

I N D I A N A U N I V E R S I T Y

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Washington University  
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

My colleague Jeffrey Kurtzman has asked if I would share with you, for the record, my personal perspective on the characteristic manner in which people in our field relate to one another socially in a professional context that involves the communication of positive feelings of support, praise, compassion, and/or collegial affection. I welcome the opportunity to do so and hope that my observations may contribute to a fair resolution of the complaints made against Professor Kurtzman.

Permit me to make the claim, which I hope you will verify, that customs of professional social interaction, both public and private, among people whose occupations relate to the performing arts— theater, dance, and, of course, music— differ in significant ways from those found, for example, among scientists, lawyers, people in business, and perhaps in other more traditional professions.

Speaking specifically about my personal observations in the field of music, which are based on some forty years' experience as a professional— fifteen of them as departmental chairperson— I can report that colleagues frequently hug one another on meeting, sometimes exchanging a kiss on the cheek. This happens quite commonly between men and women, as well as between women and women; one sees it less often, but not infrequently, between men and men.

Following public presentations of one or another kind, congratulations are very often communicated by hugs, with an accompanying kiss on the cheek. Most such expressions occur in a public context, but on more than one occasion I personally have welcomed a colleague into my private office with an affectionate hug and a kiss.

A colleague is, of course, a peer. But I have also embraced a student under similar circumstances, in private, in the context of conveying my warm congratulations on some worthy achievement.

In other circumstances, when my intention was to communicate support, compassion, and/or understanding, I have also hugged a colleague or a student. Circumstances of the latter sort have very likely occurred as often in private as in public, were my memory but capable of retrieving and enumerating them all for dispassionate evaluation.

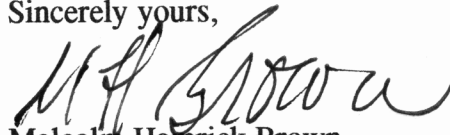
During fifteen years as departmental chairperson, I frequently found myself in the position of mediator, obliged to function as sympathetic listener to the complaints and problems of both students and colleagues. More than once, especially in circumstances when I could not find the words so earnestly desired by the person at my desk, I approached unbidden and placed my arm around his or her shoulders to communicate sympathetic understanding.

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Given my perception of the norms and practices of social conduct in my field, it did not occur to me, in any of the situations referred to above, that my actions in private, outside the range of public scrutiny, might have been judged to be highly inappropriate.

While it would be foolhardy, nowadays, not to reconsider the parameters of one's professional social conduct in private situations, I predict that the public norms and practices among persons in music, and in the other performing arts, will continue into the foreseeable future little changed from what I have described above, given how habitual these have become among professionals in the field.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. H. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the typed name.

Malcolm Hamrick Brown  
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