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# Inception: Beginning a New Conversation about Communication Pedagogy and Scholarship

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Abstract

Drawing on past pedagogical and scholarly lines of inquiry, this article advances—in a dialogic form—several questions to be considered for future research and practice in areas of communication, teaching, and learning. The dialogic form of this article offers a meta-message inviting colleagues to consider creative approaches to inquiry and collaboration in the 21$^{st}$ century. The ideas and questions presented in this essay serve to push the field beyond disciplinary silos, advance research and pedagogy about teaching and learning, and offer thought-provoking insight into what scholars and practitioners who explore communication, teaching and learning can contribute to those inside and outside of our discipline.

*Keywords:* communication pedagogy, new directions for communication inquiry, communication and learning, teaching communication, agenda setting for communication pedagogy and practice

Inception:

Beginning a New Conversation about Communication Pedagogy and Scholarship[1]

"Under the expansive spell of imagination the orator may so open up the depths of his [sic] own responsive nature that he induces the same frankness and openness in his audience."[2]

Binny Gunnison, *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking,* 1915, pg. 149

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man [sic] in his time plays many parts."[3]

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene VII).

[Curtain open]

Narrator:  In November 2013, nine scholars carved out time together to discuss big communication questions about teaching and learning.  Each of the nine had different educational pedigrees, brought to the table varied paradigmatic leanings, and carried the baggage of their academic networks.  They had heard of each other, naturally, and some had even worked together.  And, some had been trained in intellectual clans that held the others in high disregard. Yet they all came together in a spirit of doing something important.  Something big.  Something different.  What you see here is a representation of their dialogue. It is a moment of inception.

The dialogue genre is purposeful.  It is a meta-statement about the power of violating expectations for the sake of imagination and transformation.  The naming of the characters is also intentional.  The nine scholars who had this conversation are not named in this dialogue. Their names have been changed to mask their paradigmatic stances; inviting readers to entertain the idea that any of the scholars could have made any of the statements.  The characters in this

dialogue were named after nine of the seventeen public speaking teachers who boldly stepped out of the National Council of Teachers of English in 1914 to begin the association that became the National Communication Association. Of the 17 individuals who made the decision to break away from NCTE, some of them went on to become well known founding members of the associations that eventually became the National Communication Association.  Names selected were those most likely to be recognized by the audience of the dialogue; remaining names were selected randomly.  It should be noted that any of the 17 names would have achieved the purpose of using their names: acknowledging their bold move as visionaries in our field.  This dialogue is dedicated to them.  It is with their vision and courage that the authors of this dialogue insist we continue asking important questions about who we are and who we want to be as communication scholars and teachers.

This dialogue comes to you as a theatrical script.  Why?  Well, as Shakespeare states: "all the world's a stage"[4] and we all—past, present, and future—are invited into the narrative to co-construct its form and content. As you read the voices of the actors and actresses engaged in this conversation, step onto the stage and become a participant.  It is highly possible you will not agree with everything you read.  That is ok.  Productive discomfort is a goal of this experience.  Ask questions. Disagree. Interrogate assumptions. Raise issues. Imagine new directions for communication research and pedagogy.  And in this process, at its best this dialogue can induce what Gunnison calls "frankness and openness"—that which is at the core of transformative scholarly and pedagogical endeavors.

You are invited in: Contribute to writing the script.  Enter the conversation.


ACT I:  "To Be, or Not to Be: That is the Question" (*Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1) [5]

O'Neill:  I'm out of the business of teaching content.

Woolbert:  Blasphemy!

O'Neill:  No, seriously.  At the end of the day, does our content matter? I mean, what I bring to the table is more about process than content.  What I know about communication is important but what is more relevant to others is whether I can help them articulate what the problem is. Can I help others see things they had no idea existed?

Gates:  So you are suggesting our work should be more focused on process, not content?

O'Neill:  Well, kind of.  Communication scholars bring something important to the table but I'm not sure the most important thing we bring is our content.  We need to focus more on process, rather than content.

Winans:  Wait, wait.  We've been teaching *both* process and content for ages.  At the core of our discipline is the teaching of public speaking. Public speaking pedagogy is about process and content—we teach the content of ethos, pathos and logos and the processes of organizing a speech and engaging an audience, for example.

O'Neill:  Yes, but I think we've become too narrowly focused on the content of what students' know.  Put another way, we've hung our hats heavily on cognitive learning. And after decades and decades of research about cognitive learning, what do we really know about it? What do we really know about what our students learn about our content?  In fact, are they really learning our content?  In the book *Academically Adrift,* Arum and Roska say this: "Many students are not only failing to complete educational credentials; they are also not learning much, even when they persist through higher education."[6]

Woolbert:  I don't know if I agree with their assessment.  Perhaps we just don't know how to assess if they are learning much.  We know that measuring cognitive learning is complex

and problematic and sometimes really about students' *perceptions* of their learning instead of the learning itself.[7] But does that mean cognitive learning doesn't matter? I think it matters. We can't really be serious that we're not invested in teaching content or in cognitive learning. We do want students to understand the vocabulary and principles of our discipline.

Rarig: But don't you think we need to approach this in a different way? We need to embrace more than the idea that a single variable can lead to a meaningful assessment of learning. In fact, there are multiple approaches and measures of cognitive learning[8] and very little agreement on which is best.[9]

Hardy: Well, let's take an example of one of the variables that we often study in terms of learning: immediacy. We know that immediacy is a significant teacher behavior in terms of many learning outcomes.[10] The research has showed us that. We know that immediacy enhances motivation to learn, affect for the teacher, and affect for the class.[11]

Rarig: Yes, true. But I worry that overly focusing on this one variable can become too reductionist and prescriptive. Immediacy doesn't always work. If we rely too much on formulaic approaches, we might not be willing to recognize the exigencies of the situation and communicate differently than the formula advises.

Cochran: I agree. We have to see teaching and learning in all its complexities. Otherwise we risk missing out on the important problems that we can help solve.

Phelps: Yes! What do we really know about the vexing communication problems that teachers and practitioners face? And even more important, how can we help solve them? Seems to me we've been asking research questions based on historical paradigms rather than on the communication problems that our students have or will face.

Winans:  I could imagine a great research project emerging here. What if we interviewed teachers and practitioners with whom we are working and asked them the following:  If you had the best communication scholars at your disposal, what communication problem would you want them to help you with? Then, we could pull literature from our own and other disciplines to help understand those problems from multiple perspectives.

Gates:  And then we would have a template for reforming our classrooms to address those problems.

Phelps:  So this brings me back to learning and the content piece that we were talking about earlier. If we are going to reform our classrooms to address vexing communication problems, we need to help students with the ability to plan, judge, evaluate, problem solve, think critically; we need a more deep communicative understanding of process.[12]

Winans:  Yes. Our best communication students should answer questions about vexing communication problems with "it depends" and then unravel what "it depends" on. That's someone who has learned.

Phelps:  I disagree completely. First, how do you assess "it depends"?  We know we've long discussed and debated assessment—what it is, what actually we should assess in terms of communication, and how we should assess it.[13]  Now you want to throw in a nebulous "it depends" as something we should teach and assess?  Any student can say "it depends" and know nothing about what they are talking about.  That isn't someone who has learned!

Winans: True.  I think what we are looking for is an informed "it depends."   But how do we get our students to an informed "it depends?"

Hardy: We need to teach them about process-oriented outcomes.  Well, we need to be rhetorically creative and flexible. We need to help them develop something we might think about calling rhetorical perseverance.

Woolbert:  That reminds me of Angela Duckworth's work on "grit."[14] Perhaps grit is one of these outcomes we could focus on. Duckworth argues that grit—staying focused on a goal over time—is a key characteristic of successful people. How could we study that? What does grit look like in a communicatively competent individual?

Hardy:  Well, developing grit demands ongoing effort. It demands that we aren't stopped by a challenge.  It means that we might need to understand attention as more than an initial pedagogical accomplishment but as a constant dialogue and resource.

O'Neill:  Yes, and grit probably means we learn to teach about and deal with making mistakes.

Hardy:  Currently, we don't teach our students the value of mistakes or errors in solving communication problems. We haven't analyzed error as part of the process of learning and we sure haven't written about error from the lens of communication.

Phelps: There's an entire field of composition out there working to rid students of "error" in writing and now we want to teach them the value of errors in communication?  That will go over well with our colleagues.

Woolbert: Well, let's think about it. Artists have an entire pedagogy about error.  They work hard to get their students to make errors because artistic expression develops within and around and from error.[15]

Gates:   But how do we teach and study "error" in communication?

Hardy:  We've done this before with other constructs.  For example, we've been able to define what communication apprehension looks and sounds like and even how to treat it[16]. Why can't we bring to bear our collective resources and ideas to do define and explore things like grit or error?

Woolbert:  I don't know.  None of that seems particularly communicative to me.  Things like grit and mistakes seem to be in the jurisdiction of psychology or social work. Not communication. They don't belong to us.

Phelps:  Well, perhaps they haven't belonged to us in the past.  But… let's imagine for a minute—why not us?


ACT II:  "This above All:  To Thine Own Self be True" (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3)[17]

Gunnison: I think we have lost focus on the big picture.  We get so focused on the minutia that we lose what is important:  do we, as teachers, really know much about learning?  And it is not just teachers who have lost perspective:  do doctors know much about healing?  How much do lawyers know about justice?

Cochran:  These are the big goals we –in any discipline—should be focusing on and yet I'm not sure we know--really know--much about them.  I think the problem is technology. We get mesmerized with the latest and greatest technology and forget what we are really here for.

Woolbert:  I was reading the book *Teaching Naked* and Bowen makes the observation that technology is a tool, like chalk[18].  We would never suggest that we could solve the problems of learning by buying more chalk, right?  No, instead of unreflectively dropping more and more technology into our classrooms, we would work to ask the big question first:  what kind of learners do we want to nurture?  What tools can we use to nurture those kinds of learners?

Rarig:  Both Dewey[19] and Freire[20] would council us to focus on problem-posing, and on the "whole" of the person in situ.

O'Neill:  I hate to say this but I'm now imagining how my administrators and legislators might respond. We need to be preparing students for the workplace, plain and simple.  All this other stuff – well it doesn't hold water with administrators and legislators. We cannot avoid the realities of this particular time in history.

Gunnison:  Wait. We can't simply cave into the inevitability argument. When is it time for us as members of the academy to say, "no?" When is it time to engage in organized action and resist conducting our work in a way that we know does not serve students or the greater enterprise of education? I don't think we often consider the possibility of saying, "this is not the way we should do it" or "this is not the way we should assess the quality of education."  Why not stand up and speak about holistic, transformative learning?

O'Neill: Administrators and legislators and accreditation agencies—not to mention students—want results.  And in this climate, results do not equal holistic, transformative learning.  They equal jobs.  We need to be preparing our communication students to get jobs. It is part of our responsibility and this discipline, in particular, has a unique contribution to make to healthy and productive workplaces.  I, for one, don't think we should apologize for this contribution.

Gunnison:  This is an age-old debate.  I mean right before World War II, in a time period when scientific, practical, and military knowledge—content knowledge—was presumably valued, Abraham Flexner, the founding director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton wrote an essay "The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge." He argued that the most

important discoveries have been made by those driven by the desire to satisfy curiosity, rather than the need or desire to be useful.[21] Let's teach students to be curious. Not simply to get jobs.

Rarig:  But we can help them get jobs and do well in those jobs.  As communication scholars and practitioners we are well suited to do this. With all the focus on MOOCs and online degrees, we have to be bringing something distinct and important as communication teachers.

Phelps:  That is the problem!  We aren't bringing anything distinct as it stands.  I read this article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that suggested that the success of MOOCs is entirely our own fault.  It argues that the university is becoming entirely monocultural and that MOOCs are the logical, most economically-feasible way to deal with the increasingly "indistinct" university. Listen to what the article has to say:  "As any botanist knows, a monoculture is highly susceptible to a single pathogen. A great shakeout is under way, and MOOCs are the logical outgrowth of this push for interchangeable educational delivery. Curricula, faculty, and students are overwhelmingly indistinct, and MOOCs are simply the cheapest way to combine those elements in our economically constrained times."[22]

Winans:  Wait a minute.  If things like MOOCs are tools, then they are not good or bad by themselves; rather, it is how they are used.  We can learn quite a bit about good uses of technology and online education by studying it carefully and thoughtfully.  We, as communication scholars, can make a unique contribution to this conversation and to our students.  And we already have—we know some interesting things about the ways in which email and social media influence the teacher/student relationship.[23]

Gates:  Yes, true.  But now that you've brought up social media that opens the door for a conversation about privacy and surveillance and big data.  If you are using any social media in

the classroom, your information is being tracked.  Why would you want to introduce a technology knowing that is happening?  It's complicated and messy.

Rarig:  But big data isn't always about tracking information.  It can also help us understand important concepts.  Regardless of what you think about Kuh, National Survey of Student Engagement, and all the other the student engagement work, it is big data that is working hard to deal with an experience like engagement.[24]

Woolbert:  Let's get back to what we bring back to the table as communication scholars and teachers.  Yes, the Kuh work does tell us a bit about how to engage students in their learning.  But even in our discipline, we know a bit about how to engage students in learning.  For example, we know that teachers can engage students by making things understandable.  Clear.[25]

Gunnison: Well, although some teachers worry about things like clarity, there are many, many other concerns facing today's teachers. The concerns are complicated.[26] We know clarity is important, but so are multiple other concerns like establishing credibility, negotiating teacher/student relationships, managing authority, acknowledging difference, and providing feedback, for example.[27]

Phelps:  Right. These other concerns are incredibly important to address with teachers of all levels of experience.  And furthermore, when it comes to clarity, I'm not sure it is the pinnacle that it once was in teaching and learning. Current employment surveys suggest that one of the most important things we need our graduates to do is to manage ambiguity effectively.[28] In fact, I recently heard Judith Ramaley, Senior Fellow of the American Association of Colleges & Universities, talk about the need to increase students' capacity for ambiguity tolerance.

Winans:  So this means instead of working hard to be clear and understandable, we would help students and teachers learn to better manage those situations—in the workplace and

elsewhere and technologically mediated or face-to-face—that are ambiguous, unclear, and a bit nebulous?

Cochran: That sounds like an interesting challenge, but now we have to ask the looming question: how?


ACT III: "Though This Be Madness, Yet There is Method in't." (*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2)[29]

Phelps: I'm tired of engineering and the sciences referring to us as the "soft skills" discipline. We need a new reputation.

O'Neill: We've made this bed. We are seen as the "I like working with people" discipline. Some equate that to "touchy/feely." I'm not sure I do, but I know others do.

Rarig: I do not know that I do either. I think this is an important moment to fully embrace our strengths for helping people deal with ambiguous situations, competing goals, difficulty, and difference.[30]

Gunnison: Doing those things will take some creativity.

Hardy: Ok, let's go there then. What could creativity as a learning outcome look like? I mean, I think we are on the right track… even the revised Bloom taxonomy acknowledges "creation" as the highest cognitive capacity.[31]

Rarig: I've been involved in a number of conversations about creativity and learning environments that encourage creativity. These conversations have made me wonder about what it really means to say we want our students to be "creative."

Hardy: We know about this in our discipline. We've been studying "invention" in our discipline for ages. Invention is all about discovery, analysis, research. . . finding all available means of persuasion.[32] Isn't creativity just the new buzz word for invention?

Rarig:  I don't know.  I mean invention is more of an individualistic process.  Discussions of creativity these days focus on it as interactional.  In fact, in the book *Creativity:  Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention,* Csikszentmihalyl says this:  "creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context."[33]  So, don't we need to be talking more about what a creative academic community looks like, instead of just creative students?

Phelps: Yes, we need to be thinking about creativity as something that is communal, not individual.  It could be seen as a set of practices or values that come to define a collaborative process or a collective.

Winans:  This is great—so how do we need to change our teaching and our teacher training to foster this?

O'Neill:  I don't know… I think creativity is for teachers in preschools.  We aren't in the entertainment business. We don't need to be teaching new teachers to be creative. We need to teach them the basics:  how to write a syllabus, how to manage disruptions in a classroom, how to run a discussion, how to write a good exam.

Gunnison:  Yes, I agree.  But I think we need to do more than those things.  And I'm not just talking about "childlike" forms of creativity.  I want teachers to be able to be present in a difficult discussion, to be able to understand what is behind what is being said and not said, and then to be able to help guide the discussion in nuanced ways that are intricately connected with the identities in the room.  That's a creative teacher.

Winans:  Wait, wait….what do we sacrifice by focusing on that as a teacher-training outcome?  A novice teacher might not be able to do those things very well.  So then what? Do you want students lining up at your door complaining about the teachers you train because they

find them incompetent, uncaring, and untrustworthy?  Not under my watch. Instead of teaching teachers to be creative, we need to show new teachers how to manage their authority[34] and gain credibility.[35]

Gunnison:  I'm not saying ignore those things, I'm just saying let's think bigger. Let's do more.  I mean, what if we could have a typology of creative teaching? What would it look like?  What are the communication aspects of creative teaching?

Cochran: Let's even ask a broader communication question:  What kinds of communication support creativity-- in the classroom and broadly in the academic community?

Gunnison:  Well, to answer this we could observe spaces that are dedicated to improvisation and tried to see what they are about and how communication helps construct and activate creativity? Like acting classes or jam sessions for musicians.  Then we might be able to know better the communication aspects of creativity.

Hardy: Now this pushes us to connect with areas outside our discipline.  There's a lot of talk in business about what it takes to start and sell entrepreneurial companies.[36]  Qualities like creativity and innovation are central.

Rarig: Conversations about entrepreneurship and innovation make me a little nervous. Frankly, I hear the ever louder steps of capitalism and market economy in those conversations. Have we lost sight of our commitment to education for and about democracy,[37] about contributing to a stronger community ethos and, very practically, to access and mobility and the resources of an educated public?

Winans: I'm not sure the conversations about entrepreneurship and innovation are all about markets and profits. I think they can be heard as conversations about ways of relating and ways of creating access and ways of innovating social formations.

Gates: I agree. Conversations about creative citizenship invite participation in public dialogues that are multiple and layered. They are conversations about making sure that more access means that more voices are engaged and more diversity of thought brings more options for engaging.

Winans:  Yes, and here is where communication pedagogy can contribute to the conversation.  We can help people learn when and how to be nimble--when and how to pay attention to the codes that call for a shift in attention, when and how to draw on uncommonly used communicative resources. We can help people recognize and act on their own agency. That's part of creativity.

Hardy:  Yes, creativity should also be about how we interact with the world when faced with inequity and poverty and discrimination. We need to understand our jobs as helping students to creatively see and respond to the exigencies of a situation, especially where systematic injustice is occurring.[38]

Rarig:  Really this seems like a conversation about teaching "informed creative action."

Cochran:  So if we explored this concept more fully, what would it look like for a communication scholar to study and teach about informed creative action?

Woolbert:  I can think of many questions we could be asking:  How can we teach students how to be creative thinkers and do-ers who are willing to tackle problems that matter?

Phelps: What about creative un-doers? There are many policies and practices that I'd like to think we can collectively "un-do."

Rarig:  Yes!  These are difficult situations.  So perhaps it is about being able to, well, handle "hard." Do our students know how to answer the question-- when things look hard and

something needs doing or un-doing, what do I do next? Can they say with confidence:  I know how to handle hard.

Gunnison:  This would be about teaching them that it is not just "I have a script" but that I know how to address a situation.  That's creative thinking and doing.

Gates:  I don't think we have a curriculum that teaches that. But I'm not sure we should put that in our curriculum.  We teach decision-making and problem-solving.  These are concrete communication processes that we know about.  Let's stick with teaching those.  We have expertise in those processes.

Gunnison:  But I do not think it is enough to teach what we already know.  Let's push this a bit:  what would the communication and creativity curriculum look like?

Hardy:  Well, it would celebrate failure, praise and reward out of the box thinking, encourage nimbleness, be full of ambiguity and uncertainty, be divergent…

Gates:  That's a lot to do.  It is everything I can do to teach my classes, get grading done, revise the articles waiting on my desktop, respond to emails from administrators and on and on.  There's not enough space in my calendar for "make creative students."

Gunnison:  Well, perhaps not… but what do we have to lose by trying?


ACT IV:  "Of All Base Passions, Fear is the Most Accursed" (*Henry IV*, Act 5, Scene 2)[39]

Winans:  I think we should just throw out grades.  And while we are at it, let's throw out course evaluations.  Students are so grade driven and faculty are so concerned with course evaluations that it gets in the way of learning and teaching.

Cochran:  That's quite a risky proposition. It could put teachers and scholars in a vulnerable position if they stand up and make a statement like that.

O'Neill:  How do you think it felt to those 17 speech teachers who stood up 100 years ago and walked away from English?

Cochran:  They were putting their professional lives on the line.  Can you imagine today going back to your home department and telling them that you were part of a movement to create a new professional association one divorced from today's commonly accepted tenants of scholarship? A move that might produce tensions for identity and resources on your own campus? I imagine they felt a bit vulnerable.

Phelps:  But they made a difference.  Here we sit at the 99th meeting of the National Communication Association. It was a HUGE deal.

Rarig:  So if we are trying to do the same—ask big questions about learning and teaching, we need to realize we could be putting ourselves in a bit of a vulnerable position.  Perhaps we need to talk about vulnerability.

Hardy: What do you mean by vulnerability? I know what I think of, I think of feeling exposed, feeling unsure…

Gates:  That reminds me of a TED Talk on vulnerability that I just came across. It was Brené Brown and she was talking about courage and vulnerability.[40] Part of her argument, I think, was that vulnerability is about speaking a truth and while it may not be a comfortable space to be in it is also not a weak one. I hope we can think about our pedagogy as aimed at helping teachers and students see vulnerability as a strength-- a mark of courage.

Cochran:  We have a discipline-specific pedagogy that is rooted in our theoretical underpinnings and speaks to this and gives us a lens for talking about it. Among other things, that lens would invite us to think about how vulnerability is embodied and connected to cultural identity.[41]

Phelps:  Okay, let's go with that and get specific for a minute and talk about vulnerability in teaching. What would it mean to train teachers to embrace vulnerability?  I mean, I think I'm fairly progressive in my work with teachers but there's part of me that gets really nervous hearing myself say to a group of new teachers:  "be vulnerable."  That seems to me to be like telling them to hold up a sign on their forehead that says: "walk all over me."

Winans:  But is it really?  When we show our vulnerability, aren't we more authentic? None of us is perfect.  We don't have to accentuate our imperfections, but why not be willing to show the imperfections so that students can see how those imperfections can be worked through?

Gates:   I just have this gut sense that great teachers do this… they embody vulnerability. Our research tells us about how excellent teachers embody behaviors related to constructs such as humor[42] and encouraging participation.[43] Why wouldn't we want to understand their communication behaviors related to vulnerability?

Phelps:  That would be another intriguing project for us to consider! What if we could shadow people in moments of vulnerability—a musician just about to go on stage to perform, an athlete competing in a sporting event, or a lawyer about to argue an important case.  We could begin to identify the communication behaviors and contexts associated with vulnerability and the ways people experience and manage that vulnerability.  Then we could use that information to create training modules to prepare new teachers and to prepare students who might face vulnerable situation. Imagine a cohort of teachers who knew how to be honest and vulnerable in the classroom instead of hiding out behind the insane advice to "never smile before Christmas."[44] Imagine a cohort of students who saw vulnerability as a courageous catalyst for change?

Cochran: I like that project a lot and it has me thinking about how it could intersect with notions of privilege. Don't we need to be honest about the privilege of vulnerability? Let's face

it, some bodies are more safe to show vulnerability than others. I think that awareness needs to be in this conversation.[45]

Rarig: And if we are going to talk about vulnerability in teaching and learning then perhaps we should also talk about what it means to be a vulnerable scholar.  We spend all this time arguing for reliability, testing validity, generating codes, scales and measures, and thematic structures… all to prove we know what we are doing.  Doesn't vulnerability invite us to expose the ways we *don't* know what we are doing?

O'Neill:  Why would we want to call attention to the ways in which we are vulnerable scholars?  Other disciplines will laugh us off the stage.  Talk about credibility —we'd definitely have an issue with it if we did that!

Gunnison:  Well, now we are back to that messy part.  If I finish a study more confused and ambiguous about a topic, is that the mark of good scholarship? If I know less than when I started, have I done my job as a scholar? Should I be celebrating that?

Cochran: What if knowing less leads me to inquire more?  Isn't that what Dewey would say is an "educative experience?"  Sometimes I think our scholarship is actually, in Dewey's idea, "mis-educative" in that we learn something and then stop asking questions… so it halts the growth of future experiences.[46]  At least if I finish a study more confused, I'm bound to ask more questions.

Woolbert:  I see your point.  So, what is good scholarship, really?  I mean if we are saying that we should be setting the agenda for the next generation of scholars who care about communication, teaching, and learning—what "counts" as good?

Winans:  Perhaps there isn't a model.  I mean, perhaps what we are saying is we have to let go of the idea that there is one right way.  That's a move towards vulnerability.  Perhaps we

recognize that good scholarship is also an "it depends" proposition. It responds to the exigencies of the moment, does not conflate method with theory, and embraces a set of tools that allow us to explore the complexities of the phenomenon. Good scholarship is not associated with one particular methodological paradigm or one genre.

Hardy: This means we need to get out of our methodological and paradigmatic silos. We need to talk to each other.

O'Neill: Well that sounds simple… but I'm not sure it is that easy, is it?

ACT V: "The Fault, Dear Brutus, is Not in Our Stars, But in Ourselves" (*Julius Caesar,* Act 1, Scene 2)[47]

Winans: Why is it I feel like if I don't give students A's, I've permanently damaged their self concept? Not everyone should get a trophy every time.

Rarig: Yes, we are creating a system where mediocrity reigns and true excellence cannot emerge.

O'Neill: I remember many first days when the teacher would say "look to your right, look to your left, only one of you will be here at the end of the semester." Let me tell you, I wanted to be that one. I worked really hard to be sure I was the one left standing.

Rarig: Yes, but at what cost? Maybe the person next to you could have become a life long friend. Or the two of you could have worked together and accomplished much more than you could have by yourself. The competitive model of education prevents students from learning a set of very important skills. Education should not be about "outwit, outplay, outlast."[48] It should be about working together, you know… collaboration.

Gates: This makes sense but is much too idealistic. Collaboration is a nice ideal but it is not reality. We live in a competitive world. Collaboration is never entirely possible.

O'Neill:  I don't know.  In a book called *No Contest: The Case Against Competition,* Kohn makes an argument that collaboration is possible.

Gates:  Yes, I've read that.  He also makes it clear that we are living in a world driven by competition.  He says:  "Not only do we get carried away with competitive activities, but we turn almost everything else into a contest.  Our collective creativity seems to be tied up in devising new ways to produce winners and losers… even where no explicit contest has been set up, we tend to construe the world in competitive terms."[49]  So collaboration, if possible, is an uphill battle.

Hardy:  I kind of agree with you.  Collaboration is one of those buzz words in education that many use, but few know how to do with students and colleagues. We all work with people in other disciplines and many of us work with constituents outside the university.  This isn't new. I'm just not sure we talk much about how to do it and how to do it well.  We complain about how hard it is, but don't dig deeper into why it is hard.

O'Neill:  Right.  Every university website has something about collaboration, but few websites talk about what it feels like to be in a room working with people who have drastically different viewpoints and are working in a system that rewards individualistic accomplishments. It is really an "us/them" system, and unfortunately "them" is anybody other than me!

Cochran:  Ok, well, how might be do it differently?  I mean, what would it mean to work in a collaborative system instead of a competitive one?

Woolbert:  Well, I'm not sure I can tackle the whole system, but I can think about what it means to collaborate on a smaller scale.  It is the ability to listen carefully and thoughtfully to someone who is dramatically different from me.  Difference really does matter.[50] It is trying to

understand someone else's perspective without judging it. It is working hard to make sure my voice is understood. It is making sure my contributions move the collective work forward.

Rarig: And it is not just about working together to do this. That is too simplistic. It is about what it means to create community. It is about realizing that every utterance I make when working with others either moves towards or away from community. And isn't that what we want our students to be able to do--to collaborate with people who are very different from themselves and to learn what it means to be in community with those people? How can we teach them to do it, if we don't really know how to do it ourselves?

Woolbert: Well, I'm not sure we don't know how to do it. We probably all can think of some examples where collaboration worked really well. And we have some good research in our discipline that helps us understand what it takes.[51]

Hardy: Yes, and take our conversation here as an example. When we began this conversation we came into it from different disciplinary subfields and different paradigmatic perspectives. We each brought in the baggage as well as the wealth of our training. All that could have gotten in the way of collaboration.

Gunnison: But it didn't. We don't agree about everything, that is clear, but agreement and collaboration are not synonymous. And in fact our literature would tell us that too much agreement is counterproductive to collaboration.[52]

O'Neill: I think part of what happened with us is that we were willing to let go of the labels that highlight our differences. Those labels no longer serve our research, or our collaborations within and outside the discipline.

Gates: The labels, ironically, while they help to define a community, might not serve community building processes or the collaboration that is necessary within those processes. We

spend too much time identifying ourselves with sub-disciplines and paradigmatic communities that we build walls that prohibit true collaboration.

Phelps: Well, I think those sub-disciplines are important markers of identity. They help us know what we do and what we don't do. So in our case, the sub-disciplines help us think about what counts as "instructional" and what does not.

Gunnison: I disagree. Everyone in our discipline does "instructional" work, even thought they don't self identify as "instructional" scholars or practitioners. And therein lies the problem. I think whenever we are engaged in any kind of communicative act, something pedagogical is happening.

Winans: So it isn't about saying we can only contribute to this area or that line of research. It isn't about labeling a research area or tradition and then placing certain people in those boxes.

Gunnison: No, it is about embracing the imperative that we all, as communication scholars and teachers, have a social contract to understand, model and enact those communication qualities that we believe matter. If we can do this, we can tackle the big questions, and maybe even tackle the system.

Phelps: We can ask new questions about content and process.

Winans: …explore possibilities for educating holistically…

Woolbert: …interrogate how to build spaces where creativity flourishes…

Cochran: …invoke processes and spaces that allow for vulnerability…

Gates: . . . question how and why our interactions and collaborations build communities.

O'Neill: It is about recognizing that in all these issues and questions there is always more to ask and more to uncover and more to learn.

Woolbert:  So, what is the role of communication pedagogy and our pedagogical research in advancing these big ideas?

Winans: How will our discipline prepare teachers and learners capable of the kind of collaborative, messy, and creative problem solving that we need for the 21st Century?

Gunnison: And, can we first teach this to ourselves so that we can imagine and model new ways of being, speaking, and doing in the discipline and across disciplines?

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Narrator:  And so they left, each to his or her own institution, each still carrying the baggage of their academic networks, but each allured by the power of dialogue and intrigued about the prospect of new partners and new projects.  They left-- knowing more, and knowing less; a perfect paradox.  They had not answered all the questions, nor did they leave in complete agreement about what the questions should be.  But they did ask the questions.  And they left wanting to question more, explore more, and engage more; committed to the "expansive spell of imagination" that they hoped would incite others to do the same.

And now I ask you.... if something pedagogical happens in every communicative act, what could happen here?

What do you think?

[Curtain open]

Notes

[1] Because of the genre of this manuscript and in order to preserve the readability of the dialogue, we used the Chicago Manual of Style instead of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual.

[2] Binney Gunnison, "Imagination in Oratory," *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* 1, no. 2 (1915): 149.

[3] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It:  A Comedy*. (London:  S. Gosnell, 1810), 34.

[4] Ibid.

[5] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1992), 127.

[6] Richard Arum, and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 54.

[7] Paul Witt, Lawrence Wheeless, and Mike Allen, "A meta-analytical review of the relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning," *Communication Monographs*, 71, no. 2 (2004): 184-207.

[8] Timothy P. Mottet and Steven A. Beebe, "Foundations of Instructional Communication," In *Handbook of Instructional Communication: Rhetorical and Relational Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Mottet, Steven A. Beebe, and James C. McCroskey, (Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2006), 3-32.

[9] Ann Bainbridge Frymier and Marian L Houser, "The Revised Learning Indicators Scale," *Communication Studies* 50, no. 1 (1999): 1–12.

[10] Witt et al., "Immediacy and student learning," 184-207.

[11] Diane M. Christophel, "The Relationships Among Teacher Immediacy Behaviors, Student Motivation, and Learning," *Communication Education* 39, no. 4 (1990): 323–340.

[12] Roger Schank, *Teaching Minds: How Cognitive Science Can Save Our Schools* (New York: Teachers' College Press, 2011).

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[14] Angela Duckworth, "The Key to Success?  Grit." Filmed April 2013. TED Video, 6:12. http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit.html

[15] Steve Seidel et al., *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Harvard Graduate School of Education: Project Zero, 2009).

[16] Graham D. Bodie, "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety," *Communication Education* 59, no. 1 (2010): 70–105.

[17] Shakespeare, *Hamlet, 45*.

[18] Jose A. Bowen, *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

[19] John Dewey, *Experience in Education* (New York: Kappa Delta Pi, 1938).

[20] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary ed., trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).

[21] Abraham Flexner, "The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge," *Harper's Magazine*, 1939.

[22] Patrick J. Deneen, "We're All to Blame for MOOCs," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 2013.

[23] Joseph P. Mazer, Richard E Murphy, and Cheri J Simonds, "I'll See You on 'Facebook': The Effects of Computer-Mediated Teacher Self-Disclosure on Student Motivation, Affective Learning, and Classroom Climate," *Communication Education* 56, no. 1 (2007): 1–17.

[24] George D. Kuh et al., *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

[25] Joseph L. Chesebro and James C McCroskey, "The Relationship of Teacher Clarity and Immediacy with Student State Receiver Apprehension, Affect, and Cognitive Learning," *Communication Education* 50, no. 1 (2001): 59–68.

[26] Ann Q. Staton-Spicer, "The Measurement and Further Conceptualization of Teacher Communication Concern," *Human Communication Research* 9, no. 2 (1983): 158–168.

[27] Deanna P. Dannels, *Eight Essential Questions Teachers Ask: A Guidebook for Communicating with Students* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[28] American Association of Colleges & Universities, "What Do Employers Want from College Graduates?" *Liberal Education* 99, no. 2 (2013).

[29] Shakespeare, *Hamlet, 95*.

[30] John T. Warren, "Performing Difference: Repetition in Context," *Journal of*

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[36] Jason Bowser, "8 Traits of Successful entrepreneurs--Do You Have What It Takes?" http://www.mbda.gov/node/337.

[37] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

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[39] William Shakespeare, *Henry VI.* (New York: Signet Classics, 2004).

[40] Brené Brown, "Listening to shame," Filmed March 2012, TED video, 20:38, http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.html

[41] Jo Sprague, "Expanding the Research Agenda for Instructional Communication: Raising Some Unasked Questions," *Communication Education* 41, no. 1 (1992): 1.

[42] John A. Banas, Norah Dunbar, Dariela Rodriguez, and Shr-Jie Liu, "A Review of Humor in Educational Settings: Four Decades of Research," *Communication Education* 60, no. 1 (2011): 115–144.

[43] Kelly A. Rocca, "Student Participation in the College Classroom: An Extended Multidisciplinary Literature Review," *Communication Education* 59, no. 2 (2010): 185–213.

[44] Kevin Ryan, *Don't Smile Until Christmas: Accounts of the First Year of Teaching* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[45] John T. Warren, "Doing Whiteness: On the Performative Dimensions of Race in the Classroom," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 91–108.

[46] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1997).

[47] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1912), 23.

[48] Charlie Parsons, *Survivor*, Produced by Mark Burnett (2000; Hollywood: Columbia Broadcasting System), Television series.

[49] Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 2.

[50] Brenda J. Allen, *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (Grover, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 2010).

[51] William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013).

[52] Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

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