

Exploring the Concept of Executive Presence and Implications for Training

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Abstract

Anecdotal evidence in the form of career placement advertisements requires job seekers to have the quality of executive presence. However, there is little in the scholarly literature that investigates the pedigree of executive presence thereby explaining what is meant by the term. The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of executive presence by examining the rhetoric within the historical context of the medieval trivium and then propose ways in which presence may currently be learned and embodied through an aesthetic approach of training.

Introduction: Seeking Executive Presence

Anecdotal evidence in the form of career placement advertisements requires job seekers to have the quality of executive presence. Business mentors and brand managers maintain that executive presence helps in “creating a positive impression” (Booher, 2003, p. 19), and assists with “personal brand and impression management” (Monarth, 2010, p. 127). Jimenez (2010) notes that “Individuals with “executive presence” use all aspects of their voice to sell their ideas and generate enthusiasm. Others are inspired to follow the leadership of those with executive presence”. Thus executive presence is linked positively with emotional intelligence (Xavier, 2006) and helps individuals deal with their anxiety about “getting their messages across with the right mixture of intensity and personal engagement” (Johnson, 2009, p. 36).

There is little in the scholarly literature that investigates the pedigree of executive presence. Furthermore, there is little evidence of critical inquiry into the phenomenon beyond its functionary elements of appropriate body language and vocal tone and projection. The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of executive presence by examining the rhetoric within the historical context of the medieval trivium and then propose ways in which presence may currently be learned and embodied through an aesthetic approach of training.

For actors, the notion of *presence* relates to the power of performance, the visceral sense of connection that an audience gains from the stage-presence of the actors who through riveting performance hold the attention of the audience as if *compelling* them to attend to the on-stage action. For the orchestral musician it is the presence that conductors bring with them to rehearsals and performances that inspires musicians to play beyond the limitations of individual technique.

This aesthetic of presence that is informed by performance art requires that the performer acquire a raft of finely honed preparatory skills that are embodied over years of practice. By extending this notion from the artistic to leadership development, what happens *prior* to one becoming a leader are necessary preconditions to leadership. Furthermore, this preparation goes past life-long, iterative learning and

rehearsal and embraces the moments immediately prior to appearing in public. Thus, this paper begins with a macro view of the medieval trivium and then refocuses on the meso-level notions of presence and then finally examines the micro skills with which performing artists become intimately acquainted such as the breath, the preparatory beat, and the location of character *before* making any sound or entering the stage.

The Trivium

McLuhan advocated for recapturing scholarly engagement from the Middle Ages trivium (McLuhan, 2006). Although known for his provocative insights into contemporary media (see for instance McLuhan, 1973), McLuhan himself was deeply rooted in ancient, patristic and medieval scholarship. Added to that mix was his engagement with twentieth-century aesthetics through artists such as James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound.

McLuhan's orientation towards grammar, dialectics and rhetoric represented under the rubric of the trivium arose out of his disquiet about the shifts in emphasis in the European Enlightenment, which favored the ocular over the acoustic. Thus McLuhan observed that mathematics displaced linguistic traditions (McLuhan, 2006, p. 5) resulting in a scientific orientation and the conceptualization of space through Euclidean geometry. Hence the printed word and its mass dispersal through the printing press became the primary means of authoritative communication with public rhetoric being deemed to be mere puffery without substance. McLuhan proposed that by rediscovering the trivium, the dilatory effects of this narrow scientific focus might be reversed.

In sum the trivium is,

the combination of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic [and] provided a medieval person with facility in using language. In his *Metalogicon*, John of Salisbury – well known as a political philosopher into the fourteenth century – defines its three branches as follows: grammar 'is the science of speaking and writing correctly'; dialectic 'is the science of effective argumentation'; and rhetoric is the 'art of persuasion' (Haas, 2007, p. 48).

Furthermore, it is important to note that during the Middle Ages, the boundaries between the three elements of the trivium were barely distinguishable (Moss, 2004). Hence, students learned all three together, thereby providing an education that equipped them to embark on a more complete study of the liberal arts through adding the subjects of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy (McLuhan, 2006, p. 88).

However, these medieval scholastic practices were replaced by an atomized curriculum that separated disciplines into discrete domains. The price we have paid for this fragmentation is a student community that focuses on specific areas of study without the ability to integrate the parts into cohesive whole. However, there have been a few advocates of a more complete education based on the trivium. Among them was popular novelist Dorothy Sayers who bemoaned the inadequacy of our education system, advocating for a return to the trivium as crucial for a young person's education (Sayers, 1947). MacCabe (1984) concurs arguing that medieval education "presupposed a grounding in the functioning of language as a necessary preliminary to any study" (p. 70) and that the trivium was displaced with the scientific turn. Following MacCabe, each of the elements of the trivium: grammar, dialectics and rhetoric are used to explore how contemporary business education might be strengthened and potentially assist the application of presence.

Grammar

Contemporary understandings of grammar involve the structure of written text. This narrow view of grammar was contested by Russian discourse theorist Michael Bakhtin who considered the context as an important element of language. As Kamberelis (2004) argues,

Bakhtin insists that grammatical forms (and their functions) cannot be fully understood and appreciated without considering their poetic/stylistic dimensions. Most of these dimensions are dimensions of context: sound, intonation, gesture, dramatism, [and] space (Kamberelis, 2004, p. 96).

Although today grammar has developed into a discipline with a narrow focus on the structure and articulation of written and spoken text, the medievalists went beyond the written and spoken word and considered the whole of the natural world as the field in which the student would work – analyzing and critiquing in order to derive meaning. With this broader canvas scholars would consider the “Book of Life in scriptural exegesis [and] ... the Book of Nature, as well” (McLuhan, 2006, p. 7). Hence “language was viewed as simultaneously linking and harmonizing all the intellectual and physical functions of man and of the physical world as well” (McLuhan, 2006, p. 17).

Awareness of an engagement in the world was fundamental to the grammarian approach and rather than atomizing and distilling knowledge into discrete categories the medievalists were much more integrated in their scholarship. Students were encouraged to know their world, the context within which language was used, and in this knowing bring all their critical faculties to bear on their analyses. A necessary element of this critique was gained through dialectics.

Dialectics

Contemporary notions of dialectics have been informed in the main by Hegel’s phenomenology. Although the notions of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis as a dialectic process have been attributed to Hegel, the idea is largely absent from his writings. Rather, Hegel’s usage of the triadic formula is in relation to his criticism of Kant’s usage. Thus “Hegel is not obsessed by triads, but he is obsessed by the problem of opposites and of their reconciliation” (Norman, 1976, p. 26).

It is this idea of mounting a cogent argument based on the theoretical analysis of language that is the medieval understanding of dialectics. Thus dialectics is not a stand-alone discipline but also relies on the more empirically oriented grammar and rhetoric.

Dialectic specializes in the word as thought and in the content of words and of thought, and in systems of right thinking. Having no inherent ground, dialectic is abstract and co-opts rhetoric and grammar as a sort of external ground. It comprises two activities, logic and philosophy, and is the fountainhead of Method and Old Science (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988, p. 9).

Notwithstanding the debates among grammarians and rhetoricians about the value of dialectics among patristic and medieval scholars, McLuhan notes that all three are necessary and equal elements of the trivium. Perhaps, though, the most empirical of the three disciplines was rhetoric, the ability to speak persuasively.

Rhetoric

In his analysis of medieval scholarship McLuhan notes that “the sixteenth century was nothing if not an age of rhetoric” (McLuhan, 2006, p. 5). However, in contemporary times rhetoric has become more of a pejorative term. Medieval scholars described the empty rhetoric of sophistry as *prosopopoeia* where the speaker adopts an affect but lacks in authenticity. Thus McLuhan writes of “the Earl of Surrey [who] is accorded a speech or *prosopopoeia* in which he speaks in the high style befitting his rank and his poetic skill” (McLuhan, 2006, p. 244).

For the medieval scholars rhetoric with its companions of grammar and dialectics provided the speaker with a potent tool of persuasion. Thus words in themselves were considered to have transformative potential.

In his advocacy for revisiting the trivium in today’s education system, Haas (2007) cites the Brazilian educational activist Paulo Freire who maintains that language itself inspires change.

Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world (Haas, 2007, p. 50).

This idea mirrors Boal’s (1979) notion that the rhetoric of ancient Greek tragedy was transformative.

Those three interdependent elements (*peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, *catastrophe*) have the ultimate goal of provoking catharsis in the spectator (as much or more than in the character); that is, their purpose is to produce a purgation of the *hamartia* (flaws) (Boal, 1979, p. 37).

Hence, rhetoric *moves* us not through erudite argument alone, but also by ethical considerations and emotional appeal. To this end Rodden (2008) claims:

A rhetoric of narrative does still include a substantial rational component, but its concepts are less dry or mechanical or head-centered, and instead more full-bodied and even impassioned. They are rational but also emotive and ethical.

How, then, would educators work with these ideas from the medieval trivium in training today’s business students in authentic and persuasive rhetoric?

Presence: The Meso-View

The previous portion of this paper introduced what is being neglected in current educational forums and institutions. Educators may be reduced to merely teaching content rather than the ability of how to learn, but if one learns how to learn, then content becomes the vehicle for the process. This may be more evident in graduate teaching and learning than in current undergraduate programs. The trivium puts forward the notions of learning language to communicate, understanding content knowledge and abstraction, and the ability to be able to communicate that knowledge. It is this third portion of the trivium that is intriguing and especially how performance artists might contribute to knowledge in this area.

In neither the dominant functionalist organizational paradigm or the interpretivist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) is the notion of presence given validity as a discreet construct within the organizational communication literature. This exploration seeks to position the concept of presence within the managerial discourse in the hopes that it supports and enhances organizational functioning.

The original concept of presence comes from noticing in job recruitment advertisements a call for “executive presence”. Curious as to what factors might comprise this notion, locating research related to this particular concept or topic proved difficult. Another proposition arose about how it might be related to charisma where there is a large and abundant body of related research.

Thus, if presence was related to charisma, or the same thing, then why were recruiting companies not stating the call for *executive charisma* for which there is research outlining many of the measurable factors as an identifiable trait? Might it be presumptuous to request a charismatic executive? What if the notion of presence was different from charisma and if so, then what are the factors that comprise it? For whom might this concept be useful?

Equating charisma with presence is problematic, however. Is charisma something that person possesses or is it attributed to leaders by followers? Weber (1946) suggests the latter and argues that a charismatic leader is given “devotion of his disciples, his followers, his personal party friends is oriented to his person”. Although there may be a perceivable link between the two concepts Hartog and Verburg (1997) observe that it is in the discourses of leaders where charisma might be located. Similarly, Conger and Kanungo (1987) maintained that charisma can be identified in the behaviors of leaders and their ability to move the organization beyond the status quo and to articulate a vision that promotes a new and idealized purpose and structure of the organization.

This concept may be useful to consultants who coach leadership development, communication, process management, or other related human resource disciplines. Defining and identifying the construct of presence would also be useful to recruiters, from whom this research was inspired. If recruiters can find people who exhibit specific qualities as defined by the construct, they may be better able to find suitable candidates to fit the job requirements. Additionally, management instructors may be able to focus on teaching the practical qualities necessary for student development and personal growth.

Micro-skills

Using the trivium as a starting point of discussion, the focus turns to the micro-skills necessary to embody presence. To reiterate, performance artists may be able to further explain this notion of presence. Performers not only use the rhetoric written for them – the musical notes or the words in the script – but they must also be delivered or communicated with authority, passion, and a demand of attention. The following section attempts to define presence, as performers understand it. Second, Gruber’s (1980; Gruber, 1981a) model of creativity is applied as a means of explaining the importance of perspective within the notion of presence. Next, ways in which not only content knowledge is important but also how performers communicate that knowledge is suggested and lastly, the implications for teaching are discussed.

What is Presence?

The notion of presence as *gravity* – a specific pull toward one from other people – may be one of the most concrete ways of explaining this quality. A person with presence walks into a room or onto a stage

and immediately commands attention: heads turn, ears prick. One finds he or she cannot look away from someone who has presence. It is a sense of command, authority, trust, and believability.

Every human being has a specific gravity. Before an audience one may say that the comedian has a density – the quality of his presence. The comedian must learn to make use of this dynamism, this kind of aura that surrounds him...The impression of self-sufficiency which certain actors sometimes give is an excess of personality. The same is true of the sense of authority on the stage (Jouvet, 1970, p. 229).

Since there is little for a starting place for a definition of presence, a look at the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* provides an understanding of the term in use: According to the *OED*, presence is defined as:

A person who is corporally present; usually with implications of impressive appearance or bearing...

Demeanour, carriage, or aspect of a person, esp. when stately or impressive; nobleness, majesty or handsomeness of bearing or appearance...carriage of the body in dancing, influence felt or conceived as present...

...state or quality of having one's wits about one, or of having full control over oneself, esp. in peril or emergency; calmness and self-command in trying or dangerous circumstances; freedom from embarrassment; agitation, or panic.

Joseph Chaikin, a well known actor of the social and political theatre movements in the United States of America in the 1960's and 1970's particularly, states that the actor "does not have to pander to...win the audience's partnership; he [sic] begins with the assumption of partnership, and this assumption is the tacit understanding, the secret under the character façade" and that "an actor must involve himself [sic] with different ways of perceiving other than his own" (Chaikin, 1991, p. 37).

Chaikin (1991) adds another quality to the already mentioned concepts of presence: that of partnership. A person with presence is ready or alert to partnering with others. As Chaikin proposes, partnership is a tacit understanding between two parties. It may be that because of the gravitational pull, a partnership is formed like the meeting of the positive and negative ends of a magnet. Therefore, for Chaikin, presence is implicit partnership and the ability to perceive in ways different from one's own perceptions.

Actors and musicians are keenly aware of their partnerships. They partner with the audience and with the people on stage. They rely on each other for micro-communications about and from the audience, where they are at in the cognitive process of the performance, what task they are in the moment of achieving, and anticipating what is coming or what yet needs to be done. These micro-communications come in the form of non-verbal channels such as eye contact, breath, gesture, comportment, and timing.

Therefore, it might be said that presence is a gravitational pull of attention toward a person because of their impressive bearing, demeanor, self-command, implicit partnerships and alternative perspectives. The question begs: can presence be taught?

Before attempting an answer to that question, an understanding of a process of creativity is necessary to explain how an artist develops a unique perspective with which to create. This is important because

when one is aware of one's own perspective, then one can explore alternative perspectives as stated above. The discussion then leads to how artists learn their craft and the implications of that process of learning for students of communication. Third, the relevance of presence in the organizational context is discussed and lastly, the artist's process of work is presented as a contribution for students of organizational communication studies.

A Process of Creativity

Briefly, many models exist attempting to determine an individual process of creativity especially the work of Theresa Amabile (Amabile, 1997; Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987), Howard Gardner (Gardner, 1993, 1995), and Dean Keith Simonton (Simonton, 1992). Knowledge of an individual creative process is important because these models contain the rudiments of how the notion of presence might be able to be taught to others. A model with which these authors particularly resonate is Gruber's (1980; 1981a) model that looks at how systems evolve in order to optimize the opportunities for creativity to occur. Its main distinctions are that it incorporates the notion of development over time, the uniqueness of the individual creative case, and the individual's creative perspective.

Gruber's model is grounded in the research of Piaget (Gruber & Vonèche, 1977; Piaget, 1974) proposing that thought organizes itself through multiple and various adaptations. According to Gruber (1981b), creative work is dominated by the development of evolving sets of structured thought. "These structures are not static entities but regulatory systems that govern the intellectual activity of the person" (Gruber, 1980, p. 289). The person then, organizes thought in a meaningful way that constantly evolves and rearranges itself to solve various problems and thus incorporating the element of time. He does not subscribe to the notion that an idea just *comes* to someone as if a light bulb suddenly goes on over one's head. However, this clichéd notion is more fully explained by Gruber (1981c) through the brain's ability to catalog information for use at a later point, especially by using other avenues of thought unrelated to the current problem of interest: an 'Aha!' moment. Hélie and Sun's (2010) model of Explicit-Implicit Interaction (EII) supports Gruber's notions by attempting to more deeply understand the interaction of explicit and implicit knowledge processing and offers further understanding to the debate of incubation resulting in sudden insight.

Briefly, Gruber's (1980; Gruber, 1981b) model consists of five domains of context that are relevant for the discussion of developing presence and the ability to practically teach it to students. These domains of creative development are important because they acknowledge how a creative perspective matures over time and therefore, encourage one's presence in the world.

They include the sociohistorical period in which a person lives, family and personal life, relevant work enterprise(s), work as a whole (*œuvré*), and professional milieu (Wallace, 1989, p. 37). The sociohistorical period determines what cultural values and beliefs in which the creative person works. For example, Gruber (1981b) points out that Charles Darwin was reticent for many years to publish his theory of evolution until he felt there was a time when his society might be able to accept such a notion.

The family and personal life shape the individual's ability to connect with others not only emotionally, but as Goleman (1996) suggests, the family and personal relationships influence how we interact interpersonally. The domain of the relevant work enterprises focuses on the activities that the individual uses for the work to be accomplished. These enterprises are comprised of tasks that complete projects resulting in enterprises over a lifetime. Sometimes, the enterprises become networks of enterprises while some enterprises may be totally unrelated to the body of creative work. However,

the unrelated enterprises are still considered to assist the creative individual with incubation time for orchestrating knowledge in new ways to solve problems that are meaningful for the individual. The work as a whole domain understands the individual's work over his or her life as a complete body of purposeful activity. It searches out a special point of view. According to Gruber (1985), the individual looks at the world from a particular perspective that is influenced by all five domains.

While the domains of context are artificially separated for analysis, they naturally interweave to construct a creative life. It is this special perspective developed by the individual that enables the person to see things in a new way – fruitful opportunities and directions in which to go. For example, Gruber (1985) suggests that Einstein was not the most talented mathematician of his time but he used his specific perspective to compose his knowledge into the theory of relativity.

Finally, the professional milieu domain focuses on the specific work environment. Certain settings require specific rules to be followed if the work is to be regarded as valid and valuable (see Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Kuhn, 1970). However, in an effort to be novel, these very rules and boundaries must at times be stretched and possibly broken. Therefore, the rules of the professional milieu may be inspiring as well as problematic for the individual.

In sum, these five domains of context comprise to shape an individual's identity, purpose, motivation, and way of gathering information and interpreting the world around him or her. Specifically, the domains intersect and interplay and thus cultivate the creative individual's unique perspective. It is in the growth of this perspective where presence is cultivated.

Learning Presence

Artists in the collaborative arts such as music, dance, and theatre, communicate with each other using micro-communication methods such as sound or silence, gesture, eye contact, breath, and timing. Within the performance of a play or concert, there is constant awareness of and communication with the audience and performance partners. Artists learn how to 'play' with each other and the audience for the maximum benefit of experience for all. Performers receive the communication from the audience, connect it with how they are performing, use timing to initiate the next task at the appropriate time, breathe or catch the eye to communicate a stop or continuance of the action, and all the while communicating the content of the script or score. In terms of the trivium, performers learn a micro-language to communicate with their partners – both audience and stage, understand the texts by which they use to communicate through deep analysis, and learn how to communicate that knowledge in way that becomes meaningful to everyone involved.

Learning the Language to Communicate

In beginning artistic training, the student learns the rudiments of the discipline. In terms of music, one learns the elements of the instrument, scales and basic musicology. In the theatre, one learns the basics of stage directions, use of the body and voice, and improvisation. For both disciplines, students discover how the entire body is used as an instrument of communication. The beginning student learns how to play the instrument through use of the breath, body, and mind: incorporating all three together simultaneously.

Actors use various exercises constructed to heighten their self-awareness and to the reactions of others (Stager Jacques, forthcoming). Many of these exercises involve improvisation techniques Spolin (1999) and other theories of acting for example Meisner (1987) and Stanislavsky (1961; Stanislavsky, 1976).

Broadly, Meisner and Longwell's (1987) theory focuses on "you", the character trying to make the partner in the scene *do* something, and Stanislavsky's (1961, 1976) theory places the focus on what "you", the character *wants*.

Therefore, the first step potential artists learn are the basic assumptions of the work milieu. They accomplish this by drawing on his or her personal and family life, the sociohistorical period in which they live as a beginning perspective, and begin the lifetime work of building relevant work enterprises that will one day comprise a body of work as a whole.

Understanding Content Knowledge and Abstraction

Performers graduate to learning how to use their discipline's notation as a way of communicating meaning. They learn the foundations of analysis, which involves interpreting what the author or composer intended to convey. In the case of actors, they learn how to break apart the script according to the particular theory of acting to which they may subscribe, glean character elements from the words, incorporate those indications into a three-dimensional human being, and use what they have learned from their foundational training to fill in the gaps. The performance becomes unique to the actor playing the role in this latter aspect. For example, Hamlet played by Dame Judith Anderson was far different from Lawrence Olivier's version of Hamlet. That is a broad example, but because of the uniqueness of each individual playing a role due to their sociohistorical influences, personal and family life relationships, and relevant work enterprises, each performance will also be unique.

Ability to Communicate the Knowledge

The ability to communicate knowledge requires the previous two steps: learning the language and content and abstract knowledge of the discipline. Most of the training in artistic professional schools focuses on communicating text or the application of theory to practice. Theory is learned as a means of expressing ideas and the commitment to putting forward those ideas. It is here where performers excel. Foundational skills enable deep analysis and self-reflection, which then leads to the final step of sharing that knowledge with others. In addition, performers share that knowledge with passion, emotion, and in collaboration with the audience.

This manuscript could veer into a discussion of specific ways in which actors and musicians accomplish performance. However, the primary means of whatever theory of acting or music production is applied, there is one primary factor in common: practice. Musical scales are repeated for hours, sensory awareness exercises become daily routine for actors, observation of human behavior is *de rigueur* for both. Artists of every discipline practice foundational skills every day. They are the basis of the individual's work. Next, interpretation and analysis of the text happens individually and collaboratively. One studies one's part in the production privately first, but then in rehearsal, the individual's analysis is questioned, challenged, and tried until a consensus of collaboration is achieved. The clear communication of the author or composer's intention is realized through constant practice by self and group preparation.

Another contribution of performers' training and quite possibly the most important not incorporated into teaching, is the artists' ability to juggle multiple communication stimuli from several directions – and – to be able to adjust one's performance according to the split-second interpretation of that stimuli. For example, in the performance of a comedic play, an actor analyzes the script for potential funny moments. They can be either physical or cognitive jokes. These moments are planned and relentlessly rehearsed. Hopefully during performance, the audience laughs. Now, the actors must time the delivery

of their next line to come just after the peak of the laughter so that they are heard and also drive the energy of the action on stage. This timing skill takes developmental experience to read the audience's reaction, communicate with one's scene partner to hold his or her action until the next line is spoken, how to "come in over the top of the laugh", and continue with the action of the play. Therefore, what is going on in the mind of the actor is receiving reaction from the audience, sending micro non-verbals to one's scene partner, receiving micro non-verbals from one's scene partner, remembering the content of the scene, i.e., the lines, their meanings, and intentions and motivations; and when to decide to continue the action of the scene. The ability to accomplish this expert skill requires foundational skills, knowledge of the discipline, experience, and practice.

In sum, developing presence requires cultivating one's perspective of the world and one's place in it, the ability to perceive in ways other than one's own, implicit partnerships, basic foundational and content knowledge of a discipline, analytical ability, receiving and reacting to multiple micro-communication stimuli, and practice. Teachers already do a fine job of teaching knowledge and even analysis, but possibly do not encourage enough practice in the area of verbal communication of this knowledge. Therefore, students do not develop presence and may struggle with job interviews and other performance requirements of work unless more attention is paid to this performance arena.

What is Presence in the Organizational Context?

According to Perce (2009) scholars do not agree on any one definition of presence. However, she suggests that these scholars propose two primary types of presence: "personal, or the extent to which one senses being actually located in a physical environment, and social, or the sense of feeling *with* others" (2009, p. 277, emphasis in the original). Personal presence in the fore mentioned context relates to media use such as virtual worlds. The constructs that distinguish these two types of presence is understood, however, individual presence is comprised of both notions simultaneously – awareness of where one is in the environment as well as the sense of feeling *with* others.

Halpern and Lubar (2004) describe leadership presence as "the ability to connect authentically with the thoughts and feelings of others, in order to motivate and inspire them toward a desired outcome". While the Halpern and Lubar (2004) definition is simple, it reflects aspects of the *OED* definition – especially the latter part of the definition. For example, the *OED* states that presence is the quality of having one's wits about one, accentuating control over oneself, calmness and self-command, and freedom from embarrassment. Having one's wits about one and having self-control allows for interpersonal connections with others: to actively listen to others' thoughts and feelings. Halpern and Lubar's (2004) model of presence in action is simple and comes from their experiences as professional actors as well as consulting to and teaching leaders and managers the elements of presence as actors learn it. Their model reiterates several of the factors that have been previously mentioned, such as partnership, self-awareness, and authenticity. It states:

P stands for *Being Present*, the ability to be completely in the moment, and flexible enough to handle the unexpected.

R stands for *Reaching Out*, the ability to build relationships with others through empathy listening, and authentic connection.

E stands for *Expressiveness*, the ability to express feelings and emotions appropriately by using all available means – words, voice, body, face – to deliver one congruent message.

S stands for *Self-knowing*, the ability to accept yourself, to be authentic, and to reflect your values in your decisions and actions (Halpern & Lubar, 2004, p. 9).

In the Forward to Halpern and Lubar's (2004) book, Warren Bennis (2004, p. xiii, emphasis in the original), a noted leadership scholar writes that leadership and presence are linked together "by a common social purpose: *the creation of mutuality, of transforming feeling into shared meaning*". Bennis' suggestion supports Chaikin's (1991) views of implicit partnership with the audience.

How Can Presence be Taught?

Performers learn presence as a part of their training. Halpern and Lubar (2004) suggest that presence does not have to be of an electric magnitude such as when Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech. They rely more on interpersonal connection and a genuine spirit or what is more popularly termed in organizational discourse as authenticity. Presence can be quiet as well as demanding. Rosa Parks became an icon of the 1960's civil rights activism in the USA. In December of 1955 she quietly decided not to give up her seat to a white male passenger. "Her quiet courageous act changed America, its view of black people and redirected the course of history" ("Rosa Louise Parks biography," 2011). At times, the quiet leader demands more attention than one who blusters.

Halpern and Lubar (2004) note that within the training of the actor, the paradox exists that to pretend, the actor must be real. "Actors, consequently, are probably more aware of authenticity than anyone else, because they've studied it, and themselves, so carefully" (Halpern & Lubar, 2004, p. 7). Ladkin and Taylor (2010) echo this notion and also draw on the methods of Stanislavski, the famed Russian acting theorist, actor, and director of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to illustrate how his acting methods still in use today benefit leaders to be their 'true' self and embody authentic leadership abilities.

Therefore, since modern performers have been learning the skill of presence as authentic, as implicit partnerships, and as awareness of self and the self in context; it seems reasonable and logical to conclude that presence is a skill and quality that can be taught.

What might be misinterpreted throughout this paper is that the aesthetic and the scientific/intellectual persons have separate and distinct ways of being in the world. As Dewey (1934, pp. 15–16) states,

The difference between the esthetic and the intellectual is thus one of the place where emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interaction of the live creature with his [sic] surroundings. The ultimate matter of both emphases in experience is the same, as is also their general form. The odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind. The thinker has his [sic] esthetic moment when his ideas cease to be mere ideas and become the corporate meanings of objects. The artist has his [sic] problems and thinks as he [sic] works. But his thought is more immediately embodied in the object. Because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words, and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it.

Educational Closing Remarks

One of the core competencies that graduates of business schools are expected to possess is the ability to make presentations to a variety of audiences that are informative, interesting and engaging. Yet the sense of preparedness of graduates lacks for the grueling task of public speaking. The observations in this paper are informed by dual career perspectives as performing artists (dramatic and musical) and as faculty members in a large business school. It is frequently observed that at all stages of curriculum delivery (undergraduate or postgraduate) students seem unaware of the need to engage emotionally with their audience of peers and instructors. Here may be the point where educators are being remiss: The hours of teaching time spent on learning the rudiments of disciplines and possibly even more time on theoretical notions – both very important knowledge, but perhaps not enough time is spent on learning how to communication that knowledge. Lectures generally occur in rooms that provide little space or design for 360-degree interaction with other students – or at the very least, face to face communication. The configuration of most classrooms is still the row-like, face-forward-to-the-teacher type of design. Many students struggle with in-depth discussion leaving most of the talking to a few outspoken people. Other students do not engage with discussion because of a fear of being wrong or appearing silly with unintelligent comments or questions. It seems most people are not skilled in speaking in groups of people.

Almost without exception, students choose to use digitally mediated forms of presentation styles that rely heavily on computer software packages like Microsoft's PowerPoint. This may be because of its ubiquitous and assumed usage both in the classroom and boardroom. For instance, in lecture preparation instructors spend time choosing backgrounds to their slides, finding ways of animating text and selecting video and audio accompaniments to course content. The textual content is often usually displayed in bullet points sometimes with reduced font size in order to pack as much information on slides. This method of delivery favors content as the primary purpose of the lecture has its roots in pedagogical styles that assume the lecturer is an expert who has information necessary for successful course completion and movement to the next level of study.

This paper advocated an alternative means of engagement by exploring the notion of *presence* – a sense of being present *to* and *with* an audience in a way that facilitates emotional connection and persuasive intent. The goal was to explore the pedigree of rhetoric and propose how today's students might become better equipped relate freely, openly and with confidence with their audience and in so doing become authentic leaders and embody executive presence.

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