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# PROJECT REBIRTH

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Professor Beverly Sauer



# About Project Rebirth

**Project Rebirth** is a chronicle of the strength of the human spirit coping with disaster: the aftermath of September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center.

Founder: Director Jim Whitaker  
Board Chairman: Brian Rafferty, CAS '79

Project Rebirth records the minute-by-minute redevelopment of the WTC site and represents the first long-term film record of ten people dealing with grief and trauma. It is a film and a Center for victims of and first responders to events of traumatic loss.



# The GUWLI Project

**GUWLI Research Team** has been granted access to the video archives of Project Rebirth at Columbia University.

**Our goal** is to analyze these archives in order to document gender differences (if any) in the ways that speakers respond to grief and loss.

This analysis will help leaders become more sensitive to the ways that individuals experience and talk about risk and loss.

This research has direct application to risk communication, public health policy, & public response to both natural and man-made disasters.



# Research Question

When individuals reflect upon a crisis, how do their gestures represent authentic emotion or cognition?

For the producer?

For the interviewer?

Do actions speak louder than words?



# Project Phases

1. Literature Review
2. Gesture Cataloguing
3. Qualitative Analysis



# 1. Literature Review

- Communication is a multimodal phenomenon. Both gesture and language contribute to the message delivered and the message received. (McNeill, 1992)
- Gestural viewpoint plays an important role in the interpretation of meaning in gesture i.e. as a speaker or as an audience member. (Sauer, 2002)
- Speakers can represent features of manner and motion not possible in speech alone (Sauer, 2003)
- Gestural meanings are not naturally evident, but subconsciously interpreted. (Tannen, 1996)
- Service economies are predicated upon relationships between professionals and clients. Communication is integral to workplace outcomes. (Miller & Kaoeten, 2008)



## 2. Gesture Cataloguing

- Definition of gesture
- Features of gesture
- Archival review in VITAL



## VITAL Interface

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PROJECT REBIRTH MASTER COURSE (Spring 2009)

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### Course Home

**Project Rebirth** is a chronicle of the strength of the human spirit coping with disaster: the aftermath of September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center. This VITAL course is intended to provide faculty with a complete index of Project Rebirth footage, as well as sample assignments for students.

[Collapse all](#)

#### Topic: Year 1 Videos

Jan. 1, 2009 – Jan. 31, 2009

Project Rebirth film crews are chronicling the lives of ten people coping with 9/11. Our subjects give 3-5 hour interviews on each anniversary of 9/11 and invite Rebirth's film crew to record relevant events in their lives. The identities of and details regarding our individual subjects are for now unavailable for public access.

Rebirth's volunteer subjects:

- Ling (LY): A survivor from an impact floor of the South Tower
- Joe (JK): A NYPD officer who oversaw recovery efforts at the Fresh Kills landfill
- Tim (TB): A fireman who survived the collapse of the Towers, but lost his best friend and 343 fellow firefighters
- Nick (NC): A high school student who lost his mother
- Tanya (TV): A young woman who lost her fiancé
- Brian (BL): A construction worker who lost his brother, assisted with recovery efforts, and works building the Freedom Tower today
- Debbie (DA): A Muslim American woman who became an advocate for religious tolerance following 9/11
- Charles (CC): A volunteer in the recovery effort who later trained as a Red Cross volunteer and assisted Katrina survivors in Gulfport, Mississippi
- Claire (CG): A single mother who lost her sister
- Larry (LC): A man who lost his domestic partner of 14 years and moved to California

Essay: [Project Rebirth, Year 1](#)

DUE: Jan. 31, 2009 | STATUS: Not Started

#### Assignment Videos:



[BL003](#)



[BL004](#)



[BL005](#)



[CC003\\_004](#)



[CC005](#)



[CC007](#)



[CG001](#)



[CG002](#)



[DA002](#)



[DA003](#)



[DA004\\_005](#)



[DA006](#)



## VITAL Interface

TV004

EDIT CLIP



00:03:24 / 00:46:38

[Video detail](#)

Set start: 00:03:23

Set end: 00:03:30

Title:

Note:

Tags: [Add/Remove tags](#)

New

Save

My Clips

Show:  Group by:

Clip Time: 00:03:42 - 00:03:43

Tags:

Note Content: Uses both hands, palms open, facing each other in an up and down motion to indicate she had questioned whether or not she was adopted from an early age.

[Tanya - My brothers and my sisters look like me](#) (Modified: 2009/1/4-18:50:15)

Clip Time: 00:03:30 - 00:03:40

Tags:

Note Content: Tanya uses both hands open palm moving them apart and together to indicate the similarity between the siblings' looks. When describing each is 1/2 Filipino and 1/2 European uses right hand in an arching motion left then right. When describing the Eurasian mix uses right hand with fingers curving down into a box shape.

[Tana - I had the sense I was different](#) (Modified: 2009/1/4-16:46:12)

Clip Time: 00:03:23 - 00:03:30

Tags:

Note Content: Tanya uses both hands, palms open toward her in circular motion to describe how she felt different as a child. Concludes by using left hand to pull hair behind her ear.

[Tanya - I wasn't raised knowing I was adopted](#) (Modified: 2009/1/4-16:40:59)

Clip Time: 00:02:48 - 00:02:54

Tags:

Note Content: Tanya moves right hand with palm down from her left to right, then moves it in circular motion from her to viewer, adds left hand to circular motion, makes crossing motion downward below the frame. Finishes explanation with "they wanted to protect me" by bringing

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GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE RESEARCH INITIATIVE (Fall 2008)

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### Manage My Clips

Show:  
 Group by:

	Title	Modified	Video	Timecode	Notes	Tags
Jan. 29, 2009						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">The perfect kiss for me</a>	2009/1/29-12:00:30	TV004	00:19:06 - 00:19:12	she closes her fist to describe the perfect kiss sergio gave her BS; then note that she says: for me.... Tannen would describe this as insecurity? note how her hands "bloom" at the end	bloom gesture, kiss gesture, kiss gesture-capturing experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Big daddy is staying</a>	2009/1/29-11:59:19	TV004	00:20:43 - 00:20:47	she makes a phone gesture as him BS: this is an example of a mimetic gesture (acting out someone else) --which is different from merely 'perspective taking', though related.	acts out other's perspective, big daddy, mimetic, phone gesture
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">He made sure I was taken care of</a>	2009/1/29-11:58:05	TV004	00:33:19 - 00:33:27	she makes a series of gestures to represent his taking care of her at a friend's wedding...she makes fists at one point  BS: she has a lot of interesting repeating gestures in this segment. Note that the 'connection' gestures don't connect. the back and forth gestures represent uncertainty.	fist, sergio
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">significance gesture (BS)</a>	2009/1/29-11:56:50	TV004	00:00:00 - 00:00:00		explanation, sergio, significance gesture
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Significance gesture</a>	2009/1/29-11:55:50	TV004	00:26:10 - 00:26:15	shows you what her fingers coming together represents= significant BS: note also the 'plea' to the interviewer--flat hand outstretched as she explains her point of view  she puts her hands together again is representing that it would go on and work	

Done



### **3. Qualitative Analysis**

- Gestures enable speakers to represent space more accurately than language alone.
- The three-dimensional nature of gesture provides the capability of representing space and viewpoint.



# Character Viewpoint Anticipatory Gestures



# Observer Viewpoint



# Mimetic vs. Analytic



# Speech Gesture Mismatch



## Boxes and Circles





# Conclusions and Implications

- Gestures have meaning and reinforce language.
- Speech-gesture mismatch creates confusion for the audience.
- Speakers who have a greater frequency of speech-gesture mismatch are perceived to be less authentic, or more disingenuous.



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