The Dark Side of Customer Rapport With Frontline Employees: Heightened Customer Territorial Responses

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THE DARK SIDE OF CUSTOMER RAPPORT WITH FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES: HEIGHTENED CUSTOMER TERRITORIAL RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that retail customers are territorial, which results in reactive behaviors that are inconsistent with an individual’s goals and can hurt firm profitability. The manuscript expands the typology of customer territorial responses previously identified in the environmental psychology and marketing literature. The typology is developed based on two exploratory studies and tested in the main study in the context of closing time boundary conflicts. The main study also extends the existing literature as it examines the effects of customer rapport on the relationships between employee intrusiveness and customer territorial responses. The results indicate a new category of territorial responses, deferential verbalizations, along with deferential actions; distinguishes between retaliatory verbalizations and retaliatory actions; and replicates the effects of territory intrusions on customer abandonment. The results also indicate that employee rapport has a positive moderating effect on the relationships between intrusiveness and all of the responses except abandonment, illustrating a dark side to customer rapport with frontline employees (FLE) that has not been explored previously.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation for Research

Territoriality, or the attempt to control space, is often characterized as a fundamental human activity, may be a function of evolution (Lyman and Scott 1967). Past research provides evidence of the role of territoriality in many human interactions, including recent retailing research that studies territoriality in the context of closing time (Ashley and Noble 2014). Closing time represents a boundary between the open store domain, which the customer is entitled to occupy, and the closed store domain, which the consumer is not entitled to occupy.

Consistent with territoriality research in other contexts (e.g. Brown and Altman 1983), Ashley and Noble (2014) found evidence of three customer responses to territory infringements by frontline employees (FLEs) who prepared for closing time while the store was still open: accession (e.g. moving out of the store in deference to the FLE), retaliation (e.g. taking action to punish FLEs and demonstrate to FLEs they have the right to be in the store), and abandonment (e.g. giving up the store permanently). The way customers respond has important implications for firm profitability, since customers who complete their shopping trips without reaching their goals or who stop shopping at the store altogether can reduce revenue, while retaliation and lost customers increase (operational and acquisition) costs.

Evidence from qualitative research suggests additional territorial responses, which motivated inclusion of more nuanced territorial responses in the main study. The distinction between territorial responses is important since identifying customer territorial responses is an important step in understanding how to manage FLEs to minimize negative outcomes for the firm. Therefore, we surveyed customers to characterize additional dimensions of territorial responses, which were used as outcome variables in the main study.
The main study examines the role of customer rapport with FLE in customer territorial responses. Rapport with FLEs has been identified as an important construct that fosters customer relationships with firms (e.g. Gremler and Gwinner 2008). Previous research suggests rapport plays a positive role in response to service failures and conflict resolution (e.g. DeWitt and Brady 2003; Drolet and Morris 2003), but it also suggests it changes how people interact and occupy space (e.g. Nadler 2003; Jap, Robertson, and Hamilton 2011). We suggest it has a dark side: it amplifies the likelihood that customers will engage in territorial responses that may have negative, costly implications for the firm.

Therefore, the goals of this paper are twofold:

1) identify additional customer territorial responses, which are important for retail managers and FLEs to identify and manage

2) demonstrate the dark side of rapport, which increases customer territorial responses.

To this end, the remainder of the paper is organized as follows: First, we discuss customer territoriality in general and then move to discuss territorial responses to FLE intrusions before the closing time boundary. Next we explore territorial responses and expand on the territorial responses previously studied with two preliminary studies. Then, the potential dark side of rapport is reviewed and hypotheses are developed. This literature review is followed by a main study that empirically illustrates the potential dark side of customer/FLE rapport.

1.2 Expressions of Customer Territoriality

People use common rituals and symbolic fences to carve out territories when they occupy space temporarily to show the individual has presumed rights to a particular place (Ruback and Juieng 1997). People are sensitive to violations of these ambiguous, socially constructed, and often vulnerable boundaries (Lyman and Scott 1967). Public places, like public parks or
retailers, have higher ambiguity about when the claim to an area begins and terminates (Goffman 1971), which may ultimately lead to greater conflicts. Customer territorial responses may happen as a result of perceived intrusions by other customers (Griffiths and Gilly 2012) or by frontline employees (Ashley and Noble 2014).

The existing literature on territorial defenses in the boundary theory literature suggests customer responses to territory infringements are about regaining control or relinquishing control (Szlemko et al. 2008; Fraine et al. 2007). For example, in a study of territorial behaviors regarding a temporary parking space, Ruback and Jieung (1997) indicate people wait longer to leave their parking space when someone was waiting as a way of defending their right to occupy the space, even though their goal was to leave the space. When the person waiting is aggressive (honking their horn), the person in the parking space waits longer. This example shows that people defend a territory, even when they are not interested in gaining anything through their defensive actions. One context in which the literature has shown territorial responses from consumers is when front-line employee actions prepare for closing time while the store is open.

1.3 Customer Territoriality in Response to Closing Time Activities

Closing time represents a border or boundary between the open store domain and the closed store domain. Retail environments represent secondary territories, characterized by shared ownership of the domain (Griffiths and Gilly 2012; Altman and Chemers 1980). Because closing time is a symbolic boundary between the open and closed domains, the domains in which relevant service behavior begins (open) and ends (closed) (Ashley and Noble 2014), it is susceptible to renegotiation by parties with interests on either side of the boundary (Clark 1994). For example, shoppers may try to push back the closing time boundary to accomplish their
shopping goals after closing time. At the same time, employees may try to push forward the closing time boundary to complete after closing assignments before closing time so they can leave earlier.

The boundary is important because open and closed store domains are very different. In the open domain, front-line employee (FLE) focus is on activities that provide direct benefits to shoppers, while the closed domain shifts the emphasis to cleaning up after shoppers and preparation for future shoppers which may create confusion about identity and purpose, which can result in conflict (Kaufman and Lane 1996; Clark 1994). Thus, employee actions near the closing time boundary may also trigger territorial responses that harm the retailer’s relationship with the customer and its bottom line (Ashley and Noble 2014). For example, a customer might make a mess or go slower to retaliate/regain control of the open store, which may increase costs. Or, the customer may leave the retailer, temporarily or permanently, which may result in lower revenue (Ashley and Noble 2014).

1.4 Territorial Responses

Shoppers may defend their right to be in a store to employees who try to make them feel unwelcome before closing time, which infringes on the open store territory. Customer responses to territory infringements are about regaining control or relinquishing control, even if the actions are not consistent with their goals. For example, taking longer than necessary to complete a shopping trip or making a mess may be a way to retaliate against the intrusive employee, but it also delays the completion of the consumer’s task (Ashley and Noble 2014).

Previous studies in the context of closing time and other contexts identified three main ways that consumers can respond to territory infringements (e.g. Ashley and Noble 2014). First,
they can retaliate. For example, in the context of road rage, consumer responses to territory infringements included physical and verbal retaliation (Fraine et al. 2007). In other territorial disputes, consumers defend their right to public territories by marking their space and retaliating against intruders (e.g. Taylor and Brooks 1980; Ruback et al. 1989). The literature also points to exit, or abandonment of the territory, as a possible outcomes of territory infringements, especially in public spaces (Brown and Altman 1983). As such, we include abandonment as a possible outcome of territory infringements. Finally, the literature notes accession or deferential actions as a possible outcome (Fraine et al. 2007). This is where consumers change their behaviors to physically accommodate the infringer.

Previous research in the context of closing time identified other, non-territorial responses, but did not explore whether customer territorial responses were different in the context of vertical relationships (Ashley and Noble 2014). Therefore, we started with customer interviews to see if there were any responses that did not fit within these three categories. We also identified the customer’s rapport with front-line employees as a construct that may impact customer territorial responses.

1.5 Customer Rapport with Frontline Employees

Customer choice of responses to territory infringement depends on their perceptions that their right to shop is worth defending (the benefits) outweigh their perceived costs of defending their right to shop. One factor that may impact the customer’s perceptions of the value associated with territorial responses is customer rapport with frontline employees (FLEs). Customer rapport is the extent to which the customer feels they have a psychological connection with the employee (Gremler and Gwinner 2000). Experienced customers who have rapport with
employees are more likely to be satisfied, loyal and engage in positive word of mouth (Gremler and Gwinner 2008), but it also changes the dynamic of interactions (Jap, Robertson and Hamilton 2011).

Information about the role of rapport in territorial responses is important because some firms invest in training that encourages employees to form bonds with customers. The same firms may try to limit costs or improve atmospherics by asking employees to engage in behaviors that may be interpreted as territory intrusions. Thus, firms that encourage/are considering encouraging rapport would benefit from a greater understanding of how rapport relates to behavioral outcomes resulting from territorial intrusions.

2. EXPLORATORY STUDIES

2.1 Exploratory Study 1: Critical Incident Technique Interviews

The purpose of Study 1 was to identify territorial responses from a customer’s perspective across a wide variety of experiences to determine if prior research has fully articulated these responses. A convenience sample of 21 shoppers to described a specific experience at a retailer when they shopped near closing time. Critical incident technique is used to capture the respondent’s perspective on the experience, in his/her own words, without forcing them to respond to the issues we expect respondents will think is important (Gremler 2004). We asked them to describe the behaviors of the employees, their thoughts, feelings, and their responses, including whether it changed their future shopping behavior at the store. The average age of the respondents was 25 years old; 20% were male and 80% were female. The types of territorial behaviors noted by customers were coded by two independent judges and reviewed by 5 customers and 5 FLEs with experience working at a retailer’s closing time to check the
wording and validity of the territorial responses identified in the CIT. The revised list included 25 customer territorial responses.

2.2 Exploratory Study 2: Survey

The list of 25 customer territorial responses was given to a group of 200 consumers recruited at a regional festival to measure their reactions to territory intrusions near closing time. A short list of employee behaviors near closing time was provided to provide context (e.g. an employee gave you a dirty look or displayed hostility towards you (because you shopped near closing time). Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood they would engage in different customer responses if they felt an employee interfered with their shopping trip as they shopped close to closing time at a specific service provider (anchored by 1= not at all likely and 5 = extremely likely). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the responses.

The 25 items loaded on five factors that accounted for 70% of the variance in the responses. Items with high cross loadings were eliminated from future analysis. The results suggest that verbal retaliatory responses (4 items, $\alpha = .847$; e.g. “I made negative comments aloud about the service employees’ closing time behaviors”) are in a separate category from non-verbal, active retaliatory marking (3 items, $\alpha = .826$; e.g. “I messed up the merchandise and/or shelves a little while shopping so the employee had to re-straighten”). In the same way, deferential verbalization responses (3 items, $\alpha = .721$; e.g. “I explained to an employee I would not take long”) were grouped separately from accession/deferential action responses (2 items, $r = .63$; e.g. “I left the store without meeting my shopping goals so I did not interfere with closing”). The separation may represent a distinction between acknowledging the closing time but staying in the store and moving faster (deferential verbalization) or simply making moves to get out of
the way (deferential action). The fifth factor included two abandonment items (r = .58; e.g. “I will not return to the store because of the way I was treated”).

The exploratory studies shed light on the distinctions between the different types of territorial responses, which will be useful as managers try to understand their implications for firm profitability and try to manage the fall-out accordingly. Specifically, the results reinforce a distinction between retaliatory verbalizations and retaliatory actions, which is consistent with the road rage literature but has not been previously studied in the context of retailing. Further, the studies find support for a new category of responses, deferential verbalizations, where customers express deference verbally, but may or may not give up the territory.

3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Intrusiveness and Territorial Responses

Consistent with the existing literature on reactionary defenses (responses to infringement attempts by others) in the boundary theory literature, the responses consumers could engage in include: verbal expressions and/or actions that retaliate against the infringer and interfere with the infringer’s goals (retaliatory verbalizations/actions); changing behaviors to physically accommodate the infringer (accession/deferential actions); and leaving the domain, temporarily or permanently, because of perceptions the domain is not worth defending (abandonment) (Szlemko et al. 2008; Fraine et al. 2007; Ashley and Noble 2014).

Based on the responses to the critical incident interviews and survey, we separate retaliatory verbalizations from retaliatory actions, and add deferential verbalizations, where the customer acknowledges the desires of the employee but maintains control of the territory, which is a unique contribution to the literature. One explanation for its absence in previous research is
accession has been looked at as a territorial response when there was not a pre-existing relationship (Fraine et al. 2007). We are able to explore this territorial response because we examine a territory conflict between parties in a dynamic, vertical relationship where the potential for a pre-existing or ongoing relationship exists.

We expect deferential verbalizations to be a separate response from deferential actions (accession) because the customer does not give over control of the domain or accommodate the employee’s wishes by leaving the domain; they transfer power by stating they are aware of the boundary. It is different from retaliatory actions because the action is not an attempt to get back at the employees. Instead, it is a customer’s attempt to maintain his/her right to the domain in a way that preserves the relationship.

According to boundary theory, as intrusion perceptions increase, customer territorial responses should also increase. Thus, we replicate the previous test of intrusiveness on abandonment, and look for relationships between intrusiveness and the expanded typology as we test the following:

**H1:** Perceptions of intrusion pressure increase the likelihood of deferential actions, deferential verbalizations, retaliatory verbalizations, retaliatory actions and abandonment.

The hypothesis is unique from previous studies of territorial responses because it includes deferential verbalizations, which are distinguished from deferential actions that are typically characterized as accession in the services literature. We also separate retaliatory verbalizations from retaliatory actions, which is important because these responses have different implications for the frontline employees and the firm.
3.2 Moderating Variable: Customer Rapport

Consumer are more likely to engage responses that defend their right to shop at the store or avoid ruffling frontline employees’ feathers if they feel the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. Rapport with frontline employees has been shown to increase customer cooperation and decrease customer retaliation (Gremler and Gwinner 2000; DeWitt and Brady 2003). Rapport has previously been linked with trust, which has a role in conflict resolution, in general. It increases the likelihood that interactants will share information that allow them to come to an agreement, reduces threats and ultimatums, and increases information sharing (Nadler 2003). However, rapport may increase the consumer’s perceived rights to occupy the open store domain, amplifying the effects of perceived intrusion by employees on territorial responses.

Rapport makes people feel more involved in interactions, which can change their physical orientations and the way they negotiate space (Nadler 2003). It makes people configure themselves as part of a group or move toward the individuals with whom they feel a rapport (Nadler 2003). In the context of an open store, it might increase their sense of ownership and/or perceived right to occupy the domain, increasing territorial responses.

Rapport generally increases cooperation (Drolet and Morris 2000), which may result in higher levels of accession, either by leaving the service provider or verbally acknowledging awareness of the time until closing. In addition, Jap, Robertson and Hamilton (2011) studied the effect of rapport in settings where one party has to misbehave to reach a successful deal. They found that negotiators with higher levels of rapport were more likely to misbehave (e.g. lie when the truth would lead to conflict) (Jap, Robertson, and Hamilton 2011). Similarly, if customers with a high rapport feel intruded upon in the open store domain, they may be more likely to
engage in retaliatory actions or verbalizations that establish their right to the domain and restore balance.

Rapport, and the related increase in positive expressions between interactants, does not grow in environments that foster competitiveness (Drolet and Morris 2000). Perceptions of territorial intrusions may increase competitiveness as the customer negotiates his/her rights to maintain presence in the space. Further, retaliatory defense is only worthwhile if the benefits of the reaction offset the shopper’s costs associated with the reactive behavior (Brown 1964). The benefits are expected to be higher among consumers who have rapport with the employees at the service provider. Therefore, the literature suggests a dark side to customer rapport with frontline employees: it may amplify the likelihood of territorial responses to intrusiveness, formally stated as hypothesis 2:

**H2:** Customer rapport has a positive moderating effect on intrusion pressure perceptions, increasing the likelihood of customer accession, deferential verbalizations, retaliatory verbalizations, retaliatory actions and abandonment.

4. MAIN STUDY

4.1 Methodology

Two hundred twenty survey respondents were recruited as they left one of two grocery store locations in the Southeastern United States within two hours of the store’s closing time. One field researcher stood at each of the two doors at each location twelve nights to recruit participants. Customers were invited to sign up to take the survey at home from their computers or on paper within the next 24 hours and given a full-sized bag of potato chips. Participants were
entered in a raffle for a $500 gift card to the grocery store.

Respondents were asked about their rapport with the store’s employees (four items from Gremler and Gwinner 2008; e.g. “I have harmonious relationship with the employees at this store”) and their perceptions of intrusiveness during that shopping trip (four items adapted from Li, Edwards and Lee 2002; reduced scale α = .91; e.g. “Employees interfered with my ability to meet my shopping goals”). They were also asked to respond to the survey items used to capture territorial responses in the exploratory survey that did not have high cross loadings (14 items) and represented the five types of customer territorial responses.

4.2 Results

A base model analyzed using a CFA in SEM indicated the model fit well ($\chi^2 = 66.96; df = 51; GFI: .952; CFI: .978; TLI: .948; IFI: .980; \text{RMSEA: .045}$). The standardized betas ($t$-values) for the paths from intrusion pressure and each of the territorial responses were significant at $p < .001$: retaliatory verbalizations $\beta = .89$ (11.18); retaliatory actions $\beta = .82$ (9.75); abandonment $\beta = .79$ (8.77); deferential verbalizations $\beta = .52$ (5.69); and deferential actions $\beta = .33$ (3.50). Therefore, hypothesis one was supported.

Including a direct path from rapport to each of the territorial responses and the moderator took away the main effect from intrusiveness to abandonment, but the rest of the main effects remained significant. In addition, there was a significant main effect from rapport to retaliatory verbalizations ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) and a significant main effect from rapport to deferential verbalizations ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). All the significant main effects must be viewed in light of significant interactions (at the $p < .05$ level) between intrusiveness and rapport on each of the independent variables, supporting the majority of H2: retaliatory verbalizations ($\beta = .14$);
retaliatory actions (β = .12); deferential verbalizations (β = .13); and deferential actions (β = .18). The summary of results is in Table 1. The significant interactions are graphed in Figure 1.

---Please Insert Table 1 and Figure 1 Approximately Here---

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Understanding how customers respond to the intrusion pressure that results from employee infringements on his/her territory is critical because the range of potential responses includes actions that can decrease the firm’s profitability. Identifying the actions as territorial responses can help managers resolve conflicts around the closing time boundary. Understanding when customers are most likely to engage in territorial responses, like customers with high levels of rapport with frontline employees, can help managers segment customers who shop near the closing time boundary and provide treatment that minimizes the most costly responses.

The results indicate that territorial responses include subcategories that were not previously explored in the literature. In the context of closing time, deferential verbalizations provide a way for the customer to acknowledge closing time, but still pursue their goals within the store. We also separated retaliatory verbalizations from retaliatory actions. The path from perceived intrusion pressure to retaliatory verbalizations was the strongest, suggesting that customers would be most likely to fight perceived territory intrusions with words that express what the frontline employee is doing is wrong and unwelcome.

Retaliatory actions, where the customer goes out of his or her way to slow down employees or make the employees do extra work in response to perceived intrusion pressure, was the second strongest path. Retaliatory actions are likely to be counterproductive, as they require an expenditure of energy that would be better utilized completing the shopping trip. Retaliatory
actions are also likely to be more costly for the retailer, since it has to clean up after a customer who has gone out of his/her way to make a mess or is going slowly and getting in the way.

The weakest path was the path between perceived intrusion pressure and deferential actions. However, the interaction with employee rapport is strongest for this outcome. The effect of rapport may or may not be positive: a shorter trip may yield less revenue, which would only be recovered if the customer makes the time to return. Rapport also amplified the likelihood of other territorial responses, so there is a potential dark side to customer perceptions of rapport with employees. Boundary crossings may be more volatile for high rapport customers.

Customers who choose to respond to intrusiveness by boycotting the store may be the most costly for managers. Abandonment was the third strongest path from intrusion pressure, and was not influenced by the customer’s perceptions of rapport with an employee. It is notable that rapport did not protect the retailer from what could be the most negative outcome of intrusion pressure. A customer may feel catharsis following retaliation and return to the store. A lost customer is likely to be expensive to replace.

Big differences between open and closed store domains could result in conflicts in goals, identity, and purpose from both domains that lead to conflict, juggling and "schizophrenia". FLEs go from serving customers to wishing they would leave so they can clean up after them. When differences between the domains are vast, strong borders are more desirable. Managers should make sure the closing time, and what is expected during the domain leading up to closing time, is clear to both customers and employees.

A customer who sees the closing time activities as an extension of the retailer's customer orientation, because it helps deliver value for future visits, is likely to react differently than a
customer who sees closing time activities as a violation of the store's service culture. Jap, Robertson, and Hamilton (2011) found that reminding negotiators that their behavior could have long-term repercussions diminished negative behaviors from high rapport negotiators. In the same way, reminders of the importance of the customer’s long-term relationship with FLEs would reduce the likelihood customers would engage in behaviors that hurt the firm.

Further, if operational budgets require closing time activities prior to closing time, managers should consider positioning closing time activities before the closing time border accordingly. Just as stores will have pardon our dust signs that express they are working to better serve the customers when they are remodeling, managers may find ways to communicate FLE efforts are leading toward greater value (e.g. keep costs lower and pass along savings or prepare for a positive shopping experience for the next day).

The results should be interpreted in light of the use of convenience samples. Replications should include more representative samples and a variety of retail contexts. The relevance of the new territorial responses should be examined in customer-to-customer territorial disputes (e.g. rights to occupy a space); employee-to-employee territorial disputes (e.g. rights to a work space); and other types of employee-to-customer territorial disputes (e.g. customers approaching employees about business during non-work hours) should be tested. A longitudinal design can examine whether responses do not occur simultaneously (e.g. Deferential Verbalizations and Deferential Actions or Retaliatory Verbalizations and Abandonment) and may include observational data and surveys or experiments. Follow up interviews may help identify the relationship between the territorial responses and when a customer is most likely to engage in more than one response.
The paper sets the groundwork for future endeavors by identifying additional types of territorial responses, which are important for retail managers and FLEs to identify and manage. It also illustrates a dark side of customer/FLE rapport, showing it increases several types of territorial responses (Deferential Verbalizations, Deferential Actions, Retaliatory Verbalizations, and Retaliatory Actions).
Table 1: Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H1: Perceptions of intrusion pressure increase the likelihood of territorial responses:</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
<th>Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deferential Actions (Accession)</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferential Verbalizations</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retaliatory Verbalizations</td>
<td>.89***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliatory Actions</td>
<td>.82***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>.79***</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H2: Customer rapport has a positive moderating effect on intrusion perceptions, increasing the likelihood of:</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
<th>Partially Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deferential Actions (Accession)</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferential Verbalizations</td>
<td>.13*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retaliatory Verbalizations</td>
<td>.14*</td>
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<td>Retaliatory Actions</td>
<td>.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001  
** p < .01  
* p < .05
Figure 1: Interactions between Intrusiveness and Rapport on Territorial Responses

Intrusion x Rapport → Retaliatory Verbalization

Intrusion x Rapport → Retaliatory Actions

Intrusion x Rapport → Deferential Actions

Intrusion x Rapport → Deferential Verb
REFERENCES


Founded in 1892, the University of Rhode Island is one of eight land, urban, and sea grant universities in the United States. The 1,200-acre rural campus is less than ten miles from Narragansett Bay and highlights its traditions of natural resource, marine and urban related research. There are over 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in seven degree-granting colleges representing 48 states and the District of Columbia. More than 500 international students represent 59 different countries. Eighteen percent of the freshman class graduated in the top ten percent of their high school classes. The teaching and research faculty numbers over 600 and the University offers 101 undergraduate programs and 86 advanced degree programs. URI students have received Rhodes, Fulbright, Truman, Goldwater, and Udall scholarships. There are over 80,000 active alumnae.

The University of Rhode Island started to offer undergraduate business administration courses in 1923. In 1962, the MBA program was introduced and the PhD program began in the mid 1980s. The College of Business Administration is accredited by The AACSB International - The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in 1969. The College of Business enrolls over 1400 undergraduate students and more than 300 graduate students.

Mission

Our responsibility is to provide strong academic programs that instill excellence, confidence and strong leadership skills in our graduates. Our aim is to (1) promote critical and independent thinking, (2) foster personal responsibility and (3) develop students whose performance and commitment mark them as leaders contributing to the business community and society. The College will serve as a center for business scholarship, creative research and outreach activities to the citizens and institutions of the State of Rhode Island as well as the regional, national and international communities.

The creation of this working paper series has been funded by an endowment established by William A. Orme, URI College of Business Administration, Class of 1949 and former head of the General Electric Foundation. This working paper series is intended to permit faculty members to obtain feedback on research activities before the research is submitted to academic and professional journals and professional associations for presentations.

An award is presented annually for the most outstanding paper submitted.

