Critical Communication Pedagogy in/About/Through the Communication Classroom

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Critical Communication Pedagogy (CCP) signals a critical approach to Communication and Instruction scholarship (Fassett & Nainby, 2017; Fassett & Rudick, 2016; Fassett & Warren, 2007). *Critical* signals a recognition that social reality is inherently political and encourages individuals to work with/in communities to identify, intervene into, and change oppressive systems. *Communication and Instruction* scholarship refers to (a) research concerning how to teach communication principles, theories, or knowledge (i.e., Communication Pedagogy or Communication Education) and (b) research about communication as it manifests in or about all types of educational spaces (i.e., Instructional Communication). CCP is not guided by a single methodology; rather, it signifies both an intellectual tradition and an umbrella term for critical approaches to Communication Pedagogy and Instructional Communication (e.g., Communication Activism Pedagogy, Critical Performative Pedagogy, and Critical Intercultural Communication Pedagogy; see Frey & Palmer, 2014; McRae & Huber, 2017; Atay & Toyosaki, 2018, respectively).

How Does Critical Communication Pedagogy Inform Communication Pedagogy?

The goal of CCP is to identify knowledge as a site of privilege/oppression, the uses of communication to perpetuate/reclaim power, and the ability of communicative actions to open spaces for intervening into normative structures of education. To this end, CCP sets social justice as its guiding principle to Communication Pedagogy. We define *social justice* as "the process and goal by which people work together to transform unequal power relations [and] realize a world where all people feel emotionally, physically, and economically secure to realize their full capabilities," (Rudick, Golsan, & Cheesewright, 2018, p. 3). CCP is characterized by "10 Commitments," but, in the interest of brevity, we distill these tenets into three concepts: identity, social (re)production, and power. These concepts provide a language for recognizing how teaching communication knowledge should be understood within a political-moral imagination that centers social justice.

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Identity

Within CCP, identity is not viewed as a series of demographic characteristics; rather, identity is a combination of historical, personal, and cultural positionalities that are articulated communicatively. For example, although those individuals who are considered "White" may seem obvious today, what constitutes it has frequently changed over the past 500 years.However, CCP extends beyond recognizing how identity is arbitrary to demand a pedagogy that intervenes into how identities are supported and/or marginalized within current systems.

Communication instructors guided by CCP are sensitive to how identity shapes disciplinary knowledge. For example, public speaking pedagogy overly represents Western forms of presentation and argument; interpersonal pedagogy privileges heteronormative relationships; and organizational pedagogy supports managerial interests over workers' rights. Although scholars have confronted our discipline about these issues, many of their criticisms have gone unaddressed in undergraduate pedagogy. This situation implicitly marginalizes some identities while privileging other identities as "normal" or "correct." CCP encourages instructors to choose course materials that provide equitable representation of voices, and to be sensitive to the historical trajectories that shape individuals' positionalities.

CCP research is interested in the dialectical relationship between identity and culture. Scholars bring attention to the ways everyday communication connects to culture and how culture shapes everyday practices. For example, researchers could explore how students in communication courses talk through/about/across their identities and how these instances of inter-group communication are opportunities for sensitively experiencing the Other. Ultimately, CCP scholarship about identity complicates normative assumptions concerning classroom instruction and unpacks how even mundane practices can have toxic influences on students' identity development.

Social (Re)production

Traditionally, Communication Pedagogy research has presupposed education as a benign institution. For some, communication knowledge is important insofar as it helps students attain economic mobility, while other people view it as a way students participate in a democratic society. CCP recognizes educational institutions as places both liberation *and* dehumanization, advocacy *and* alienation, equity *and* colonization. Therefore, CCP seeks to intervene into how institutions of education (re)produce existing asymmetries of access/distribution.

Instructors grounded in CCP recognize how institutional rules and social norms can solidify existing hierarchies. For example, our discipline touts democratic deliberation as an important student outcome. However, we wonder how this is performed in everyday communication classrooms as a 50-minute lecture about the importance of democratic deliberation may do more harm than good when working to realize civil political practices. CCP encourages instructors to engage their classroom as part of a larger system and sensitizes them to how content, relationships, and organizational cultures are sites for intervening into processes of social (re)production.

Research from a CCP framework is concerned with interrogating the goals of the communication discipline and the means used to secure them. Important to this agenda is rejecting the idea that learning only has instrumental value or that students' worth is exhaustively defined by their economic potential. For example, researchers could explore how societal disparities along racial, gender, and/or class lines

are maintained through course content, bureaucratic control, and/or legislative action. CCP asserts a moral imagination that recognizes the complexities of the human experience and the importance of protecting it from the intrusion of technical rationality, marketplace logics, and social Darwinism. CCP research disrupts the process of (re)production by reconnecting students with a deep appreciation for community.

Power

Many Communication Pedagogy scholars understand power within the context of student-instructor interactions. This view of power, although important, must be placed in a framework tracking the multi-level ways power flows through the communication classroom. A CCP approach asserts that stopping the analysis of power at the level of student-instructor mystifies the institutional (e.g., administrators), judicial-legislative (e.g., laws), and cultural (e.g., public sentiment about education) ways it influences education. Such an understanding is formed in the hope of working with students to realize their potential as change agents.

The communication classroom is a natural site for teaching students about power. Helping students view power as multi-level in romantic relationships, family rituals, organizational bureaucracies, public addresses, and intercultural connections are just a few of the ways that instructors can offer students a language for intervention. Importantly, instructors guided by CCP should seek not only to make students sensitive to its ebb and flow (although, certainly, that is a worthy goal), but also provide opportunities for students to exercise it within and beyond the classroom (e.g., communication activism).

CCP research about power explores the ways that it manifests in or influences the communication classroom. For example, CCP scholars can utilize methods (e.g., longitudinal, ethnographic) that address how communication students' communicative practices shift over the course of their enrollment and beyond, and how this shift makes them more open to difference or more likely to view social problems as contextually and historically informed. These methods point to CCP researchers' responsibility to ensure our discipline embraces its responsibility to realize a society where concentrated power (e.g., wealth) does not overcome social justice.

Conclusion

CCP maintains a hope that the world as it currently is, is not what it has to be. Together, communication students and instructors can articulate and pursue a utopic vision for our world. We are excited to see Communication Pedagogy scholarship increasingly embrace CCP. Rudick et al.'s (2018) textbook provides advice and activities to new/seasoned instructors implementing CCP into the communication classroom. Pensoneau-Conway and Atay (2018) co-edited a special issue on CCP in *Communication Teacher,* showcasing ways to implement social justice within/beyond the classroom. Hundreds of edited collections, journal publications, conference papers/roundtables, university workshops, hallway conversations, and individual choices keep social justice at the heart of Communication Pedagogy. It is this labor that ensures a bright future for our students, discipline, and society.

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