal what it is like when they do not agree on how they want to spend their free time in their relationship. Animating these lines repeated the conflict, or brought it into the current discourse of the mediation session as the mimicked antagonism is perpetuated as the conflict is demonstrated for the mediators.

The animator-only position also allows disputants to bring an additional voice into the discourse. Sometimes this is a voice representing someone that was used against the disputant to contribute to the antagonism (Case 2, Excerpt 8). Rumi addressed that the psychological evaluator was used against her by Tom.

Sometimes disputants also animate a hypothetical statement that the other disputant might make, revealing how the other disputant fits into the guiding narrative. These hypothetical statements came in the form of distributive presumptive attributions (Case 3, Excerpt 10; Case 4, Excerpt 7; Case 4, Excerpt 8; Case 4, Excerpt 12). Bob revealed his thought that Amy could want to just get rid of him. George revealed that in his eyes, Tamra looked at him as an enemy or did not care enough to talk about certain

things. The animation of a hypothetical statement also sets a contrast between what the preferred communication should be and how the other actually does communicate (Case 4, Excerpt 2). In all of these instances, the animator-only position perpetuated mimicked-antagonism. Now, I move to instances where animator-only contributed to the break in the antagonistic pattern.

Animator-only to Abandon Antagonism or Shift to Good Mimesis

Animator-only positioning contributed to the break in the mimicked antagonism pattern for some disputants. Sometimes this production format was used to bring an additional voice into the discourse. An additional animated voice could function to give new information that the other disputant was not previously privy to (Case 1, Excerpt 7). Amy shared what she said to her friend about Nick to clarify that she was not going to file a restraining order. The new information may have contributed to the openness to work on a discourse of civility. By bringing this voice into the discourse, Amy offered some assurance to Nick that the threat of a restraining order was clarified (at least in a qualified way) to not truly be a threat.

Bringing a new voice into the discourse through the animator-only position also functioned to support an argument to work together (Case 3; Excerpt 2). In this instance, Bob argued that he was not the bad guy in the narrative because he had previously done proofreading work for someone that was very satisfied with the product. An additional voice that said Bob could do a good job may have paved the way for openness to a second chance for these disputants. The conflict regarding proofreading work between Bob and April was put into a larger context where the principal of "proofreader" was

approached from two different guiding narratives. The animator-only position brought an additional voice into the discourse to support one of those guiding narratives (in this case, Bob's).

A shift from mimicked antagonism to good mimesis emerged in the discourse through the animator-only position. From the social constructionist perspective, a change in discourse is in fact a change in the conflict. As seen in Case 5, the animator-only position was used as a repetitive form of rehearsed discourse for future interactions. Instead of working on a thicker narrative or addressing issues with underlying animosity, the disputants in this case abandoned antagonism and shifted to good mimesis by practicing lines that fit within each other's ideal model for communication. A direct quotation of negative feelings could have quickly led to mimicked antagonism (Case 5, Excerpt 7); yet externalizing responsibility for those negative feelings to tone allowed the disputants to practice a different way of talking. When the first disputant accommodated to the request to practice their future discourse (Case 5, Excerpt 10), she in turn mimicked the request (Case 5, Excerpt 11). The disputants gained momentum in rehearsing a potential future interaction in what could be characterized as a shift to good mimesis (Case 5, Excerpt 12).

Presumptive Attribution and Indirect Communication

When a disputant contributes a turn in the sequence of dialogue, everyone present could draw different sets of meanings. Multipotentiality - the fact that words can be interpreted in a variety of ways - may in fact serve as a valuable resource to disputants during mediation. Some disputants made presumptive attributions that revealed the

meanings they put on the other's contributions to the conflict. In some instances inaccurate attributions were clarified by the original speaker, but in many they were not. In other instances, the confusion of meaning was side-stepped through indirectness. Without quite committing to any promise, someone could appease the need of the other to move beyond the current issue of discussion. Being indirect was a strategy to avoid words that may be triggers or hot-buttons that could escalate the conflict or damage a productive context for the session.

Pinker (2007) drew attention to *indirectness* highlighting that implicature can be used to maintain a proper orientation, or face (Goffman, 1959), in front of another when making an inappropriate request (e.g., indirectly trying to bribe a police officer out of a traffic ticket). Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) suggests that people adjust the directness of their language for smoother social interactions that help maintain face. Therefore, rather than directly, or baldly, giving statements or making requests, people rely on indirectness to get their point across. For example, disputants could use indirectness by producing their turn from a particular footing that communicates cooperation to one participant (i.e., the mediator) while expressing harm through the message (i.e., a dig) to another participant (i.e., the disputant).

In mediation, participants are often negotiating multiple relationship types (e.g., we are now on different sides of negotiating a deal; we are co-parents planning an approach for raising our child; we are opponents fighting for the greatest gain; we are co-workers trying to advance our individual careers after a messy romantic split; etc.) and so standards for communication previously learned are interpreted differently within the

new relationship context. Not only does this provide a new context for interpreting and constructing meaning, it may also be possible to use disguised cooperative efforts to come across as rational and well-mannered in mediation, while indirectly making digs at the other disputant. Alternatively, indirect communication may allow disputants to be vague and side-step the need to share meanings and construct a different conflict narrative for moving past a difficult problem or to further perpetuate antagonism.

So, disputants are performing for the mediators as well as for the other disputant in these cases. A first glance at the contributions to the discourse may lead to incorrect first interpretations. Looking at the subsequent turns between the disputants brings further meanings to light – including those where the disputant provides the explanation to the mediator of how the other's previous comment was indirect. Often presumptive attributions served as an alternative to directly asking the other disputant a question - which perpetuated mimicked antagonism. In other instances, keeping vague – and away from labeling with clear, mutually understood language – was beneficial as long as presumptive attributions were not present. So presumptive attributions were one of the ways disputants wielded their weapons against the other. Alternatively, indirectness was a way for side-stepping an account of the conflict situation that led to abandoning antagonism.

Presumptive Attribution to Perpetuate Mimicked Antagonism

When presumptive attributions were made, some disputants took the opportunity to correct the meanings the other unfairly placed on them. (Case 1, Excerpt 17).

Other times, these presumptive attributions went unaddressed (Case 1, Excerpt 10; Case 1, Excerpt 15). For example, Amy made a presumptive attribution that Nick was unfairly trying to take a "moral high road" in the mediation when he was in fact the one with the problem (as she saw it). Still, other times presumptive attributions were mimicked contributing to a perpetuated antagonistic pattern of attack-counterattack (Case 2, Excerpt 7). In one instance, Rumi met Tom's distributive tactic of prescription with a presumptive attribution about his parents. In the back-and-forth exchange, Rumi made a presumptive attribution that Tom set her up (Case 2, Excerpt 8) which was met by Tom's presumptive attribution that Rumi "has all these conspiracy theories."

In terms of narrative, presumptive attribution was used to keep a disputant in the bad guy role (Case 4, Excerpt 2; Case 4, Excerpt 7; Case 4, Excerpt 8; Case 4, Excerpt 12; Case 5, Excerpt 1) and to mimic the antagonism through counter-accusation (Case 4, Excerpt 9; Case 5, Excerpt 3). What initially appeared to be a disclosure was also clarified to be a presumptive attribution at times. By listening to the second disputant's response to the first, what appeared to be a disclosure in one instance seemed to instead be a counter-accusation through presumptive attribution (Case 3, Excerpt 8) as Bob suggested April was taking advantage of him as a "native."

Indirect Communication to Abandon Mimicked Antagonism

Indirectness allowed disputants to side-step a barrier without accommodating to each other's guiding narrative. One of the most salient examples was when a qualified apology and abstractness was an indirect way to cease hostile questioning (Case 3, Excerpt 12). April said it may be some time before she could offer Bob work to do; but,

this functioned as the start of a shared openness to a second chance. If the disputants and mediators were more direct with the conversation about the promise that would be included in the agreement, it is possible that the mimicked antagonism would have been perpetuated. Being indirect and vague about that promise opened the door for the possibility for a second chance and encouraged the disputants to lay down their weapons.

Shifts between Disputant and Mediator as (In)Active Witness

Laforest (2009) conducted a sequential analysis to explain the expanded complexity of talk when a third party is present for a complaint. Whereas a direct complaint tends to involve a simple adjacency pair – complaint/response – a complaint when a third party is present creates an opportunity for the complaint sequences to become longer. As Laforest (2009) argues, "[f]rom the moment a third party accepts the opening of a complaint sequence, her/his interventions will manifest either affiliation with the complainant (the preferred intervention) through the expression of attitudes in agreement with her/his own, or non-affiliation (i.e., dissociating her/himself from the complainant)" (p. 2453). Face concerns become particularly salient to the complainee when a witness is present (Goffman, 1959). According to Laforest (2009) the witness simultaneously contributes to the regulating behaviors while also contributing to the tension between the participants.

In mediation some disputants struggled between what to say directly to the mediators and what to say directly to the other disputant. As a witness to the mediation session, if the mediator affiliates with the complainant it creates what Laforest terms a "collectivized" complaint which is more forceful against the complainee (p. 2454).

Mediation makes this a delicate matter, since the witness (i.e., mediator) has both complainant and complainee present. Now, if the complaint is against a third party not present, there is less risk as the target of the complaint is unaware of the blame being pointed toward him/her. Yet through a Girardian lens, placing blame on someone outside of the mediation session would be a form of scapegoating. For example, in Case 2 the court is blamed for the loss of custody and in Case 4 the parents are blamed for creating stress in the relationship. In these cases, externalizing responsibility contributed to construction of a thin conflict narrative and to perpetuated mimicked antagonism.

Shift in Footing to Perpetuate Mimicked Antagonism

Disputants shifted between directing their talk to the mediators and to each other. In some instances the talk to the mediators put the disputant in the role of being an authority on the other's behavior. For example, Tom *explained* to the mediator that Rumi had "conspiracy theories" privileging his narrative over hers (Case 2, Excerpt 8). By shifting footing to direct such statements to the mediator, the opportunity for the other disputant to respond and clarify was minimized. This shift to talk to the mediator also functioned as a distributive move of prescription which put the other in the position of the one that needed to make the change (Case 3, Excerpt 5). Some disputants shifted footing to talk directly to the mediators as a way to put words in the other disputant's mouth. George frequently spoke for Tamra while directing turns to the mediators (Case 4, Excerpt 13). When disputants put words in the other's mouth, the move limited discussion that could otherwise have the potential to clarify the concern – or at least allow the disputants to construct a new account of the concern (Case 4, Excerpt 14).

Finally, shifting to talk directly to the other disputant functioned as a reminder of past events. When Amy said, "you might remember" and lists off all the bad things Nick did, she lent legitimacy to her claim that he is the *bad* guy (Case 1, Excerpt 2). None of the above mentioned examples were direct attacks or accusations, yet they all served as moves that perpetuated the antagonism in the discourse since issues were not resolved or directly addressed, but instead filtered through talk to the mediators.

The Girardian lens highlights the mimicry of shifts in footing as well. The shift in footing from directing turns to the mediators to directing them to the other disputants developed into a pattern of mimicked antagonism in Case 2. When Tom's storytelling to the mediator shifted toward statements directed to Rumi (Case 2, Excerpt 2), the disputants built momentum toward the mimicked antagonism pattern as Rumi imitated that shift in footing to reciprocate the accusation back toward Tom (Case 2, Excerpt 3).

Shift in Footing to Abandon Mimicked Antagonism

Alternatively, the shift in footing from talking to the mediators to talking directly to the other disputant did serve as the beginning of abandoned antagonism in some cases. While telling their story to the mediators, disputants shifted footing to direct a statement to the other party to provide new information (Case 1, Excerpt 7), give reassurance (Case 1, Excerpt 8), or offer an apology (Case 1, Excerpt 1). Additionally, shifting footing to direct a turn to the other disputant functioned as a reminder of past positive events. In the flow of the mediation session, Bob shifted footing to remind April of the apology she made in the hallway (Case 3, Excerpt 10). April received this reminder as a request, as seen in her next turn where she accommodates by repeating her apology. In all of the

227

instances mentioned above, the disputant shifted footing to direct their turn to the other disputant rather than the mediator in such a way to break the pattern of antagonism.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

This study provides insight on mediation discourse as both a construction of, and a break from, the antagonistic pattern. The findings serve as a heuristic addition to the research applying a Girardian lens to mediation. Furthermore, the three moves in the construction of discourse that distinguished perpetuated mimicked antagonism from the break in that pattern could be applied to conflict talk outside of the mediation context.

Theoretical Implications for Girardian Perspective

Engaged face-to-face interaction is hard work. There are immeasurable meanings that could be drawn from participant contributions in discourse. The changes in production format are evidence supporting the extent of engaged work that disputants are doing within mediation sessions. According to the theory of mimetic desire (Girard, 1977), interpersonal conflict emerges as people imitate each other's desires ultimately leading to mimicked antagonism and the tendency toward violence. In mediation discourse this mimicked antagonism emerged in construction of *weapons* and *wounds* as a form of communicative violence whether or not actual physical violence existed between the disputants.

The current analyses of mediation discourse provide some support for Girard's (1977) theory of mimetic desire. Mimicked antagonism certainly can be located in mediation discourse viewed through a Girardian lens. Furthermore, that antagonism is perpetuated not only with what conflict tactics are constructed, but also which footing is

228

used for producing turns in the sequence. When mimicked antagonism is at play, disputants often lacked cooperation on constructing a thicker narrative so instead those narratives remained thin. The analyses point toward the prevalence of thin aspects of narrative. Cobb (2003, 2010a) advocates then that one of the best ways to get out of the Girardian pattern of antagonism is building the thicker narratives. This study is a first step toward advancing further research on specific discursive moves that can break the antagonistic cycle. In addition to the promise of constructing thicker narratives for reaching resolution to conflict, production of conflict tactics and aspects of the tenor of discourse can be constructed to break the pattern of mimicked antagonism.

All mediation is socially constructed as disputants and mediators focus on the conflict in the storytelling of the session. The current findings highlight nuanced ways that disputants continue to build antagonism in that story and other ways that they abandon antagonism or shift to good mimetic desire by focusing on different discourse. Disputants can build thin narratives and also move past mimicked antagonism within the same discourse. Table 4 is an attempt to summarize two different approaches for conflict resolution that is reflected by breaking out of mimicked antagonism.

229

Table 4. Approaches to Conflict Resolution through Girardian Lens

	Mimicked Antagonism	
	Cobb	**Green**
Avenue to break out of mimicked antagonism	Thicker Conflict Narrative Construction	Even with thin conflict narrative, disputants can abandon mimicked antagonism by focusing on ***different discourse*** (civility) or sharing ***openness to a second chance***. Or use good mimetic desire by mimicking ***practiced discourse***.

Mimicked antagonism was constructed in the discourse of cases that had physical violence likely present as well as those where there was no physical violence present. Through the current analyses, the presence of weapons and wounds in the discourse constituted a form of *communicative* violence that can continually be created and recreated within the tenor of discourse, even if there is no actual physical violence. All cases contained components of thin conflict narratives (Cobb, 2010b). Two cases ended with no agreement and discourse that is characterized by perpetuated mimicked antagonism. The three other cases ended in an agreement, or at least a temporary peace (see Table 5). For these latter three cases, mimicked antagonism patterns were not broken through the construction of thicker conflict narratives or by scapegoating substitute victims. Instead, the discourse is characterized by abandoned antagonism in place of: a) a discourse of civility (i.e., Amy & Nick); b) an openness to a second chance (i.e., Bob & April); or c) a shift toward good mimetic desire as rehearsed future discourse (i.e., Julie & Marci). These changes in discourse require further substantiating research by

230

communication scholars and mediation practitioners to extend the existing line of

research on conflict mediation utilizing the Girardian lens.

Table 5. Discourse & Outcomes of 5 Cases

| | **Mimicked Antagonism** | |
	Violence Likely Present	No Physical Violence Present (Communicative Violence)
No Agreement	**Rumi & Tim – M31** Mimicked antagonism perpetuated	**Tamra & George – M14** Mimicked antagonism Perpetuated
Agreement Reached (at least temporary peace)	**Amy & Nick – M13** Mimicked antagonism abandoned (civility)	**Bob & April – M1** Mimicked antagonism abandoned (shared openness to a second chance) **Julie & Marci – M23** Mimicked antagonism shifted to good mimetic desire (rehearsed future discourse)

The disputants in this study were able to construct discourse that abandoned

mimicked antagonism or shifted mimicked antagonism to good mimicry within the

context of thin conflict narratives. When a thin conflict narrative is constructed between

two people, it is challenging to focus on shared meanings required for constructing a

thicker story that transcends mimicked antagonism. Disputants can be quite sophisticated

with the production of conflict tactics to move toward resolution of their conflicts.

In mediation cases, the violent dynamic present is not only physical, but also

constructed in the form of communicative violence. The pull toward antagonism and

potential violence is deep when viewed through the Girardian lens. Weapons used by

disputants and wounds inflicted on the other through those weapons can be identified in

mediation discourse. The discursive turn in mediation research I am suggesting would encourage scholars to unpack the many production formats of conflict tactics and construction of the tenor of discourse that reveals the complex ways disputants communicate to continue mimicked antagonism.

Working toward interpreting the meanings of others in a positive light is hard. Reciprocating blame and the continual attack-counter-attack cycle are powerful moves in interpersonal conflict. In fact, in the cases analyzed here, the pattern that has brought the disputants to mediation has gained momentum that is difficult to change up and attempts to locate the cause of the conflict could seem fruitless. As Girard stated, "[t]he faster the blows rain down, the clearer it becomes that there is no difference between those who strike the blows and those who receive them" (p. 158). In essence, the reciprocating blame – mimicked antagonism - constructs the conflict story that the disputants have found themselves stuck within.

As Cobb (2003, 2010a, 2010b) has noted, narrative mediation is a type of approach that could encourage a break in perpetuated antagonism in conflict. Her efforts to bring Girardian concepts into the conversation of mediation research have been pivotal for scholars to begin to understand the deep socially constructed and communicative elements of antagonism and violence in conflict. As she advocates, there is great promise to resolve conflict through constructing discourse that thickens the conflict narrative of disputants to recognize the complexity of the characters in the narrative, to increase acknowledgement of interdependence, to accommodate to complex and nuanced moral claims, to internalize responsibility to the disputants, and to construct temporal

complexity that connects past, present, and future. Yet even if this is not possible, and a thin narrative remains, this dissertation points toward the potential of some disputants to lay down their weapons and move past wounds to stop constructing communicative violence and instead opt toward abandoning the antagonistic cycle or shifting to good mimesis.

Theoretical implications for Mediation Discourse

The context of mediation provides a ripe ground for investigation of actual discourse. As previously mentioned there is a selection bias with mediation discourse as disputants do not frequently schedule a session because they want to demonstrate for an audience their ability to easily resolve a conflict. However, therein lies the great challenge and opportunity for communication scholars and mediation practitioners. The conflicts that have gained the strongest momentum of mimicked antagonism may be the ones that are seen in mediation sessions. When the pattern of mimesis exists in the discourse, the ways that it is constructed could be the focus of the work of mediation. Spending time with the disputants to examine the ways antagonism is constructed in their discourse is the beginning toward understanding ways that they can construct a new discourse that constitutes a release of the conflict dynamics.

Mediation cases in which physical violence is not readily apparent, may still involve disputants, whose socially constructed discursive lives are causing harm. Being able to locate *weapons* and *wounds* in mediation discourse presents an additional challenge regarding the role of mediation for disputants. In some sessions, the accuser and the accused have converged on a story where weapons that inflict wounds on the

233

other are constructed in a perpetuated reciprocated cycle. There are subtle *weapons* and *wounds* in mediation discourse that could go unnoticed on the surface. Words are both weapons in and of themselves, and the facilitative function for the use of weapons. That is, it is not always words themselves that are the weapons to hurt. The current analysis of the discourse suggests that disputants could wield their weapons through the footing of their turn. The function of that turn can sometimes be observed in the other's turn where a wound is disclosed.

Healing of wounds could emerge within the discourse; however, resistance to resolution may in fact be due to sensitivity of the wounds or concern of being wounded again. Weapons could be laid down within the discourse; however, the staying power of negative affect often leads to reciprocating attack-counter-attack moves. So mediators may have to be involved in the process of disarming the disputants, asking them to lay down their weapons, and in turn move toward mending wounds.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE
Within mediation, the rules enforced by mediators bolster a particular form of discourse that attempts to mitigate the risk of antagonism (e.g., no name-calling or no interrupting to show respect to the other). Rules may help create the one time that disputants can share the experience they have had of being wounded by the other's weapon. Perhaps disputants can discover that being wounded is in fact an experience that each other shares. It may be possible that the back and forth of blame is brought to a halt in the ritualized form of mediation discourse. In these moments the ritual may bring power to the talk so that it affects those involved in a way not prevalent in everyday talk.

234

However, aside from the ritualized aspect of mediation, the construction of the actual discourse is where the pieces can come together for building communication that constitutes the resolution to the dispute.

Being a mediator requires not only flexibility with various moves to make in the interaction, but also awareness (Shailor, 1994) that what is happening during this session does not have a determined end. The session may be characterized by perpetuated mimicked antagonism between the two disputants. However, the mediators by the nature of being introduced into the conversation disrupt the sequential pattern of disputant turns. This disruption may come by simply interjecting at a particular point that throws off the pattern of the two disputants; or in providing a structure that ensures both disputants receive a fairly balanced amount of speaking time (e.g., mediators as turn-taking managers that the disputants have not previously had in the interaction); or in introducing rules of respect that change up the nature of talk; or by ensuring confidentiality so that disputants can freely share their story. As disputants are in the mediation process (i.e., a new context for the dispute along with two new people in the interaction) they may retell their stories in a new way.

Disputants could break patterns of antagonism in a number of ways. They certainly have an opportunity to construct thicker narratives. However, they do not have to. Perhaps their conflict story changes as the pattern of interaction in the session is constructed as something different than experienced in the past. Disputants likely do not readily cooperate on constructing a new framing story or on a new rehearsed future discourse. With a focus on the discourse though, mediators should be cautious of over-

reliance on heuristics in practice. A struggle between disputants may suggest that they are not content just letting things pass by unchallenged in the discourse. The repetition and reiteration points to a struggle over meaning. Flexibility in mediation practice could provide for the construction of a mediation discourse transcending communicative violence. Perhaps, the seemingly elusive moments of *magic* that mediators share from *successful* mediation sessions happen when a disputant discovers an unknown story; or when an untold story is shared, or an unheard story is finally listened to, appreciated, and validated. Other moments of magic may simply be a subtle shift in the footing of turns.

Cooks and Hale (1994) concluded that "the role of the mediator is to help the disputants coordinate their meanings: to assist in creating a story commensurate with each person's goals and to help each party make sense of the other person's story…to restore a moral and ethical order apart from the disputants' experiences of their particular set of meanings" (p. 59). In essence then, a mediation changes the form of interaction from *your side* of the story or *my side* of the story, to a way of creating a *new story* in the process of interaction. Indeed, the interaction constitutes a new nature of the relationship. How appropriately that is done and how effectively it is done is a matter of how the mediators and disputants together manage the meaning in interaction. The authors draw from a Habermas (1979) argument that appropriateness and effectiveness is determined by all parties in the interaction (i.e., community) rather than being imposed by the mediators based on some formalized training they have gone through. Establishing order that is agreed upon by the community is challenging, though.

The courts and professional organizations increasingly shape the agenda of alternative dispute resolution. Therefore, the community's involvement in defining order may be harder than it seems. As Cooks and Hale (1994) noted, "concerns articulated by many community mediators relate to the lack of consideration for mediation as a community-oriented project designed as an alternative to the legal system and to the lack of consideration of culture and class differences in designing ethical standards" (p. 74). Concern about confidentiality and disputant determination in court-mandated mediation was raised over 25 years ago by Cohen (1991); however, theoretical development for explaining what mediation is from an ethical standpoint of community order is lagging. Perhaps we need different language for what is going on in these interactions, as opposed to clumping all cases into the category of "mediation." Indeed, the way mediation happens in court-mandated cases is different from the grassroots efforts of community-based centers.

The current project highlights mimicked antagonism and the break in that pattern in the mediation discourse of cases from a community-based center. My hunch is that these cases are less contentious than court-mandated ones. By extending our practice, we should not necessarily try to model the way mediation occurs in court-mandated situations. Instead, it would be fruitful to explore what strengths we might share, and what limitations might be mitigated through an understanding and appreciation for different forms of mediation.

Cooks and Hale (1994) summarize it well:

"We argue that communication is both the means and the ends of social (moral and ethical) interaction. Mediation should not be defined and

studied only as a product of misunderstandings between multiple interactants, that is, as a site for individuals to discover the 'correct' way of interpreting one another's statements and actions. Nor should mediation be examined only as a means for achieving mutual understanding and respect. Such an approach is problematic in that the emphasis is on the end product with little or no acknowledgement of the ongoing nature of negotiated understandings. Rather mediation should be examined as a process with possibilities for coordinating the various meanings that humans give to their lives" (p. 57-58).

As an example of the possibilities of meaning that disputants can give to their lives, I turn to the disputants of case 3. While observing this case, I considered the interesting implications of perpetuated mimicked antagonism. To review, in the session the disputant Bob seemed to portray a dominant communication style by extensively and *repeatedly* clarifying to the other disputant, April that her advertisement looking for someone to proofread her dissertation was flawed. From an initial viewing, Bob tended to repeatedly share that the advertisement was flawed because the education level needed for the services were not articulated. April expressed that it was not a particular education level that was needed, but instead an understanding of common proofreading practices. When analyzing this case, I wondered about Bob's persistence in getting an apology from April on camera that in the end he was fully satisfied with. In some way it is important that his sense of dignity was restored, albeit maybe in an unexpected way. Bob and April even avoided the actual settlement of money with an awkward handling of $10. These disputants seemed to be stuck in perpetuated mimicked antagonism. The pattern began to change when Bob regained a sense of dignity and was given "a second chance." A repeated qualified apology and an indirect promise to work together in the future broke the pattern.

By looking at the discourse through a Girardian perspective, the features of a thin narrative come to light. In this case, the disputants seem to have fallen short of fully transcending the negativity; yet are able to get to a point where they can move forward. Additionally, understanding the pieces of discourse that contribute to the construction of weapons and wounds within the mediation pointed toward the moments where those weapons were laid down.

LIMITATIONS

There are at least three limitations inherent in this project. The first is a limitation of the data. There are some things that I was not able to account for in the data. Namely, I do not have the perspective of the disputants, limiting some inferences due to contextual cues that are missing. The discursive approach to the analysis did put the disputant turns *in conversation* with each other to shed light on many of the disputant meanings. However, there are innumerable influences on the production and interpretation of messages that the disputant's subjective definition of the situation has shaped. While I was able to draw some of these meanings out in my analysis, many context cues went unnoted in the transcripts analyzed.

Second, the design of this project lacks connections to specific outcome measures. I do not know the disputants' evaluation of the mediation session. For example, feelings of relief or of frustration were not assessed. Nor were ratings on how well agreements to settle were carried out. We do not know the state of the relationship between disputants beyond the dialogue created within the four walls of the Conflict Resolution Center.

The final limitation to the study is the one-time snapshot of discourse between the disputants. Girard's (1977) theory of mimetic desire is an explanatory anthropological lens that explains human behavior over extensive lengths of time. For this project, his lens was used to focus in on the mimicked pattern of antagonism within two- to three-hour mediation sessions. While the change in discourse that emerged in my findings support an argument that mimicked antagonism can be abandoned, we do not have the luxury of knowing whether that break in the pattern was sustained for the disputants long-term.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There is more work to do for understanding mediation discourse through a Girardian lens. Here I aim to propose a few next steps for pursuing this line of research: a) address the limitations of this study; b) investigate affect in mediation discourse; and c) further analyze how antagonism is perpetuated and broken in mediation discourse.

Addressing Limitations

Future research should address the previously mentioned limitations. First, the limitation of the data can be addressed by interviewing disputants and mediators after each mediation session to gain increased contextual cues. Alternatively, scholars could bring disputants into the research process as participants of the writing process as a validity check on whether meanings are being portrayed clearly. Second, the limitation of outcome-based measurements can be fixed through mixed method design. Quantitative analyses of outcome variables may provide substantiation of the insights drawn from the discourse analysis. Third, the limitation of extending inferences to mediation discourse in

general can be alleviated by gathering and analyzing transcripts of disputes facilitated by mediators at varying levels of experience involving a more diverse base of disputants. Fourth, the limitation of having a one-time snapshot of discourse can be addressed through longitudinal studies that test whether new patterns of discourse characterized by abandoned antagonism are sustained by disputants.

Investigating Affect

Research on affect in the midst of talk characterized by mimicked antagonism would further extend our understanding of mediation discourse through the Girardian lens. Looking at the expression and regulation of affect as a social construction would create an avenue for understanding antagonism in mediation sessions. Expressivity and regulation have received attention from communication scholars for understanding the development of close relationships (Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002). Halberstadt, Denham, and Dunsmore (2001) suggested that the degree to which affect is *displayed* is important for relational effectiveness.

Managing affect in mediation may impact the disputants' well-being. Some literature on affect points toward negative cognitive (Richards, 2004) and interpersonal (Yelsma & Marrow, 2003) consequences that can result from not expressing affect. In addition, a sense of not being true to oneself may lead to negative feelings of self as being characterized by inauthenticity rather than honesty (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthrone, & Ilardi, 1997). However, if affect goes unfettered, disputants may face both immediate and long-term negative outcomes (see Cupach & Olson, 2006).

Expressing affect can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Kring, Smith, and Neale (1994) conceptualized expressivity as an outward display of positive or negative affect through facial, vocal, or gestural channels. Expressivity may lead to positive outcomes such as ratings of interpersonal attraction (Sabatelli & Rubin, 1986). Furthermore, Boone & Buck (2003) concluded that expressivity acts as an indicator of cooperativeness and trustworthiness. On the other hand, Gottman, Levenson, and Woodin (2001) found that negative affective expressivity leads to unproductive conflict management in the context of marriage. Interestingly, Bushman (2002) also found that venting anger actually increased aggression.

Regulating affect has mixed results. One line of affective research focuses on two forms of regulation: expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal (Gross, 1998, 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Gross & Levenson, 1997; John & Gross, 2004). John and Gross (2004) conceptualized expressive suppression as the reduction of expressive behavior in the moment; whereas cognitive reappraisal is a change in thinking about the situation that could elicit an expressive response. In other words, since affect unfolds over time, there are several points at which regulation can occur. Although John and Gross (2004) labeled suppression as an *unhealthy* regulation strategy and reappraisal as a *healthy* regulation strategy, both are used to control expressions.

Affective regulation may be costly. Wenzlaff and Eisenberg (1998) concluded that parents should be cautious of suppression of expression of negative affect in their children. Relatedly, Gross and Levenson (1993) demonstrated that although individuals may reduce expressive behavior, they still experience the same level of negative affect.

Suppressing negative affect may also contribute to harmful effects such as depression and anxiety (Wenzlaff & Eisenberg, 1998). In all, the literature suggests that effectively and appropriately communicating affect is important for positive cognitive and interpersonal outcomes (Boone & Buck, 2003; Gross & John, 2003; John & Gross, 2004; Sabatelli & Rubin, 1986).

Affective expression and regulation emerging in mediation discourse is important to take note of for the well-being of disputants not only within the immediate mediation session, but also beyond. For instance, if disputants did experience negative affect that they suppress within the mediation session, they may seek out other avenues for communicative violence. Extending our understanding of affect to mediation discourse through the Girardian lens as it relates to the complex ways mimicked antagonism is perpetuated or broken would be a good step forward.

Further Studying How Antagonism is Perpetuated and Broken

Certainly, interpersonal scholars may be inspired to design varying project for further understanding mediation discourse through the Girardian lens. For example, some may want to use a longitudinal design to follow the *lifespan* of a conflict or relationship through the Girardian lens. Research on the relational climate (Huston & Melz, 2004) or ratio of positive to negative interactions (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998) may be a starting point toward drawing connections to mimicked antagonism and the extant literature. Specifically for the discourse scholars, I propose continued work on the three categories that have been presented here in this project: a) animator-only footing; b) use of presumptive attribution and indirect communication; and c) the presence of

mediator as an (in)active witness of the dispute as unique communicative resources that are used for constructing perpetuated mimicked antagonism or breaking the pattern.

CONCLUSION

When viewed through a Girardian lens, mediation is a context where disputants could construct mimicked antagonism or find ways to break that pattern. The five university conflict resolution center cases analyzed through the lens Girard's (1977) theory of mimetic desire all had discourse characterized by components of thin narratives (Cobb 2003, 2010a, 2010b). Yet, while disputants in two of the cases perpetuated antagonism, the disputants in the other three broke the pattern. A thicker narrative or a scapegoat was not needed. Analyzing the discourse through the guiding frameworks of conflict tactics, production format, and tenor of discourse shed light on how disputants constructed perpetuated mimicked antagonism and how they broke the pattern. Additionally, the analyses highlighted the emergence of *weapons* and *wounds* in the discourse suggesting that *communicative* violence is constructed whether or not there is actual physical violence apparent. The distinctions between mimicked antagonism and a break in that cycle were unpacked through the discussion of: a) animator-only position; b) indirectness and presumptive attribution; and c) shift in footing between talking to the other disputant and the mediators. These three moves are powerful ways that people in conflict are abandoning or shifting away from antagonism. These findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the discourse people in conflict construct and spur on further research using discourse analysis to help people with some of their toughest interpersonal problems.

Appendix A

Case 1	Amy and Nick – Antagonism abandoned for thin civility
C1.E1.	**Failed attempt to get out of the *bad guy* role** Integrative tactic of self disclosure - shift in footing from talking to mediators to direct apology
C1.E2.	Integrative disclosure - animator-only to quote msgs on machine; then shifts footing to direct "accusatory" reminder of bad behavior
C1.E3.	Bolsters argument that Nick was 'scary' and behavior could merit a restraining order
C1.E4.	**Disagreement with *bad guy* label through reciprocated claim of threat** Amy's tactic could be qualification(int) or prescription (dist) - if-then statement about "stalking"
C1.E5.	Shared avoidant tactic of semantic focus - is actually clarification of "the word" (stalker) needing resolution before they can move forward with agreements - Not resolved. Nick counters that Amy is the threat
C1.E6.	Amy does not accommodate counter-threat. Nick remains the bad guy.
C1.E7.	**Accusation met with counter-accusation** Amy rejects being a threat - and is animator-only to give Nick insight into what she said to her friend - offers animation of other alternative statement she could have made to strengthen her point through contrast.
C1.E8.	Shift in footing to direct to Nick - alleviate his concern "do not want to destroy academic career"
C1.E9.	Integrative tactic of disclosure. Yet, points back to disagreement over word "stalking" - C1.E5.
C1.E10.	**Reciprocated attempt to make the other the *bad guy*** Amy distributive presumptive attribution. Nick corrects. She uses avoidant process focus. Nick integrative shared responsibility (but points to her being a 'cutter' which is accusation).

C1.E11.	Nick says if Amy labels him, he has to label her (reciprocate) and suggests that tactic won't help things.
C1.E12.	**Lack of temporal complexity minimizing shared responsibility** Amy accepts shared responsibility (int) in full production - Nick and Amy agree they were worst people together.
C1.E13.	Amy puts Nick in bad guy role because he showed up unannounced - does not accept his view that he was motivated by concern that she was cutting.
C1.E14.	Amy prevents discussion of physical threat and lying being the same thing - instead uses avoidant process focus of rules of mediation.
C1.E15.	**Negative affect perpetuating beyond a change in behavior** Most you can hope for is thin veneer which will crack if pushed.
C1.E16.	Amy integrative tactic of problem-solving to let go of hostilities.
C1.E17.	**Expressed staying power of negative affect** Amy corrects presumptive attribution (dist) - to an integrative disclosure - animator and author - attributing thoughts to other as principal.
C1.E18.	Nick mimics presumptive attribution - animator and author - attributing thoughts to other as principal.
C1.E19.	Amy integrative disclosure.
Case 2	Rumi and Tom – Mimicked antagonism perpetuated (violence likely present)
C2.E1.	**Counter-accusation of *bad guy* role** Tom says Rumi's integrative tactic is a trick - animator-only for Rumi - uses her words to make his point.

C2.E2.	Attempt at problem-solving side-tracked by semantic focus "supervised visits" - animator-only limits responsibility
C2.E3.	**Lack of interdependence and *flat* moral claim**
	Rumi uses semantic focus on "charity" - she trusts him as dad but not as husband - (Tom's wound)
C2.E4.	Tom's hostile questioning. Rumi says mother should have right to establish address. Tom animator-only to use Rumi's words - shows hurt by "not a good husband" and counter-attacks
C2.E5.	**Lack of temporal complexity and perpetuating attempts to construct *bad guy* role**
	Tom initiating problem-solving rejected by Rumi - mediators tries to animate/author for Tom & Rumi as principals.
C2.E6.	Tom initiating problem-solving called a 'threat' by Rumi (does this through animator/author position of Tom's principal statement)
C2.E7.	***Flat* plot line and moral claim that externalize responsibility**
	Tom problem-solving as author/animator for parents as principal, then presumption. Rumi uses court as principal bolstered by her moral claim that the mother will always be granted custody (right to establish address)
C2.E8.	**Lack of interdependence**
	Rumi presumptive attribution that Tom set her up. Animator-only for psychological evaluator (court appointed). Tom acts as authority (exerting power) over Rumi - condescending, "she has all these conspiracy theories" explanation to mediators
Case 3	Bob and April – Mimicked antagonism abandoned through shared openness to a second chance
C3.E1.	**Construction of *bad guy* role**
	Bob avoidant tactic of abstractness

C3.E2.	Bob integrative tactic of disclosure - animator-only to bring another voice in from past work to get out of bad guy role
C3.E3.	April author/animator - uses "proofreader" as principal to keep Bob in bad guy role
C3.E4.	April switches back to footing of full production for integrative tactic of problem-solving
C3.E5.	**Lack of interdependence and *flat* plot line** Bob shifts to direct talk to mediators - distributive tactic of prescription - April jumps in to say she feels tested.
C3.E.6.	When Bob is in full production format he uses questions (although hostile and leading) rather than direct accusations.
C3.E.7.	April's attempt at shared responsibility that weren't accommodated was followed by mimicking Bob's tactic of asking leading questions (full production).
C3.E8.	**Accusation of *bad guy* reciprocated** Bob uses distributive tactic of presumptive attribution - international student status taking advantage of him
C3.E9.	April mentions headache (physical effect) - does not accommodate to bad guy accusation, but redirects focus to money.
C3.E10.	***Flat* moral claim evident in qualified acceptance of doing *wrong*.** Bob is animator-only for imagined statement April might say - turning toward second chance - since she admitted fault and didn't do the business relationship correctly.
C3.E11.	April responds to Bob's statement with a repeated apology (on camera) - seeking shared responsibility. But still some negativity yet unaccounted for.
C3.E12.	April makes qualified apology and avoidant tactic of abstractness to provide 'second chance'

Case 4	Tamra and George – Mimicked antagonism perpetuated (no violence apparent)

C4.E1.	***Flat* moral claims evident in divergent meanings**
	George integrative disclosure - animates direct quotation he might say to Tamra
C4.E2.	Both animate "don't want to go" - George makes presumptive attribution
C4.E3.	Tamra animates question she might ask George. Then animates a phrase she might say "you don't want to do something" to show her hurt.
C4.E4.	**Lack of interdependence and *flat* plot that externalizes responsibility**
	George animates what he tells Tamra - that her family puts stress on her.
C4.E5.	George integrative description that stress leads to 'blowing up' - met by Tamra 'blowing up'
C4.E6.	Tamra brings up George's tone as contributor to conflict - yet not demonstrated to display what she means
C4.E7.	**Reciprocated *bad guy* accusation**
	George integrative disclosure of how easy it is to "blow up" at Tamra - Presumptive attribution (dist) by animating an imagined line that Tamra says (not her words.)
C4.E8.	George distributive tactic of faulting Tamra for not controlling herself - he animates a presumptive attribution for Tamra
C4.E9.	Tamra does not correct, but counter-accuses George - distributive faulting.
C4.E10.	**Lack of interdependence and *flat* plot minimizes attempt at shared responsibility**
	Tamra qualified acceptance of some responsibility (int)
C4.E11.	Tamra integrative disclosure of her view of relationships - lack of interdependence, seeing their divergent views of relationship standards.
C4.E12.	George distributive tactic of faulting Tamra for not wanting to talk. He animates (presumptive attributions) what Tamra says (not her own words) about not wanting to talk about things.

C4.E13.	George qualified integrative acceptance of responsibility - but quickly externalizes responsibility to stress from Tamra's parents.
C4.E14.	**Expression of *flat* moral claim rather than interdependence** George integrative disclosure (but of negative view of mediation)
C4.E15.	***Mediator Contribution***
C4.E16.	George indirect prescriptions on relationships - moral claim that Tamra not talking with him is wrong.
Case 5	Julie and Marci – Good Mimetic Desire as Rehearsed Future Discourse
C5.E1.	**Reciprocated accusation of *bad guy* role** Julie disclosure, Marci solicits further disclosure, Julie doesn't provide thicker answer, Marci presumptive attribution, Julie ambivalence, Marci solicits disclosure
C5.E2.	Julie offers further disclosure, but then mimics Marci's tactic of presumptive attribution (rather than soliciting disclosure)
C5.E3.	Reciprocated attempt to make other the bad guy - and reciprocated the tactic to do so.
C5.E4.	**Lack of expressed interdependence** Marci solicits disclosure, Julie gives description, Marci is cut off with Julie avoidant process focus (you're interrupting me)
C5.E5.	Julie presumptive attribution, Marci animates/authors Julie's principal words with the start, "you just said…" Julie reiterates her previous contribution without thickening the explanation.
C5.E6.	***Flat* character description and plot line** Marci avoidant tactics of pessimism that limits discussion of possible resolutions. - claim that Julie doesn't like her - underlying animosity

C5.E7.	Julie puts root cause as "tone of voice" rather than underlying animosity. Marci bolsters her point through footing of animator-only for Julie's previous line "I don't like you"
C5.E8.	Julie disclosure, then faulting Marci for picking apart anything she says. Marci just wants Julie to say things "normal" (assuming not a negative tone).
C5.E9.	Julie minimizes interdependence - description/presumption that whatever she says will get scrutinized.
C5.E10.	**Shift away from mimicked antagonism** Julie initiating problem-solving - Marci animates how Julie (author/principal) could make request. Julie animates verbatim. Marci compliments and animates authors a different line as contrast of how Julie might make a demand. Julie requests Marci do the same thing.
C5.E11.	Marci animates the request the way she would say it. Julie picks out problem ("um" - a counter-accusation). Marci gives integrative disclosure.
C5.E12.	Marci attempts animating the line again. Julie criticizes "um" again – yet they both cooperate to rehearse their future discourse. Julie bolsters externalizing responsibility for conflict to "tone."
C5.E13.	**Rehearsed discourse within thin narrative** Julie integrative disclosure. Animates line to practice "tone" Marci suggested. Julie can't promise she can do that "tone" all the time at home – yet they have practiced a resolution of their conflict.

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