

Authority as an effect of presence: Negotiating authority through practices of presentification

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Relying on a communication-as-constitutive perspective (CCO) and a view of authority as an effect of presence (Benoit-Barné and Cooren, 2009), our contribution will highlight the main communicative practices of presentification by which *authority* is accomplished and brought to bear on the interaction between Kim Davis, the Rowan County, Kentucky, county clerk and David, a same-sex marriage supporter requesting a marriage license.

A CCO perspective conveys a view of authority as essentially communicational and relational. Authority is understood as an emergent and dynamic property of relationships generated in the process of organizing. This involves a communicative process of coorientation, as actors interact with each other and relate to an object of interest to them. Authority, as so conceived, does not originate from and reside *in* human agents (whether in the form of charisma, position, or expertise) or *in* things (organizational structures such as hierarchy, chain of command, norms, etc.) but *in* their interrelation, which is created and sustained through interactions and communication.

The notion of presentification is key in understanding this process. It refers to ways of speaking and acting that make present things and beings that are not physically present but can nevertheless be brought to bear and influence the unfolding of a situation. Several practices of presentification that sustain authority have been documented in the CCO literature: Authority has been linked to 1) an agent's capacity to speak for or in the name of someone or something, 2) the inscription of artifacts or texts to make the organization present in interaction (Benoit-Barné and Cooren, 2009) and 3) the invocation of revered figures through speech and text during interactions to provide a legitimate basis for action (Brummans, Hwang, & Cheong, 2013). These three practices are certainly manifest in the interaction under study. We propose to describe how they operate to shed light on the dynamic interplay by which authority is negotiated by both Kim and David.

As a whole, an emphasis on the practices of presentification will show that authority is locally achieved but not locally bounded, either in terms of antecedents or implications. Sources of authority are multiple and can be identified in the agent that locally performs it, in the persons who submit to it, and in all those things (titles, revered figures, status, practical expertise, etc.) made present to sustain and shape the interaction between them.

References

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