Communicating an Identity in Leadership

Dr. Trent Keough
President & CEO
Portage College
Alberta, Canada
$100 for speeding and
$250 for misleading
the public
What, how or who communicates, signals or represents your identity?
What do we know about communication, itself?
Communication, regardless of its form, is imprecise, chaotic and by invention evolving with its participants’ social engagements.

What makes us think, perhaps assume, it’s not that way with identity?
5 Communication & 5 Identity Myths

1. We share in the knowledge of what constitutes effective communication(s). *We would approve of others’ assessments of who we perceive ourselves to be.*

2. We welcome evaluation of our abilities to communicate. *We enjoy it when others correct our identifying behaviors, acknowledge our mannerisms or question our core beliefs.*
3. We hold a communal understanding of reality and vision a singular social happiness. *The person I am at work is the same me I was X-years ago, or will be later today.*

4. Because of our abilities to speak and write we automatically understand the *how* of communication. *We have a common understanding of and ordinary means to describe what constitutes identity.*
5. Sharing a language is an indicator of our collected knowledge of communication as a discipline. *We share in respect for the life of all that is human in our beings.*
Leadership & Identity

- What defines each?

- Is there a relationship between the two?

- Is either static or immutable?
The Self

- Genetics
- Gender
- Nurture
- Language
- Culture
- Existential

Keough 2016 Chair Conference
Processing Identity

- Genetics: the biological you
- Gender: the procreating you
- Language: knowing/negotiating the experiences determined by genetics, gender, childhood, politics, etc.
- Nurture: experiences determine you, nominative, formative, maturation
- Culture: political experiences: familial, social, religious, education, work, etc.
- Existential being, that of culture and nurture, burnishes your individual presence but doesn’t determine your inward sense of identity
- Reflection: you making cognitive sense of your biological, emotional, spiritual and social selves
- Projection: others’ determination of same
What do you choose in becoming you?

- You don’t choose your initial genetic makeup?
- Your gender is predetermined, too?
- You are born into a time, place, culture, and socio-political circumstance that impact achievement of your biological potential?
- How you are nurtured influences/determines your capacity to love and share and your willingness to fight or kill?
- Your mother tongue and culture determine your racial stereotype, and your potential for global empowerment?
What do you choose in becoming you?

- Your dialect of a valorized language indicates a predetermined social worth within each cultural context?
- Your estimation of self-worth might not be a mimetic representation of what is determined by stereotypes of culture, gender, race, economic power, language use?
The Biological Self

The Existential Self

Reflective & Projected Selves
What will we explore here?

- Are we consciously aware of what influences, forms and shapes identity and leadership?
- Does framing and perspective have bearing on apprehension of identify?
- What is framing, exactly?
What will we explore here?

- Is leadership strategic only action undertaken regardless of one’s identity?
What will we explore here?

- Is framing a form of voluntary or involuntary role play?
- Do we consciously differentiate between the many roles/frames we play as individuals and the ‘real’ persons we are or aspire to be?
- How does the ‘authentic’ self reside?
What will we explore here?

- Can leadership and identity be separated or parted out in terms of fragmenting their roles with disassociative qualities?
What will we explore here?

- What conventional, value laden expectations and assumptions do we bring to critical assessment of our leaders, and when defining our selves?
What will we explore here?

- Are we aware of the value assumptions tied to our roles and aspirational selves?
Exercise 1:

▶ “Tell me why you are who you think yourself to be.”

▶ Write down three key words that reveal some of your thoughts on this subject.
Assessment of the 3s

Can any of these words be indicators of leadership qualities, attributes and achievements that another might aspire to, emulate or mimic?
Exercise 2

- Do any of your self-chosen 3 words fit, slot or fall into any of the 5 ‘frames’ of interpretation that are about follow this slide?

Aside:

- Why the unnecessary self-reflexivity here . . . ‘follow this slide?’
Identity in Communication

- Intentional . . . What I think; I think of myself.

- Response . . . What you think; I think of myself.

- Construction . . . What society/culture says I am; what I think I am.

- Dialogic . . . What language permits me to think of being when thinking of myself.

- Social media . . . What meaningful form I choose to parody in ‘second-life.’
When I say, ‘I am . . .’, how is my identity different then from being introduced by another?

‘I am . . . Let me introduce you to . . .’

The verbal frame of biography or introduction sets a series of conventional identifiers in play, some based on cultural expectation and assumption, if not all.
Is a picture really worth a thousand words?

- When is a picture of me, me?

- How does visual ‘framing’ impact perception of identity?

- This presentation is a framing of ‘self.’

- What you will decide is whether that is an authentic self or not.

- Until you came here, prior to this moment, I made the assumption you saw me this way. Here it is!
Try a Bio, Verbal/Written Framing

- Trent Keough, BA (1986, MUN), MA (1988, MUN), PhD (1994, Queen’s), is the President & CEO of Portage College (2010-current).

- Trent also occasionally teaches English Literature and introductory Philosophy.
Try a Bio, Verbal/Written Framing

- Trent has only one paid publication since leaving university employment more than 20 years ago. “Postmodern Leadership and the Policy Lexicon: From Theory, Proxy to Practice” (2001, Keough and Tobin)

- Trent continues to declined both book contract inquiries and academic publication opportunities. He favors blogging and posting to the WEB, instead.

- ‘@prestrent’ has posted more than 9500 Tweets, some peculiar, a few provocative, others insightfully dumb. And, it continues.
Try a Bio, Verbal/Written Framing

- Trent has worked as an Adjunct and Associate Professor at two tertiary universities and at Canada’s Royal Military College, and as an instructor at three transfer colleges. He has never held tenure; he’s only secured permanent positions which he subsequently left.

- Trent has been three times a Shop Steward, once a Labor Relations Facilitator and Graduate of a Labor School, and he held two Local Union Presidencies, but not simultaneously.

- Trent has 20 years experience as an educational administrator in urban, rural and international settings: Program Coordinator, Chair School of Access, Dean of University Studies, Campus Administrator, Regional Campuses Director (rural then urban), Executive Director of Programs, VP Academic, President, President & CEO.
Try a Bio, Verbal/Written Framing

- Trent has authored more than 40 conference papers, refereed and not, and delivered day and week long workshop presentations on varied topics:
  - utopianism & contemporary intentional societies
  - rural innovation & sustainability
  - living as a visible & invisible minority
  - identity in island literature
  - innovation theory & change management practice
  - Existentialism
  - Canadian nationalism
  - leadership theory & praxis
  - communication theory & analysis
  - postmodernism, etc.,
Try a Bio, Verbal/Written Framing

► Where has Trent lived, studied and worked?

► Newfoundland (30), Ontario (10), Qatar (2), and Alberta (10).

► Trent has undertaken executive training: Kellogg Foundation Fellow at U of Austin at Texas, National Executive Leadership Institute (NELI) with ACCC, Queen’s School of Business at Kingston, Rotman School of Business U of Toronto, Northwestern U Kellogg School of Management
Now, tell me what do you know, surmise or suspect of Trent Keough’s identity?
Fast Facts

- Approximately 1000 of 4500 students attend annual convocation.
- We have a current operating budget of 32 million.
- 265 employees spread across 7 locations.
- Portage has lost more than 10 million from its operational budget since 2010.
- Portage has closed three campus locations.
- More than 150 employees lost their jobs, and even at the absolute height of the oil and gas boom that recently went bust, we were cutting.
And About Portage

- Portage College (c. 1968) serves approx. 80,000 rural, remote, and North-eastern Albertans, including those living on 7 First Nation Reservations (*Indian Act*, federal) and 4 Metis Settlements (*Metis Settlement Act*, *Alberta*).

- About four years ago, Portage had some 45 nationalities represented in its student body at 7 campus locations. Oil and gas downturn has reduced that number slightly due to outmigration.

- Portage College its spiritual origins from a peaceful, 21 day sit-in, i.e. a physical occupation of government offices, by Aboriginal people demanding local education. [www.portagecollege.ca](http://www.portagecollege.ca)
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

Find out what’s happening at Portage College’s Pipeline Training Centre!

When: January 13th, 11:00-3:00
Where: Boyle Community Centre
Appetizers and refreshments provided. Everyone welcome.
Bus tours of the Pipeline Training Centre at 12:00, 1:00, and 2:00.
For more information contact Terry Mudryk-Harbarenko at 780-689-6736.
Cornerstone of Your Identity

- Trust assessments: your own and that of valued others.

- Your trustworthiness is written in your face, more specifically the interpretation of the authenticity of your smile.

- An authentic smile comes late and never leaves abruptly; meaning, it doesn’t flash on and doesn’t have an instantaneous off switch.
Smiling, when you were in the womb!

“Smiles not only have consequences for those who see them but also for those who do the smiling.”

“Smiles are like interpersonal Velcro.” (58)

- “We are drawn to smiles because we need to connect with people.”

LaFrance Lip Service (59)
Chronology of Intelligent Smiling

- Pre-birth exercising of facial muscles
- Duchanne smiles while sleeping >6 weeks
- < six weeks voluntary smiles to parents’ smiles
- 6 months > initiating smiling at others than parents
- 6 years > they can ‘fake it’
How to read a smile?

- Configuration, intensity and timing determine the Duchenne smile

- Newborns first show the Duchenne smile while in REM sleep, only later do they wrinkle the eyes in waking moments

- “emotion is sometimes spontaneous and unconscious while at other times it is intentional and conscious” Lip Service 48
Your momma determined your communication skills!

“mothers who used emotionally intelligent methods with their children, such as distraction or explanation, were more likely to have emotionally intelligent children” Lip Service 50
Duchenne: the authentic smile has eyes!

What do you think of “Texas Judge Charles J. Hearn . . . [who] in 1993 signed his name and drew a smiley face on the bottom of an execution order”?

What do you think of “Colorado senator Patricia Schroeder’s wish to be taken seriously as a presidential prospect when she regularly drew a smiley face next to her signature”?

Lip Service 13
“Ingratiator’s Dilemma” & Authenticity

- For sure, he professes too much, eh?
- Say, cheese!
- Smile for the camera.
- “First Laugh Ceremony” a Navajo cultural practice
- Valorized dialect
Ready for some constructive narcissism?