ACCOUNTING FOR STUDENT VOICE WITHIN CRITICAL COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY: AN ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Accounting for student voice within critical communication pedagogy: An ethnomethodological exploration of student perceptions and expectations

This study, through critical communication pedagogy and an ethnomethodological lens, explores the ways in which student identity is produced through ranges of power, voice, and agency. From student voice, participants share how they understand, see, describe, struggle, succeed, and develop their identities, both individually and as part of an academic community. Further, participants’ dialogue illuminates how the intersection of communication and education identity is undertheorized as a socially constitutive act upon the body.

Specifically, this study consisted of four focus group interviews with a diverse set of undergraduate students, within and outside the discipline of Communication Studies. The participants in this study spoke to the construction of an educational identity as a process that is comprised of maintaining institutional realities, understanding how they, as students make and negotiate educational and social choices, and then demonstrate a sense of belonging through their actions. Participants’ conversations foreground individuals’ education actions as constitutive acts that serve to move them toward recognition that student identity is an act of performative possibility. This recognition allows students to either create a space for them to feel in control of developing their identities, their sense of practical accomplishments in their daily actions (i.e., communicating, decision-making, and reasoning), or having that identity assigned to them due to institutional constraints. Because participants’ expectations are built on the perception that individuals choose to comply with or resist institutional moments, they were very critical of students

who neglect the ways in which individuals’ actions (or inactions) help to continually create and reify the educational struggles they are defining themselves against.

Most intriguing is the empirical evidence that shows participants are far more aware of how critical discourse can create relationships between individuals and educational institutions, and how those same dialogues can hinder those relationships from ever coming into being. Furthermore, participants made it very clear that they are not apathetic to their educational situation; they are not judgmental dopes. As students, they make decisions that demonstrate their choices and inform a process that makes them part of very particular educational and social communities. Participants also expressed that there is an untapped desire to take a more active role in their educational development, if provided the opportunity without feeling like their education would be put in jeopardy. With participants viewing education as an extension of the self, the scholarship of communication and education and critical communication pedagogy scholars now have new context to explore and deconstruct structures of power and privilege that serve to maintain the status quo, while working with students during that process.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The earliest recollection of my creative process I can remember is sitting at a wooden table that has been in my parents’ house for over twenty-five years. Therefore, it is quite fitting that as I finish writing my dissertation, I am back in San Diego and am writing these acknowledgements at that very table. This wooden table is very beautiful, with its carved design and grooves that hold the moments shared at its sides. As I sit here now, I cannot help but notice that it has a very thin film of something on its surface. Maybe it is the build up of Pledge from the years of cleaning, or the grease from the food that has rested on its surface. Maybe the film is the oils from the hands of family and friends that sat there eating, laughing, talking, reading, writing, studying, philosophizing, and reflecting—what I did quite a bit of during this process. I have been truly blessed with the number of people sitting at my table helping me through the dissertation process and my journey through education; I would like to acknowledge them here.

Most significant to this project are the people—former students, colleagues and professors—who were kind enough to invite me join in the conversations regarding learning, love, and life with them, whether at school, The Living Room Café, an airplane hanger, over chocolate, a law office, Mary Ward Hall, 155 Buckingham, Doherty’s, Gordon Biersch, Hugh Gillis Hall, Jimmy John’s, Kohl Hall, the numerous conference hotel rooms and bars, or at the National Communication Association, Western States Communication Association, or Central States Communication Association conferences. I have carried their words around in my being for some time now; it is my hope that this
document treats these friends with the same thoughtfulness and consideration they have shown me over the years.

Equally significant to the development of this project, as well as to my development as a teacher and a scholar, have been the voices of my advisory committee: Drs. Laura Lengel, James Foust, and Charles Keil. As exemplary role models, each has, in turn, helped to challenge my notions of theory and methodology; while encouraging me to find a path and voice that holds me accountable to making the scholarship I do always accessible to whomever may encounter my work.

John T. Warren, my doctoral advisor, Chair, and friend, has been a source of support and inspiration for me throughout my graduate career. John has an amazing ability for communication diplomacy and humanity. He has the ability to share in the academic process, in such a way that the multitude of voices present can feel listened to, accounted for, and most importantly, respected. In my opinion, some of his most brilliant work to date is discussed in this dissertation, I only hope I do that work justice. John has been a patient teacher and guide, ever supportive of my diverse interests, always there to remind me the importance of accountability to my desires and energies. The greatest honor ever paid to me by him was the time spent allowing me to be parts of very real conversations of our discipline, offering his praise and compassionately critiquing my emerging scholarship and voice. His accountability of me, as a member of the academy, long before I paid any dues, has led my scholarship, agency, and teaching to a critical space that stays true to the tenants of an education that puts students first.
Deanna Fassett, my Master’s advisor, Chair, and friend, took me under her wing, when so many pushed me away at my darkest hour during the passing of my father. When so many turned their backs to my situation, she showed me the true power of a teacher’s love. Many times I became frustrated with the graduate school process and thought of leaving, and many times Deanna served as a reminder to me of why I have chosen to stay, long after I left her direct tutelage for John’s. Both John and Deanna took a young punkass and helped guide me to be a critical scholar and teacher with purpose by demonstrating the possibility of doing: teacher, researcher, scholar, and guide as acts of תִּקֵּן לָלֶם [ti-kun-o-lam] (engaging the world with justice, love, and compassion).

I would be thoughtless if I failed to mention several colleagues, professionals, and family members who have helped me with various phases of this dissertation’s development, for the foundational conversations shaped not only the content, but also my experiences as a student, teacher, and in life. For their support and (at times, frustrating) critical dialogue I wish to thank Eddie Madril, Sean Swenson, Amy Kilgard, Keith Naimby, Sherona Garrett-Ruffin, Gail Brinker, Stephanie Rozene Andrew Goetz, Andrew Hall, Sarah Mathews, Zach Fahrer, Nathan Mattimoe, Andrea Davis, and the Chapman Learning Community. All of these individuals have helped in the development of my ideas regarding communication and pedagogy, some serving as friends, mentors, advisors, advisees, students, sounding boards for a multitude of ideas (some dissertation related and others not), offering suggestions for directions of research, razzing at the appropriate times when ideas were too zany, and others simply helping me to relax when the stress started creeping in.
I owe a special debt of gratitude to my good friend Ike Brunner for reading this document in its entirety. His critical insights during the focus groups, at the times I became frustrated by the writing process, and during the final edits helped make this document a truly unique addition to the discipline. Along with Ike, I would like to also thank Kris Medford for their graduate school friendship and more, when the spaces, drama, and conversations became at times unbearable, they were always there to play the right music, offer kind words and critical insights, making the experiences of graduate school more meaningful, caring, insightful, and really downright interesting.

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And finally, I dedicate this work to my parents, Renée, Douglas, Michael and Ruth. This completed work, I believe, shows what being free to explore means. Their commitment to making tangible and meaningful connections between love, family, faith, education, and creativity serves as a model that permeates both this work and who I am to my very core.

A couple of years after my father passed away, while sitting at that wooden table, my mother gave me a box of my father’s cameras, photographs, short stories, unfinished writings, and personal journals. In one of his journals, he put deep in its pages a quotation by Thich Nhat Hanh, whose words later came to have even greater significance when I began studying critical pedagogy:

“The mind can go in a thousand directions, but on this beautiful path, I walk in peace. With each step, the wind blows. With each step, a flower blooms. Every day we do things, we are things that have to do with peace. If we are aware of our life…our way of looking at things, we will know how to make peace right in the moment, we are alive.”

I wish to add that every person mentioned in this acknowledgement and throughout this entire body of work, regardless of paradigm, in all that I am and in everything I do to be alive, thank you for sitting with me at this table.

--nicholas
“How much must a child trust himself, herself, others, and the world in order to learn?”

--Anonymous
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT**.................................................................................................................................................. III

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**.................................................................................................................................... V

**CHAPTER ONE** ............................................................................................................................................... 1

  **STUDENT IDENTITY ON MY MIND** ........................................................................................................... 1
  The new traveler: Understanding students .................................................................................................. 8
  First explorations: Preparing a trip into theory and practice .................................................................. 11

**CHAPTER TWO** ........................................................................................................................................... 18

  **SEEKING, FULFILLING, DOING: HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY**
  WITHIN COMMUNICATION LITERATURE ..................................................................................................... 18
  Critical pedagogy within the conversation of communication .................................................................. 20
  Seeking critical communication pedagogy .................................................................................................. 29
  Doing Critical Communication Pedagogy .................................................................................................... 33
  Fulfilling critical communication pedagogy .................................................................................................. 40
  Preparing for the import/export process: Critical communication pedagogy ............................................ 42

**CHAPTER THREE** ........................................................................................................................................ 47

  **METHOD: DRIVING HINTS, TIPS, AND A RATIONALE FOR EXPLORING IDENTITY** ............ 47
  Why research regarding educational identity is necessary: Rationale for the study .................................. 47
  Road hazards: Problems of theorizing identity in literature ..................................................................... 49

  **ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AS AN APPROACH** ....................................................................................... 52
  Traffic signs: Identity as constitutive phenomena ...................................................................................... 52
  Using ethnomethodology: Accountability .................................................................................................... 56
  Using ethnomethodology: Focus on the how as opposed to the why ....................................................... 57
  Using ethnomethodology: Respecification as a tool for understanding .................................................. 57
  Using ethnomethodology: Development of generalizability .................................................................... 58

  **UNDERSTANDING ETHNOMETHODOLOGY’S ANALYTICAL COMPONENTS** ......................... 58
  Indexicality .................................................................................................................................................... 58
  Reflexivity ....................................................................................................................................................... 60
  Notion of member ......................................................................................................................................... 63
  Accomplishment ........................................................................................................................................... 64
  Summary: Ethnomethodology and communication ...................................................................................... 66

  **GATHERING DATA: FOCUS GROUPS** ...................................................................................................... 68
  Methodological commitments to a process: Critical communication pedagogy and focus group participants ................................................................. 68
  Focus groups: Working with the travelers, tourists, and explorers ......................................................... 69
  Focus group procedures: From recruitment to data analysis .................................................................... 73
  Participant selection for focus groups .......................................................................................................... 73
## APPENDIX B

- **INTERVIEW GUIDE-FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS** ................................................................. 189
  - Being Student—How the FG participants develop their sense of “doing student”? .................. 189
  - Perceptions and Expectations of the environment (classroom/teacher/student) —
    What do FG participants expect out of the classroom environment? ..... 189

## APPENDIX C

- **PRE-FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE** ............................................................................... 191

## APPENDIX D

- **LETTER OF CONSENT** ...................................................................................................... 192

## APPENDIX E

- **RECRUITMENT STATEMENT: IN-CLASS** ........................................................................ 194

## APPENDIX F

- **RECRUITMENT STATEMENT: POSTER** ........................................................................ 195

## APPENDIX G

- **HSRB APPROVAL** ........................................................................................................... 196

## APPENDIX H

- **CURRICULUM VITAE** ..................................................................................................... 197
  - Education .................................................................................................................. 197
  - Courses Taught .......................................................................................................... 198
  - Fellowships ............................................................................................................. 198
  - Academic Employment ............................................................................................ 198
  - Research Experience ............................................................................................... 199
  - Awards ..................................................................................................................... 201
  - Grants ....................................................................................................................... 201
  - Service ...................................................................................................................... 202
CHAPTER ONE

Student identity on my mind

One spring day in California, I was sitting in a professor’s office. It was a typical office comprised of a few photos of family and graduate school friends, a file cabinet with articles collected over the years, and posters of academic performances and conferences that subtly tell of one’s paradigm. What stood out the most however, was the bookcase. It was not an unusual case; it was an institutional metal with rust and wear caused by those who came before her. On its shelves were names that, at the time, sounded exotic: deCertau, Foucault, Freire, McLaren, Goodall, Pelias, Shor, Sprague and Giroux. By that point in 1999, I knew these were names of people she knew, some of them personally, others she had only read about. All of them, however, belong to scholars whose work she spent time dissecting and critiquing. These books were all part of who she is— facets of her identity captured between the pages.

And here I sat in her office, tired and feeling like my education in Communication seemed to have slipped in value. I did not know why, but my undergraduate education by this point looked in danger of becoming perpetually monotonous. I was going through the motions of reading and doing what I was told. That is until the owner of this office, Deanna Fassett, said, “So, what kind of student are you?”

Deanna is an Associate Professor of Communication at a West Coast university. I have always been in awe of her because she seems to have an unwavering sense of who she is as a scholar and educator. When working with students she firmly believes that
education should stimulate a critical nature. Working with me has been no different; she has always been committed to evoking my passion for learning through critical pedagogy.

In 1999, through this simple question loaded with purpose, scholarship, mentoring, advising, paradigms, theories, and a new way to conceive of an education in Communication Studies, I decided to be an academic. In that moment, maybe unbeknownst to her, she had contrived to send me to graduate school. In a poetic way, the plan brought to fruition, I would be witness and part of a momentous finale of hearing the words that I believe most doctoral candidates and graduate school advisees fear, “You don’t get to claim student anymore.”

These words filled me with a series of emotions that scared me to my core. From the day that I decided to get my Master’s degree, to the day I heard these words from my doctoral advisor over lunch, I had always been able to invest my observations in an avant-garde feeling of scholarship. I was accountable to my ideas, but never fully committed to making them part of who I am. I finally felt that I had earned a reputation as “doing student” in a way that made me feel proud, made me feel like part of an upper echelon of students, doing more than just trying to get by, and able deal with the copious amounts of information being provided. To this point, I never had an understanding nor care about the politics of scholarship or competing research paradigms at play. All I had seen were professors’ colorful personalities who had come and gone from institutions where I was a student. When it became apparent to them that their paradigm or perspective wasn’t valued or that they became disenfranchised from a department’s
vision, their identity seemed to go into flux. After hearing my doctoral advisor utter those words, I now had a coveting awe for the perceived stability of a professor’s identity, the ability of being true to the facets of an identity. I now viewed ownership of a perceived stable identity defined by paradigm, publishing, and classroom as a luxury. For the most part, having written this dissertation was part of a dull affair. I accepted lacking a sense of student identity, comprised of theories, paradigms, and earned perspectives to travel with through academia. Victor Turner (1974) describes the middle as the liminal—the space betwixt and between, neither there nor here. Where I am at now is in a liminal space— a student but not, a professor but not, an academic. I am engaging in a process of tradition, building my own sense of credibility, but not. What I am though is able to advocate for both students and academics. The liminal is often characterized as a space of transition— much like the status of a doctoral candidate who no longer gets to claim student, yet is also held accountable to his new academic identity defined only by the dissertation process. I am on a threshold, preparing to travel from one point to another, waiting to add my voice to those of an institution that might hire me.

Throughout this dissertation, “travel” serves as a metaphor for the figures of different modes of dwelling and displacement, for trajectories and identities, for storytelling and theorizing in a postcolonial world of global contacts. To accomplish this I return theory to its etymological roots and note a 21st century difference. The Greek term “theorein” is a practice of travel and observation, a person sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony. “Theory” is a product of displacement, comparison, and a certain distance between colleagues. In this sense, in order to theorize,
one must leave the paradigmatic comforts of home. Like any act of travel, theory begins and ends somewhere.

As I reflect on that question posed to me by Deanna back in 1999, what she set in motion was the beginning of my recognition that the ability to claim student or wear the mantle of ‘being’ a professor is still a mystery—but one worth exploring. The process of being a graduate student and instructor, trying to navigate and develop the nuances of my identity (while borrowing from the credibility of others) has been exhausting and not something I completely understand. What I do understand is that the fear of hearing my advisor utter the words of what I get to claim as a stable identity sent me on an exploration to understand why the mantle of being a student meant so much. What I also realize is that people who had once been students but were now professors must have felt like I do… didn’t they?

As I question my feelings, in my own paradigmatic home, I am not quite steeped in communication education nor in education literature, not quite an instructional communication scholar and not quite an education scholar. I sit at a crossroads, listening to professors and students profess, “we still have a long way to go before we can trust each other and go about our business without fear.” This situation, clamoring to define the self is compounded by the fact that students (as the participants in my dissertation will discuss) have to adapt their perceptions and expectations with great speed to the new conditions that arise in their lives. In life and imposed by professors, the words of “claiming” and “student” are fearful at first, but are also tossed about by students, professors, and academic institutions to denote an identity. They are used quite casually,
until someone else holds one accountable to them, but really they are, after all, just words.

Perhaps an explanation for the meaning of being a student might be found at the institution where my advisor took away my sense of safety over lunch. Maybe there were others like me, engaging in a “great exploration” of identity, questioning one’s perceptions and expectations, or as my advisor calls this transition process “earning a Ph.D.”

No student identity anymore? I said. “Great idea.” Then after lunch I cried…

After the tears subsided, I began talking with other students and I knew why it was a great idea. This dissertation is centered on understanding the social contexts in which students understand the self. My paradigmatic home of critical communication pedagogy is closely tied to students’ social contexts, which use theories to place value on lived moments. The theories that serve as my base are European in worldview origin—Bakhtin, de Certau, Fassett, Freire, Garfinkel, Sprague, and Warren. I use them to analyze the context for critical communication pedagogy, to address student identity construction, and to explore student voice (“Doing student,” students’ communication about education, their perceptions and expectations.)

The more I thought about student identity, the more it made sense. In addition to exploring the mystery of what my Master’s advisor started, my Doctoral advisor began to hold me accountable to the type of scholar I wanted to be. I am sure the argument could be made that all of my professors had been holding me accountable to my ideas, my scholarship, my sense of identity, but somehow this was different. In the eight months
after my Doctoral advisor collapsed my sense of identity, I scrambled for a new identity to justify why I was still in school. Now without a place towards which to travel, the specter of a new identity is just beyond the horizon. Then it became clear— I needed to decide in my role as a researcher and as a scholar, whether I would, as an academic, be a traveler, tourist, or an explorer.

All three make journeys, but the professorial explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveler discovers the mind as it works in the development of history, the tourist discovers through entrepreneurship and prepares his/her work for others using the arts of mass publicity. The genuine traveler is, or used to be, in the middle between the two extremes, encouraging his/her advisees to push the boundaries of the current paradigms. If the explorer moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves toward the security of pure cliché. It is between these two poles that I have become bored with the travelers perpetuating ordinary education. Education for me became something schizophrenic. No longer a student, with the competing narratives of my life, my former student body, my newly emerging identity, I am left not a student, but not quite a fully self-accountable professor…

As I am becoming more comfortable in my scholarly self, crying much less, and learning with much more clarity, I have begun to understand why feeling connected to the student identity was so important. I want education to be something other than ordinary; I want to see and read about the principle features of the people with whom I work: the students. I want to understand what makes them tick. I realized that my fear came from feeling disconnected from the people I was once a part of. For this
dissertation, for my own sense of doing right, I find myself wanting to be held accountable to the disciplinary community, but also to the students. I fundamentally believe that if we do not pay attention to students, their emerging ideas and developing identities, then we continue to do damage and to instill a sense of fear in them.

P.J. O’Rourke (1989) once wrote that the world’s suffering is caused by earnest messages contained in grand theories bearing no relation to reality. Every participant with whom I explored identity told tales of chairs and desks that are warped from the uncomfortable identities that have sat in them, cheeky posters of soaring eagles with fortune cookie quotations, sad-looking walls that wish they could tell of the critical lives that they held in comfort (or at least tried to). Instead these artifacts are generic and without identity.

So which am I — a tourist, traveler, or explorer? I can be seen with a contorted face in the back of the room because this room reminds me of all the others. In front of me is a white-board, which replaced a green chalkboard, which replaced a black chalkboard, which replaced a tree (under which conversations took place), which grew when the rains eroded away the mountains that held the cave-drawing notes of students who were supposed to add to their sense of self. The classroom, which has been overbooked, is crowded. The first student has a look of fear, the second seems lackadaisical, the third excited from medication, the fourth is high on something other than prescription drugs and smells so, the fifth looks conscientious and may ask a lot of good questions, the sixth seems interested in the subject matter already, and I look like and have felt like all of them.
The new traveler: Understanding students

This dissertation consists of examining a single claim: that student identity is constituted in practice. I will shed some light on student identity by exploring how students voice their perceptions and expectations for education and how those expectations in turn shape how they view themselves. Identity, when considered in the instructional communication context, is treated by others as stable — it becomes a variable used to measure other communication factors; however, as people live their lives, there is nothing stable about it. Identity is about creatively and expressively communicating; we create a sense of self initially practiced. Identity, in its use as an expression tool, is a matter of extraordinary language to explain the abstract nature of our perceptions and expectations. In this way, researching identity, as I do here, is about looking at the process of producing the meanings that comprise an identity and how identity functions within the context of social experience. Making sense of identity involves making sense of the person who is an agent in the process. Sense making dissolves differences between subject and object and constructs each in relation to the other (Fiske, 1989b, p.1). Within the performance of these meanings lie their power, agency, and possibility.

The performance of possibilities within education has always been fascinating to me — from the possibility of making conceptual connections, to books that one will enjoy or dislike, to the way thirty students in a class will all make a sentence of a text new dogma (thereby undermining everything else to possibly be learned). Yet, for all of these possibilities to come to fruition in education, one has to meet people. Education is strangely critical in that way, offering the possibilities to meet new people and develop new ideas. Because of the choices one makes, two fundamental points can be observed: individuals’ perceptions and their expectations. All people involved in the academic process hold the possibility of being engaged by the opportunity to learn from people
whom they otherwise would never have met, but to whom they are strangely connected in an abstract notion of the college experience.

As I no longer get to claim being a student, I have had to transition to my newer role as a teacher and scholar, two new identities for me, but both of which allow me access to critically analyze an additional college relationship. This research process, in my new identity thus far, has shown me that the developing of new relationships is not something to fear, but is actually something a bit more commonplace. I sense a continued sense of accomplishment, a process if you will, with every new relationship.

Garfinkel (1967) would call attention to these individual interactions as something larger that is accomplished, not mere coincidence or commonplace. The study of these practical accomplishments is the focus of ethnomethodology. The impetus for this dissertation stems from an evolution of my interest in the actions-in-context or the ethnomethodology of instructional communication. Specifically, I am interested in how the educational context provides an observable space within Communication Studies to better understand how student identity plays into the development of doing education. Ethnomethodology is the careful and systematic examination of reality-generating mechanisms of everyday life. For me, such a study of the practical ways that students use social phenomena to actualize their roles or accomplish their identity is fascinating. From my position as a critical scholar, I believe that student voice can be examined as a site of negotiation and contestation for the “self,” specifically how students accomplish the student identity. The exploration of ethnomethodology in this sense drives a larger curiosity regarding the reoccurring interpersonal process of responding to “who are you?” when you meet someone new.

Having decided that I want to study and explore student identity, my interest is not out of nostalgia for what I once had and certainly not out of any desire to give my former self a funeral-like wake. I want to see what many scholars, who write from a
critical perspective discuss (i.e. Alexander, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Ellsworth, 1997; Fassett, 2003; Warren, 2001a, 2001b) the need for scholarship and pedagogy that implicitly addresses student voice as a product of student identity.

This dissertation seeks to examine student identity, to see how students come to the classroom and understand their roles and expectations as educational members. This is done to get a clearer picture of pedagogical identities and ensuing practices of those roles that are developed by our discipline. With the recent paradigm shift authored by the theories of Critical Communication Pedagogy, my work joins the sparse literature that explores student identity. Fassett and Warren’s (2007) *Critical Communication Pedagogy*, is a collective analysis that demonstrates the trajectories of communication education theory and pedagogical practice that has led to this paradigm shift.

This dissertation moves from theory and commitments of critical communication pedagogy to a space of practices. This dissertation, in its literature review, collected data, and analysis, fleshes out lingering questions; that is, I examine unanswered questions regarding the need for a shift in our thinking about communication education theories and their practice. This dissertation, in its uniqueness, demonstrates the practicality of this shift in our thinking by establishing the theories and commitments of critical communication pedagogy in practice, but also students’ desires. Furthermore, this is relevant for education, because I once was a student, as were my advisors, and every other professor before me, and somehow we were touched by the possibilities of education. Within the intersection of communication and education, I believe through critical research, we can uncover students’ methods and understand their choices in performing particular educational identities. Specifically, how those identities are produced in and through communication, so that the categories themselves are seen as accomplishments. However, a fatal flaw in similar research that has been conducted in the past was not allowing the students to speak for themselves. Scholars at the
intersection of the communication and education paradigms usually utilize theories and their own voice to speak on students’ behalf (i.e. Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond, 1983, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1987; Wanzer and McCroskey, 1998; Noels, Clement, and Pelletier 1999). Given this, and my advisor’s insistence that I cannot claim the student identity anymore, I believe that the research foci for communication education and instructional communication could and should use the access we have to students more directly. Engaging in this type of pedagogical development, research, and course design will garner a more nuanced understanding of who the students are in our discipline’s courses. This will also tell us how we are respecting their voices as part of the academic institution and how they accomplish “doing student” by listening to the students as they narrate their own experiences.

**First explorations: Preparing a trip into theory and practice**

Whether you are traveling to Nepal, Cuba, or visiting your mom for the weekend, the process of preparing for travel has probably remained the same for the past two hundred years (albeit some now pack iPods, instead of those bulky phonographs). People have maintained their traditional packing styles in a type of isolation, much like the early conceptualizations of communication education in the 1960s. Both cultures have been transformed by what they pack. Both cultures have refocused what the necessities are and reconceptualized how much space they have. These factors are always in a state of evolution set in the discipline’s theory and in practice, but seem to be happening in seclusion from each other. It is rare that any two classroom teachers or education scholars will have the exact same conceptualization for a student-centered approach to education. As with any dialogue on education, individuals tend to mold concepts to fit their own particular focus or needs. This has led to a few significant paradigm shifts within Communication’s educational theory and pedagogical techniques, where focus has
shifted to the potentials of bottom-up approaches. As new generations are born, possibilities for cultural change are developed. These possibilities can be seen in the historical trajectories of the communication discipline discussed in chapter two. Within the communication education paradigm (how best to teach communication courses), Burgoon, Heston, and McCroskey (1977) offer a demonstration of student willingness for classroom communication. In turn, this led to studies like Burroughs, Kearney, and Plax’s (1989) analysis of student compliance, as a facet of the instructional communication paradigm (looking at communication in instructional contexts). Ultimately, Jo Sprague (1993) raises questions regarding a perspective for pedagogical growth within a discipline specific pedagogy.

Sprague (1993) authored an article, “Retrieving the Research Agenda for Communication Education: Asking the Pedagogical Questions that are Embarrassments to Theory,” that outlined her travels and tribulations at the intersection of communication and education. She addresses several points that serve as a call for an epistemological shift by recognizing a need to reconnect with students in an exploratory capacity, building the student-teacher interpersonal and pedagogical relationship. In it, she calls for a discipline specific pedagogy as follows:

1. A discipline specific pedagogy would recognize that communication by definition is a social phenomenon.

2. A discipline specific pedagogy would recognize that communication is a complex, ongoing process.

3. A discipline specific pedagogy would recognize that human speech communication is performed, embodied, and usually oral.

4. A discipline specific pedagogy would recognize that communication is tied to cultural and personal identity.

5. A discipline specific pedagogy would recognize that communication has a relationship between communication and power.
Sprague creates new places to explore concepts like identity within old charted spaces through a sense of possibility by reminding scholars that we are engaging in the development of real relationships through our pedagogical techniques. Her calls (1992, 1993, 1999) for a discipline-specific pedagogy serve as a reminder that scholars need to be concerned with how students construct their sense of student voice within the confines of communication theory.

I examine student voice in this regard because of its importance for my own sense of possibility, as a researcher, as a teacher, and as a future advisor. I am at odds when I finish writing an article or conference paper and the finished product seems to have very little direct student voice as compared to the accomplished-contexts of the identities that I am writing about. This sense of accomplishment is ethnomethodological in nature and worth exploring.

From my position as a critical scholar, I will show that student voice can be examined as a site of negotiation and contestation for the “self,” specifically how students accomplish identity. Giroux speaks of identity as “shifting, multiple and often contradictory” (Giroux, 1993, p. 26). Ethnomethodologically, the engaged contradictions are rational properties of students’ expressions regarding how they demonstrate their negotiated identities. In this vein, Butler (1990) talks of the shifting and contradictory identity as a space where a subject is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. The ongoing accomplishments of a “perceived stable identity” become rationally organized where the subject is culturally constructed. However, this notion of accomplished identity is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured for the critical capacity for reflexivity (p. 182).

In the process of negotiating a student identity, it is beneficial to first examine what it means to have an ascribed student identity or to move toward constitutive uses of communication. The scholars reviewed in this dissertation together move literature
toward a “constitutive body” that can allow us to view student as a production (Warren, 2003). Warren (2003), speaking on racial identity, suggests that with a more dialectical perspective of race and the body, and by using the material body in order to demonstrate rhetorical social effects, one can create a powerful and complex consideration (p. 23). My work will include this ideal by offering student voices as the dialectical perspectives that articulate the effects of students’ lived social contexts.

Speaking of race signals a possible paradigmatic shift towards what Fassett and Warren (2007) term “critical communication pedagogy.” Their text considers the theoretical implications of looking at student identity in instructional contexts. Critical communication pedagogy serves as a starting point to consider instructional effects through a student’s voice, examining not how one demonstrates the practices of being a student, but more of how it is to be a student. In my review of literature and in my research, a student takes on the performative traits of an identity that is conceptualized as a site of negotiation and contestation for the “self.” The student becomes a person who is, as Dyer writes, an unraveling “raced bodies [that] get wrapped in a discourse of power” (cited in Warren, 2003, p. 24).

Ethnomethodology and critical communication pedagogy allow scholarship in this area to move toward recognition that student identity is a performative possibility, as a product produced through a range of power, voice, and agency, all granted within context. This dissertation struggles with the intersection of communication and education because of the lack of approaches that do this in instructional communication and communication education literature. I further struggle with how student identity is theorized as a “constitutive act upon the body” (Butler, 1990). That is, this dissertation looks to use critical communication pedagogy as a paradigm to address the (re)constitution of identity though a lens of perceptions and expectations. This dissertation seeks to ask how best to teach communication courses (communication

This study, through critical communication pedagogy and an ethnmethodological lens, explores the ways in which student identity is produced through power, voice, and agency. Through focus groups featuring students’ frank discussions regarding schooling practices, I have learned about the work that occurs “between” students (them) and teachers (we) and “around” the pedagogical tools we develop to work with them. Participants share how they understand, see, describe, struggle, succeed, and develop their identities, both individually and as part of an academic community. Also, participants’ dialogue illuminates how the intersection of communication and education identity is undertheorized as a socially constitutive act. Complementing the focus groups and participants’ dialogue, the ensuing ethnmethodological analysis reveals how students, engage in the everyday accomplishments of “doing student;” that is, I consider how students work strategically to construct a self for the classroom that is informed by their rational sense-making of living and experiencing education in their everyday life.

Specifically, this study consisted of four focus group interviews with a diverse set of undergraduate students, within and outside the discipline of Communication Studies. The participants in this study spoke to the construction of an educational identity as a process that is comprised of maintaining institutional realities, understanding how they, as
students, make and negotiate educational and social choices, and then demonstrate a sense of belonging through their actions. The key to understanding the participants’ conversations is to consider the following questions: How do students and teachers understand educational roles? How are these understandings socially and communicatively constructed? How do these discursive understandings shape students’ perceptions of each other and expectations of the educational system? What other factors may be playing a role in the creation and maintenance of student expectations and perceptions in education? These questions also foreground individuals’ education actions as constitutive acts that serve to move them toward recognition that student identity is an act of performative possibility. This recognition allows students’ to either create a space for them to feel in control of developing their identities, their sense of practical accomplishments in their daily actions (i.e., communicating, decision-making, and reasoning), or having that identity assigned to them due to institutional constraints. Because participants’ expectations are built on the perception that individuals choose to comply with or resist institutional norms, they were very critical of students who neglect the ways in which individuals’ actions (or inactions) help to continually create and reify the educational struggles they are defining themselves against.

Most intriguing is the empirical evidence that shows participants are far more aware of how critical discourse can create relationships between individuals and educational institutions, as well as how those same dialogues can hinder those relationships from ever coming into being. Furthermore, participants made it very clear that they are not apathetic to their educational situation; they are not judgmental dopes. As students, they make decisions that demonstrate their choices and inform a process that makes them part of very particular educational and social communities. Participants also expressed that there is an untapped desire to take a more active role in their educational
development, if provided the opportunity without feeling like their education would be put in jeopardy.

With participants viewing education as an extension of the self; the scholarship of communication and education and critical communication pedagogy scholars now have new context to explore and deconstruct structures of power and privilege that serve to maintain the status quo, while working with students during that process… or at least until his or her advisor takes him/her to lunch…
CHAPTER TWO

Seeking, fulfilling, doing: Historical trajectories of critical pedagogy within communication literature

On Saturday, June 8, 1867, the steamship Quaker City left New York harbor. On board was a group of American tourists making the world’s first package tour. Also on board was Mark Twain, making fun of the world’s first packaged tourism. One hundred and thirty-four years later, on Wednesday, April 11, 2001, I boarded a similar space, a classroom where I was supposed to present a packaged understanding of communication theory. Our professor in Twainian fashion made fun of my packaged understanding. I wondered what I missed.

Educational practices in the communication discipline have been, at times, wrought with contradictions to its theoretical core. On one hand theory speaks to the discipline’s ability to develop critical thinkers—its intellectual wares produced and distributed by an instruction-motivated industry that follows only its own intellectual interests. But on the other hand, the discipline is of the people, and the people’s interests are not always those of the industry—as evidenced by the Gender Achievements and Prospects report (2006).¹ Students who lie in the wake of the current state of communication education practice demonstrate that they understand only as a production and distribution mentality. Communication education has become ad hoc, leaving a small group of scholars willing to stake their new careers on not making education a space of

¹ The Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education (GAP) report, is a United Nations sponsored multimedia project that is designed to be more than a wake-up call to the budding issues of education. Building on the knowledge and observations of people who work in development and education, it is designed to assess progress towards gender parity in education by 2005 and universal primary education by 2015, highlight innovations, identify obstacles, generate discussion and give guidance. GAP begins at the point of agreed upon and established assessments made by United Nation’s represented countries.
consumption. Those scholars are vested in making education an active process of generating and circulating meanings within a social system.

This next point may seem rudimentary, but it is worth reminding, as a professor or researcher exploring communication education, instructional communication, or critical communication pedagogy. I believe that principal in my work should be holding myself accountable to demonstrating an understanding of my research participants. For this dissertation those participants are the students and their emerging mentality. Just as the student learns the roles and expectations of the scholar, explorer, and the texts they are asked to read, so should I understand how it is they produce and manage those meanings. For students and professors this means knowing and understanding the differences between a critical education and a packaged tour through the communication discipline. Therefore, to better understand student and professor perspectives I look at the formations of literature in communication that feature either critical pedagogy or critical theory in education. The literature in this perspective guides one to become more than a tourist, to search and be held accountable for what is found in the unknown.

Some scholars discuss critical pedagogy within communication as a shift in curriculum, perhaps as simple as adding new and diverse materials and perspectives to be more inclusive of traditionally underrepresented groups. Others talk about classroom climate issues or teaching styles that serve certain groups while presenting barriers for others. Still others focus on institutional and systemic issues such as tracking, standardized testing, or funding discrepancies. Some go further still, insisting on educational change as part of a larger societal transformation in which we more closely explore and criticize the oppressive foundations of society and how education serves to maintain the status quo—reinforcing foundations such as white supremacy, capitalism, global socioeconomic inequities, and exploitation.
The conceptualizations of critical pedagogy within communication share several ideals, which I have grouped into three sections. This grouping provides a basis for understanding: critical pedagogy within the conversation of communication; the literature of critical communication pedagogy; and critical pedagogy and critical communication pedagogy work that analyzes student voice.

This literature review serves to show critical pedagogy as a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices within education. Fassett and Warren (2007) call for research to be grounded in ideals of social justice, educational equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences. This critical approach acknowledges that schools are essential in laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice. The underlying goal of this approach and its use for this dissertation is to demonstrate the possibility to affect social change. The literature demonstrates a pathway toward this goal and sets the stage for my study.

**Critical pedagogy within the conversation of communication**

Any analysis of critical pedagogy must begin with an examination of the work of Paulo Freire, who is generally considered to be “the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy” (McLaren, 1999, p. 1), though Freire himself rarely used the term “critical pedagogy” specifically. Although Freire’s initial focus targeted adult literacy projects in Brazil, his work has consequently dealt with a wide range of social and educational issues and became popularly adopted and critiqued (see Darder, Baltodano, and Torres, 2003; Giroux, 1993; McLaren, 1993, 1999; Shor, 1992; Wink, 2002, and others). Freire’s work was first influential in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reemerging in the mid 1980s to dominate the literature of critical pedagogy. It became a point of contention in
communication scholarship in the 1990s, more recently serving as a starting point for a paradigm shift at the intersection of communication and education research.

Kuhn (1962) popularized the concept of a “paradigm shift” in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Kuhn argued that scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a “series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions,” and in those revolutions “one conceptual world view is replaced by another” (p. 10). I believe that the paradigm shift in how education is treated by the communication discipline is punctuated through the logic of critical pedagogy.

The strength of Freire’s pedagogy revolved around a dialogical and interactive approach, which aims to examine issues of relational power for students through the abuse of farmers. In addition, the fundamental goal is to place social and political critiques of everyday life at the center of the curriculum and learning. This shift in treatment of education provides little space for dictated thought or simple regurgitation of knowledge, only critical thinking; termed by Freire as praxis. The term “praxis” describes the dialogic process of knowledge creation/construction. The process is quite literal in that one reflects and acts upon the world (including education) in order to transform it (Freire, 1970, p. 51). The words and texts used in the context of critical education mean that an individual— teacher or student— pedagogically acts and speaks with reflection – a reflection designed to lead toward actions that cause changes, both interpersonally and intertextually. The implementation of praxis includes a range of educational practices and processes with the goal of creating not only a better learning environment, but also a better world. Further, the work for all critical pedagogical theory in Freirian context comes from the person in his/her contexts, which is directly related to the goal of this project.
Freire’s claim was that praxis was not merely an educational technique but a way of living (Freire, 1970). From this perspective, communication scholars turn to Freire’s notion of spoken words and text/theory use as more than just instruments to create meaning. Learning, perspectives, and meaning come from texts that make interactive and intertextual dialogue possible; further, it is within dialogue that we find the two dimensions of reflection and action. In a journey through critical pedagogy and communication, students and teachers engage in praxis because of the reflective and transformative elements of the classroom environment. The elements of the classroom are like a natural system of response and reaction in relation to one another. Praxis within the communication classroom serves as a call for reflection and action, asking students and instructors to meld concepts and theories with their own interpersonal, intercultural, intertextual, and newfound understandings of the field of study.

Further, Freire (1970, 1999) refuted the idea that education could be simply about politics, but rather that education is politics (though the two need not be mutually exclusive). Importantly, however, he argued that a social and political analysis of life should be at the center of curricula, no matter what the official content.

Freirian methodology provides insight to how communication scholars like Proctor II and Adler (1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 2002) can nuance communication theory through popular culture selections in the classroom and how this scholarly usage in particular ways can more fully account for the political power of student voice. First, the term popular culture warrants explanation because its usage is dependent on the context. The term popular culture has two inherent contexts within it that are often misused by communication scholars like Proctor II: “popular” and “culture.” The term “culture” provides the context that can show an understanding of culture’s purpose, which can unintentionally reify ideologies. Fiske (1989a) writes, “Culture is the constant process of
producing meanings of and from our social experience” (p. 1). Our matrix to a particular culture provides the foundation for our meanings and social experiences, and ultimately guides our dialogues for the “making sense” of our socio-political identity (Minuchin, Rosman, and Baker, 1978, p. 65). Within this acculturation process, the meaning making process will develop culture that becomes widely accepted, reproduced and reified, thus becoming the “popular.”

The introduction of popular culture, whether reflective or not, provides the development of interpersonal and intercultural balance through culture-making, interacting and evaluating the social politic (Minuchin, Rosman, and Baker, 1978, p. 89). Culture-making is a social process that has two important implications that are often ignored by scholars who use popular culture unreflectively. According to Fiske (1989a, 1989b, 1987) and Brummett (1991), culture making is always a political negotiation that is in process and is never achieved. Critical pedagogy, like popular culture within the conversation of communication, is a grounding that recognizes that communication is the very act of acculturation. The process contains a theoretical construction that believes education is inherently political.

Critical pedagogy at this level of signification should not be about the transference of knowledge, but rather the collaborative and collective production of knowledge grounded in the reality of students’ lives (Shor, 1992). Currently, communication scholars who advocate the use of popular culture in the classroom tend to overlook the students’ role in the text selection process. The literature directs instructors to specific popular culture to demonstrate concepts without considering student input. The literature (i.e., Proctor II, 2002, 1993, 1991, 1989; Adler, 1995, 1991, Baker, 1997; and Gregg, 1995) suggests that instructors should guide students with select popular culture because the texts will heighten student interest, leading to value clarification and
personal assessment. While these outcomes are laudable, this approach unfortunately brings the risk of encouraging students to use instructor-derived examples to mimic instructor interests and values—i.e., the students create a personal assessment in an instructor’s image.

When the texts become deprived of their dimension of the students’ action, reflection automatically suffers as well; the dialogue stemming from students becomes what Freire calls idle chatter or verbalism (1970, p. 87). When the sacrifice of action occurs, texts can be alienating for students. The texts are empty and useless because they lack a sense of personal connection to create a desire to act towards transformation. The student has in essence been treated as a repository or a bank. Like the financial institution, the student has no vested interest other than reproducing the action of “put in, take out.” In the case of education this “banking process” simply reifies the instructor’s ideology. There is a negation of power, of the praxis process; there is no transformation, and without transformation, there is no action or intertextuality. I do not believe that most instructors would knowingly assign popular culture that oppresses students; however, the manner in which Proctor II (2002, 1993, 1991, 1989), Adler (1991), Baker (1997), and Gregg (1995) all explain how to select popular culture for students and use them in the classroom (by providing examples and not addressing concerns of student voice) shows a lack of praxis or reflection of student needs.

Most of own my initial contact with popular culture in the classroom did not come from my desires to search them out, but from the instructor using popular culture to teach concepts of a given course. Sometimes I understood the texts, sometimes I sat complacent, afraid to speak up, leading to an undesirable classroom experience feeling like I was being told what to know, how to express the communication connections, and never asked for my interpretation.
The banking model of education (Freire, 1970) is domesticating; critical pedagogy reflecting on problems of agency and voice is liberating or humanizing. In communication, I recognize, like McLaren (1993) that students develop meaning through communication and dialogical relations with teachers. It is part of a larger belief that critical scholarship should be at the heart of any educational experience. Through genuine dialogue between students and teachers, the field of communication can guide students to recognize pedagogy that demonstrates grounding of a social and educational vision that promotes justice and equality. Freire (1970, p. 68) wrote: “Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.”

These concepts form the basis of Freire’s philosophy of education and give rise to a wide range of other educational practices within communication. The implementation of Freire’s philosophies of education in communication demonstrates that while there are clearly benefits to be gained, the practices are not always straightforward.

Communication contexts in this regard should be approached from the position of a broad goal of liberation and practices adapted for each individual situation. In embracing this notion, the term “critical pedagogy” itself may be inadequate. Freire acknowledged that pedagogy is grounded in and influenced by ideology, and through understanding that there are multiple socio-economic systems, defining a singular pedagogy of emancipation becomes convoluted. This means that pedagogy needs to be developed to account for the multiple voices that enter educational environments, such as the classroom. This expansion of the term critical pedagogy subsequently occurs in many more recent analyses of critical pedagogy within communication (Banks, 2000; Cooks and Chyng, 2002; Cooks, 2003; Dannels, 2001; Fassett and Warren, 2007, 2005, 2004;

The complexities inherent in critical pedagogy have given rise to different interpretations of this concept by critical communication scholars. Academics using a “Freirian process” typically cite bell hooks (1994, p. 66) to attribute an “engaged pedagogy” which espouses a combination of “anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies … for interrogating biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination … while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students” (hooks, 1994). One of the central features of hooks’ pedagogy is a critique of the elitist conceptualization of knowledge practiced in the academy, including the use of sophisticated language, which creates a barrier between the students and their teachers. As an alternative, hooks promotes a strong link between teacher theory and student practice, thus promoting a greater relevance for students.

Perhaps one of the most influential approaches to critical pedagogy in communication has been dubbed “a pedagogy of possibility” (Halasek, 1999). Fassett and Warren (2007), in Critical Communication Pedagogy, mark this paradigm shift by coining the term “critical communication pedagogy” (p. 3). This type of pedagogy is about the possibilities of a pedagogy that “draws together critical theory and communication,” and demonstrates advocacy as scholarship and pedagogy. Fassett and Warren focus on scholarship because of those scholars before us who were both seeking and doing critical communication pedagogy without a name for their scholarship. Critical communication pedagogy is about disrupting the manner in which pedagogy serves as either a tool for domination or a voice of advocacy. Fassett and Warren point out that advocacy is pedagogy, and therefore pedagogy, is in essence, advocacy.
By drawing on the boundaries of communication education and instructional communication, the process of an epistemological shift at the intersection of communication and education has, like Fassett and Warren (2007), left me carefully navigating the terrain of this paradigm shift. I find myself at this junction because the dichotomy between theory and practice is the very place I struggle to bridge. Scholarship and pedagogy are about exploring the nuances of theory, the complexities of theory, and not the evasion of the politics at play. This means holding myself (the scholar and teacher) accountable as I seek a critical communication pedagogy paradigm, to do critical communication pedagogy, and to fulfill the potentials of a critical communication pedagogy paradigm.

I believe that more than any academic trend or sense of nostalgia for the romance of scholarship, the reason to look toward the possibilities of critical communication pedagogy is to reclaim the role of the mentor. Within the role of the mentor, I believe that one can foster probing discussions about how teachers and students use power. I believe that this means as scholars we need to paradigmatically shift our scholarship to allow for the study of the mundane moments, the taken for granted moments, and those unique moments used by students to construct their sense of identity and voice.

As mentioned earlier, the process of negotiating a student identity is beneficial to the examination of what it means to view student as a production. This process of negotiation and contention in relationship to critical communication pedagogy at the intersection of communication and education is a paradigm shift that warrants exploration.

I believe it is worthwhile to organize the literature of critical communication pedagogy into three subsections: seeking critical communication pedagogy, doing critical communication pedagogy, and fulfilling critical communication pedagogy. I argue this is
useful because it provides a heuristic and comprehensive way to look at the literature, especially as it reevaluates the teacher-student relationship. Fassett and Warren (2007) in their call for the reevaluation of the teacher role to a mentoring role, suggest that pedagogy must be transformative and collaborative. Critical communication pedagogy values this because it means that pedagogy will require teaching and learning to be linked in educating students to take risks, to struggle with ongoing relations of power, to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside their immediate experience, and to envision community.

For pedagogy to be accomplished, Fassett and Warren (2007) urge it must be embedded in everyday practices. Education needs to be accountable to interaction; this implies that one must locate its emergence in social situations, rather than within the individual or some ill-defined set of role expectations (Fenstermaker and West, 2002). To unpack the educational context (i.e., mundane pedagogical moments, contentious classroom moments, aggressive scholarship that stands on simple abstraction), one has to hold those abstractions accountable; one cannot determine the relevance of pedagogy to student identity apart from the context in which it is accomplished (Garfinkel, 1967). Teachers committed to this pedagogy of possibility should not look for a prescriptive curriculum, methodology, or theories, but rather “approach such a task strategically, locally and contextually formulating practice within an integrated moral and epistemological stance” (Simon, 1992, p. 58). This would allow students and teachers to attempt to provoke a process through which people might engage in a transformative critique of their everyday lives (Pelias, 2000). Fassett and Warren’s approach moves some of the discourse from a strong theoretical standpoint previously occupied by communication scholars to a more critical, but promising, eclectic analysis of the realities of educational contexts.
Subsequently, the literature related to the critical communication theories of education has rapidly expanded to encompass, as mentioned earlier, areas of seeking, doing, and fulfilling this paradigm shift. A brief exploration of these areas, however, will help to identify the possibilities of accounting for student voice within critical communication pedagogy developed in the field.

**Seeking critical communication pedagogy**

In this section, I turn to scholars who seek out critical communication pedagogy research. At their point in time, their practices were unnamed. Critical communication pedagogy for these scholars was about the desires for scholarship that embodies notions of performance, had implications for pedagogy, and was contextualized by the performances of individuals. I examine the work of several scholars who were seeking out a way to understand performance, some for the possibility of theory and the discipline, others in relationship to the body, and others for the possibility of education. These scholars are all intrinsically linked in their seeking an understanding of how communication is shaped by societal frameworks.

Dwight Conquergood (1986) addresses one such framework by looking toward educational performance to develop experience and meaning. Through performance, he argues that we can develop a consciousness that does not overcome orality, but instead, holds interest in shifting from positivism to performance. In relationship to critical communication pedagogy, proponents of this framework value a “schooling” paradigm within which teachers find and mentor the useful parts of student voice that promote self-expression. While Conquergood is unclear about why performance scholarship remains “invisible outside our [Communication] field,” I would argue that his excitement for education is that space of empowering uncertainty that engages students in dialogue. The manner in which pedagogy can be performed holds the possibility of an incompatibility
with an external reality. In such a reality, what scholars do may not be as directly applicable beyond the pedagogical environments that scholars have constructed (1986, p. 30).

While Conquergood (1986) focused on performance, others like Hopkins (1996); Howard (2004); Jarmon (1996); focused on the cultural aspects of education. Still others like Pelias (2000), Park-Fuller and Pelias (1995); Pelias and VanOosting (1987) may have been calling for a paradigm shift within performance studies. Like critical communication pedagogy, both shifts are moves to locating work within the lived realities of people in context. I would add that beneath these works lays an explicit call for a paradigm shift that gives rise to an emphasis on the student identity in process. I would argue, too, Conquergood is seeking out scholars who are willing to look toward “Homo performans, humanity as performer rather than author” (1986, p. 38). In other words, the scholar becomes an active observer to the student’s voice as it becomes an explanation of the student’s lived experience. Once scholarship becomes more aware of the ongoing, “constructedness of our social realities,” research can begin to develop pedagogy that accounts for a cultural consensus of student voice as a voice for the uncertainty of culture that is pedagogically emancipating (1986, p. 40).

This notion of cultural consensus in relation to agency can be further seen in Nathan Stucky’s (1996) work, “Re/locating the text: Literature in performance.” His argument is that the “history of performance has been so intertwined with that of literature, it is [nearly] impossible to isolate either performance or literature without some sense of the other.” In order to get at the cultural understandings of performance, Stucky writes, “poetics of ordinary conversation, technological diversity, and cultural complexity,” needs to be accounted for in our [critical communication] pedagogy scholarship.
Emerging from Communication literature, I argue scholars were seeking a paradigm like critical communication pedagogy. Scholars wanted a pedagogy that attached value for the disciplines of communication and education, but also how it could play into the development of individuals’ identities. In particular, Apple (1999), Alexander (2004, 2003), Bell (2003), Cooks (2003), Cooks and Chyng (2002) place focus on knowing oneself in educational roles. Whereas, Daniels (2001), Fassett (2005, 2004, 2003), Giroux (2004, 2003), Hendrix, Jackson, and Warren (2003) look at the subtleties of power and rhetoric that play upon the development of educational identity. Further, through the literature of Hyttten (2003, 1999) and Hyttten and Warren (2003) work has been done outlining the subjugated power of pedagogical practices. Whereas, Kramer-Dahl (1996), Lensmire (1998), McIntyre (1997), Nyquist (1999), Pelias (2002, 2000, 1999), Pineau (2002, 1998), Postman and Weingartner (1969), Shor (1992), Simon (1992), Spivak (1993), and Sprague (1999, 1993, 1992) focus on the role voice, agency, and critique play within education paradigms. The accompanying “education” paradigm within these facets of literature contains educational practices that reflect the individual wholeness of each teacher and student. In this unnamed paradigm, each individual is empowered, has value as a complete person, and comes to believe that the system must serve, or at least accommodate, his or her needs.

Consider Sprague (1992), who clearly calls for critical communication pedagogy. This “seeking” of a “schooling” paradigm was entrenched in her work during communication education’s early attempts to identify themes that would seek to remove the criticalness of teacher’s work. In her themes, she centers on the possession of knowledge and of ability contained in the overt curriculum and also the negative values of a narrow view of intelligence. Her “schooling” paradigm focuses on issues related to status and working conditions by concentrating on circumstances that hinder
paradigmatic development. Through the classroom space, she demonstrates that scholars do not assign value to how environments affect the learning process or the various agendas within communication that prevent critical reports from uncovering those effects. She argues that the peripherals of dominant educational structures are where you will find the scholarship that seeks to develop more than “passive and compliant workers,” (Sprague, 1992, p. 186). However, the very people who are empowered to guide students to critical spaces are having their own skills diminished to such small tasks that critical tasks become nothing more than “imitative-maintenance” (p. 186). Students who seek to become accepted members of the academy are required to adhere to the covert curriculum of conformity, punctuality, obedience, and loyalty, valued by economic, political, and scholarly elites.

Hytten (1999), in the field of education, seems to extend Sprague’s notion to ask communication and education researchers to consider the ways in which those who seek a more critical paradigm substitute one form of hegemony for another. Hytten’s larger critique is that the critical work done to further an accounting of student voice does not truly problemitize students’ understanding of the social world.

Within the critical communication pedagogy paradigm (as it is presently emerging), there is a valuing of diversity and individuality, the big picture together with the mundane details, questioning as well as answering, and problem-solving through the capacities of the group, while still fostering of an individual critical approach. Such an approach may lead to diverse outcomes that do not reflect standardized and centralized perspectives that have become the “norm.” The emergence of this “education” paradigm is causing a division in the ranks of educators and, in some cases, is exposing the alignment of school “effectiveness” initiatives with vested financial, socio-political, and paradigmatic interests. Instead, paradigmatic efforts should focus on the development of
the whole communication discipline, including all scholars (and those possible future scholars within our students) equitably. As an educator, I would challenge myself to examine my views and practices concerning pedagogical effectiveness. I believe that I must respond in my work by considering whether I am empowering the inequities of the educational system, the communication discipline, or the student.

Current paradigms have done a notable job of preparing students for the “seeking” age; fewer have systematically decided how to engage students in this practice. This is not to say that scholars have not been doing critical communication pedagogy, only that they have been working without an identifiable paradigm.

**Doing Critical Communication Pedagogy**

In communication education and instructional research, it is often not easy to discern whose interests are served by institutional and discipline-improvement initiatives. The work may reflect either the interests of students or of the system, but that is often ambiguous. In “doing” critical communication pedagogy, I will examine this ambiguity through the lens of a “doing” logic, which means I will look at communication used to reaffirm or disrupt the taken-for-granted qualities of the education culture. The degree of acceptance of such a logic by educators like Banks (2000), Cooks (2003), Daniels (2001), Fassett (2003, 2004, 2005), Hendrix, Jackson II, and Warren (2003), Johnson and Bhatt (2003), Smith (2005), Stucky (1993, 1995), Warren (2001b) serve to show the degree of relevance for the critical communication pedagogy paradigm shift in their research questions and actions.

Robert Ivie’s (2004) article simply titled, “What are we about?” suggests scholars should “marvel at the absence of a map [rigid paradigm]. No one map of the [communication discipline] territory dominates our collective imagination.” Without trying to speak definitively, he believes that the spirit of scholarship is one of experimentation,
exploration, invention, and innovation, that our communication projects are in a perpetual state of becoming and that we aim to address communication in its many forms and venues of cultural production. We ask how it functions as an articulation of power and how we might reflect upon it as a source of democratic culture. Ivie’s belief that critical study of culture theorizes communication for the purpose of revising practice is a parallel logic to critical pedagogy’s notion of praxis, and critical communication pedagogy’s call that the “doing” of scholarship and teaching articulate theory and experience. In this vein, the challenge of achieving healthy democratic communities and cultures lies in considering the voices and agency of individuals and community, developing identities that can represent the union of communication and culture.

Further considering the logic of a critical communication paradigm would be Leda Cooks and Chyng Sun (2002), who explore traditional approaches to teaching about gender in order to examine the politics of oppression and marginalization of women. They point out how such studies typically do fully explicate gender binaries that are implicit in such studies. Using a Foucauldian and social constructionist frame (steeped in explorations of power in regards to ideas which may appear to be natural to those who accept it, but in reality is an socially constructed norm), Cooks and Sun look at desires and resistance. The terms that are used in the students’ self-reflections, and how such reflections might invoke tensions between the institutional, material, social, and disciplinary boundaries are both present and invisible. The connection to critical communication pedagogy logic lies in the types of questions asked or concerns explored. The focus on tensions, desires, and questioning what an alternative would look like through Foucauldian discourses of power and social constructionist aspects of gender binaries locates a greater reflexivity that treats gender ascription as social constitutive phenomena.
Another scholar who embodies this logic is Bryant Alexander, (2004a, 2004b, 2003, 1999) who presents the classroom critique as an opportune time to consider the changes that are happening in the world at large, and how those changes are relevant to education. In the previous section, “seeking critical communication pedagogy,” scholars reviewed were invested in interests that may have inadvertently paralyzed the education system. Toffler (1980) refers to this in The Third Wave as allowing a commandeering [of the schools’ curricula] to serve its agenda (p.169). Alexander’s examination, on the other hand, has become embedded in the communication discipline, and the changes that are occurring in society to challenge those interests are the focus of the “doing” critical communication pedagogy logic.

In Alexander’s (1999) essay, “Moving toward a Critical Poetic Response,” he argues that apart from using traditional means to spark critical thinking regarding the performative nature of teaching and socialization, there is a need to serve as mentors for “pedagogical goals that are buttressed against my desires as a person in the larger world,” (p. 107). Using his own body as performance and his critiques as performative opportunities, he demonstrates how students can communicate with each other through critique. Alexander’s Critical Poetic Response (CPR), in fact, is the kind of critique that supports critical communication pedagogy’s commitment to power as a fluid and complex phenomena. I sense that power within Alexander’s CPR treats student identity as a central feature to students’ abilities to communicate their position, theoretical understandings, and critique — so much so that power should not be conceptualized as an intrusion on, nor an affront to, the teacher’s need for critique. When considering the conditions of critique, Alexander’s CPR method conveys criticism as balanced and constructive; it holds both parties of the critique accountable for the accomplishment of the assignment as a whole, the language of critique, and the performance’s individual
parts. This differs from traditional methods, which, he argues, “reduces performances to individual components while failing to do justice to their totality” (p. 107). While Communication Studies has been focused mainly on students’ abilities to demonstrate discipline competence in the basic course; Alexander’s has nuanced this into an opportunity to use critique for students to demonstrate “performative reflexivity.” This process of “matching form to content” achieves a demonstration of students’ discipline competence and builds students’ core abilities to be critical (p. 114).

In another example of “doing,” Hytten and Warren (2003) address how students engage in a class that focuses on the socio-political power of whiteness. In their essay, they discuss whiteness theory and its intent to make white cultural and political assumptions and privileges visible so that whites do not assume that their own position is neutral or normal. Although in many ways consistent with the aims of multicultural theory, whiteness theory is also distinct from mainstream multiculturalism. Multicultural theory usually seeks to foster an appreciation of cultures other than the dominant culture; in its more radical forms, multiculturalism also involves problematizing the assumptions of the dominant culture. But because mainstream multicultural approaches are concerned primarily with developing authentic understandings of non-dominant cultures, they usually do not concentrate on how white power operates to foster and maintain white privilege through discourse (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995). Through critical engagement, students begin to focus specifically on whiteness as a political and cultural position—a position and an identity that, to a considerable extent, is gained at the expense of people of color.

Because white cultural norms are systematically enforced in education, Hytten and Warren (2003) argue that it is particularly important for educators to deconstruct inscribed and reified practices that actually serve to protect and secure whiteness’
dominant position. Through four appeals— to self, to social progress, to authenticity, and to extremes— the appeals invoke discourse that creates critical positions to understand why prevailing pedagogical and curricular patterns engage in oppression. The author’s purpose is not to shame, but to embrace social structural critique, as it places mundane practices in a meaningful context to promote more enabling interactions.

Hytten and Warren’s (2003) writing suggests that there should be a nagging concern regarding privilege in scholarship. Too often the impact or influence of this power position is removed (p. 67). This statement illustrates the main reason to promote an increasingly critical look at the intersections of communication and education. Quite often, it is in the institution that racial power gets reified. Accordingly, Hytten and Warren extend the work of McIntyre (1997) to gain a better understanding of how whiteness influences and informs teaching practices. By focusing more on white power’s related problems, they identify behavior that makes it easier for people to switch back and forth between these identities of inclusion and exclusion. In fact, they conclude with the very praxis and reflexivity that questions whether it is possible to construct critical re-readings of white privilege constructions to “disrupt the foundations upon which cultural power rests” (p. 87)

These four examples of “doing” demonstrate the promise of a paradigmatic movement towards an open and critical system of pedagogical possibility. Such a system will shift from closed scholarly esotericism to an individualized experiential approach; from a bureaucratic social scientific research agenda to one that is responsive to the nuances of student voice; from being prescriptive with our pedagogy and theory to a learner-enabled focus. In “seeking” and “doing,” education becomes more than a right or responsibility, but a commitment.
It is our task as educators to deal with the implications of the “seeking” and “doing” logics to find realistic implications for the real world of students. It has not always been easy to distinguish 1) what makes education congruent with the best interests of the student, 2) what perpetuates the socio-political vested interests of the scholars, and 3) whether these positions are mutually exclusive. However, critical communication pedagogy, as a paradigmatic shift, provides that possibility.

In developing an agenda for an education that steeps itself in a shared language of space and possibility, we must challenge the academy to “seek” and “do” the ideals of the critical pedagogical process, much like an extension of Wartella’s (1994) “Challenge to the Profession” to be more inclusive of public value, as public intellectuals (p. 57). This dissertation will “seek” and “do” the commitments of critical communication pedagogy through the methodology of this dissertation research (Fassett and Warren 2007).

Providing an overview of Fassett and Warren’s (2007) groundbreaking text, there is a call for a shifting in paradigms, much of which was discussed earlier. This shift has several key features that inform the mentality of this dissertation. The first goal, and one that I believe in almost dogmatically, is the need for critical reflection that is done in a communal setting. This can be done amongst colleagues, at conferences, or even with students. I would agree with Fassett and Warren’s contention that there is no sustained or prominent place for critical theory in communication pedagogy in the field (p. 6). Having taken courses and participated on conference panels where these conversations we going to or about to take place, I have witnessed established professors undermine new perspectives; I have seen students’ critical thought stifled in courses by professor wanting to assert their authority or fearing students may surpass them in scholarship; I have seen journal editors disregard perspectives and research because they disagree with the paradigms presented or simply do not know how to read such work. Discussions in
critical communication pedagogy can significantly extend and examine the ways in which we “do” education, think about our discipline, research communication, and most importantly develop a space of critical sustainability for years to come.

Importantly, critical communication pedagogy can help demonstrate how identity is constituted in communication. For critical communication educators, the classroom can be a space to explore how teaching and learning about social justice can affect identity. This shift in thinking about identity is not simply exploring a change in language use, but an opportunity for research to demonstrate a more complex, nuanced understanding of identity. Phenomena that is contextual and emergent from communication, but also commits scholarship to a more complex and nuanced understandings of power, privilege, culture, and responsibility (Fassett and Warren, 2007).

Communication research, consistent with the above mentioned, can show an understanding of power as fluid and complex. Because critical communication educators situate identity as relational, as emergent from (always already ideological) contexts, then they must, by necessity, understand power as similarly so (Fassett and Warren, 2007, p. 41). Critical communication educators bear the responsibility of exploring power and privilege as a facet of culture, not some additive function that makes teaching more interesting.

The text also speaks to the ethnomethodological nature of critical communication educators, in that research and practice should embrace a focus on concrete, mundane communication practices as constitutive of larger social structural systems. As Fassett and Warren (2007) point out, critical communication pedagogy needs, relies, and benefits from research and analysis that begins in the site of our concrete, mundane communication practices, for it is in those moments that the social structure emerges. Further, critical communication educators embrace social, structural critique as it places
concrete, mundane communication practices in a meaningful context. Language (and analysis of language as constitutive of social phenomena) is central to critical communication pedagogy. This means engaging voices that are affected by pedagogy. However, this is also a place for identity development in the reflexivity of voice. Reflexivity becomes an essential condition for critical communication pedagogy to develop— in the locating of the self in research, teaching or learning (Warren and Fassett, 2002). Reflexivity in this sense locates the (re)construction of identities.

Pollner’s (1991) sense of reflexivity is about the process of practice; reflexivity is about locating ourselves in relation to the phenomena we investigate. Like ethnomethodology, critical communication pedagogy is reflexively (re)created in and through our work with others (in our classrooms, our offices, our journals, our families, and our communities). However, aside from Fassett and Warren’s (2007) goals for critical communication pedagogy, they also understand a commitment to bridging research binaries that are more inclusive of curriculum that makes possible a philosophical and theoretical language that recognizes that even if we are to accept the binaries that does not mean we need to negate that which exists in between those poles. The themes in Fassett and Warren will be illuminated in the next section, as well as in chapter three when they are specifically connected to my theoretical frame, ethnomethodology.

**Fulfilling critical communication pedagogy**

The guiding principle of fulfilling critical communication pedagogy is a commitment to a paradigm shift in order to listen to voices of those directly affected by our pedagogical research and classroom designs. The importance of this paradigm shift can be seen in the words of Audre Lorde (1990):
The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all [men and] women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recriminations, lamentations, and suspicion (p. 286).

As Lorde (1990) points out, there is a necessity to reconceptualize our previous ways of seeking and doing, especially if we have evidence that “old definitions” are no longer supported. In the case of student identity research this means listening to voices of students who both anecdotally and empirically express frustration with how their perceptions and expectations of education are treated. What is clear from my dissertation research is that if this kind of paradigm shift is not adopted, then the manner in which we continue to develop our understandings of student identity will continue to leave students expressing their frustrations without an outlet for their voice.

Similarly, Fassett and Warren (2007), like Lorde, are a driving force for this paradigm shift. Tapping into the historical context of Kuhn’s (1962) notion of the paradigm shift, the signs are all around us. For example, the desire for standardization, student disentitlement in the educational process, introduction of more remedial courses, critiques of student’s critical thinking abilities, questions regarding student performance, accountability, what constitutes accomplishment, teaching standards, the role of voice, agency, and power all serve as catalysts for this paradigm shift. Change is difficult. Scholars resist change; however, the process was set in motion long ago and we will continue to co-create our field of study. Kuhn (1962) writes, “awareness is prerequisite to all acceptable changes of theory” (p. 67). What we perceive, whether reflexive, conscious
or unconscious, is subject to the limitations and distortions produced by our inherited and socially conditional nature.

By looking at the work of scholars who are calling for a more direct representational paradigm of critical pedagogy within the walls of instructional communication, as well as those scholars without a name for the work they have been doing, we will find the pedagogical tools and methods to construct a more critical educational environment in critical communication pedagogy. Nonetheless, we will continue to encounter resistance by contemporaries to the ideas of developing a more nuanced and critical education, simply looking at the disparities at the intersection of communication and education that discourage students who occupy this space from entertaining practical notions of critical expectations, praxis, and reflexivity (Fassett and Warren, 2007). In other words, much current scholarship curtails discipline-wide attempts at critical thinking or building a discipline specific pedagogy that takes seriously the power of communication. To fulfill my intentions of “doing” and “fulfilling” critical communication pedagogy, I spent time learning from students how to possibly represent them in a curriculum that focuses on the connections between voice, agency, power, and relevance. This supports the current research that seeks to change how we do education, schooling, or Postman and Weingartner’s (1969) concern that, “Kids go into schools as question marks and come out as periods.” I believe that critical communication pedagogy has the power to do this because of its commitment to student identity. It is why my work (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007a, 2007b, 2007c), including this dissertation, seeks to fulfill critical communication pedagogy’s call.

**Preparing for the import/export process: Critical communication pedagogy**

Within the realm of critical communication pedagogy, educators, their perspectives, and their practices have developed significantly over the past few decades,
even without a paradigm. It would be erroneous to claim that critical educators and their pedagogical practices are given equal representation by colleagues (students, teachers, and administrators), or even to suggest that critical practices are regarded without suspicion (hooks, 1994, 2003). It is possible to contend that consciousness of the possibilities of critical communication pedagogy is certainly higher now than ever before. Scholars can look to emerging conference themes, journal articles, new texts, new courses, and the begrudging general shifts in the canonical language. This does not suggest that there is any one vision of what critical communication pedagogy might look like; this is because the vision of such pedagogy is one that allows and encourages clashing dialogues to take place. Further, the diversity in views gives light to certain points of commonality between those searching for their voice in this growing area.

Paramount amongst the many concerns of critically-conscious educators is a desire to reflect in their practice, their own theoretical perspectives, while not forcing those perspectives on students. These critical educators avoid acting maternally or treating education as though they are gardeners providing nutrients to a garden. Education in its critical form promotes an understanding of the student as knowledgeable, as an individual who comes to the class with experiences that can enlighten both the class and the teacher. The students’ experiences and the teacher’s experience commingle, changing the traditional nature of the teacher role from “the one who teaches” to “one who is taught in dialogue with the students” (Freire, 1970).

Teaching with critical communication pedagogy underpinnings can be thought of as a process whereby particular understandings about identity politics can influence the design and delivery of an educational program. This framing of education creates critically conscious classrooms that work to create a more socially just society. In Freire’s (1999) terms, this is a praxial process that rests on “rethinking, reflecting and re-
writing” (p. 66). Praxis is neither effortless nor unproblematic and many sincere attempts at curriculum reform have left scholars boggled as to the effects of reflexivity. I would argue that the ambiguity stems from the limited number of scholars publishing critical work in our journals that recognize the intricacy of issues concerning oppression, and resistance, and our larger failure to share this complicated web with our students. Even fewer scholars address student voice from the student perspective.

Ethnomethodologically, Fassett’s (2003) article “On Defining At-Risk: The Role of Educational Ritual in Constructions of Success and Failure, is the only one that explicitly explores the critical relationship between students’ sense-making accomplishments and institutional constructions. That being the case, our limited scholarship and direct research in these areas have given students reasons to doubt, question, and resist our best intentions.

This lack of literature is only one of my reasons for working with student participants. Another is the seemingly additive approach to critical pedagogy discussion that has been taking place at our regional (e.g. WSCA, CSCA) and national (e.g. NCA) conferences. For example, one panel I attended attempted to develop a critical feminist pedagogy that included texts by Briskin (2000) and Gillbert (2000). The discussion unfolded to simply “add women texts” into existing curriculum or to “liberate by fiat,” but also to engage in inclusionary discourse that acknowledges the importance of long-term, systematic interruptions of dominant masculine discourses. This is a highly problematic approach as Fassett (2003) discusses, because students who perceived a mere “additive” approach were led to “resist” being either “empowered” or “enlightened.”

Therefore, my desire to export critical pedagogy’s abstract perspectives to an overt and consciously tangible classroom environment makes a move toward the development of reconstituting a primary issue of how students frame communication
education and their ownership over their education. This invariably addresses the instructors’ role in developing a space and possibility where students and instructors ask and respond to questions about what counts as knowledge. For student voice, this is about understanding who can and should speak with authority, and about whose voices are heard in the content and processes of a “critical” classroom and how participation in this particular space can/could/should be assessed given the historical distrust between teachers and students. My direct advance toward the critical communication pedagogy paradigm has emerged out of my interest in pedagogical theory and is based on my acceptance of the following:

- Educational activity should be designed for relevance. This means that I attempt to see how communication and other general education spheres exist as occurrences within a wider cultural context. I can offer opportunities where all are learners.
- Education involves a process whereby the teacher and student interact to negotiate meaning. I can demonstrate a love of learning with expectations.
- Issues of power surround educational practice: Given Foucault’s (1980) notions of power and knowledge, it would be short-sighted to think that our role as an instructor is a passive one. Instructors hold power as assumed knowledge bringers, just as much, if not more than, students as knowledge bringers to the classroom. The link between Foucault and pedagogical tools like feminism is that the power of identity/agency is intrinsically linked to the development of knowledge, which is dictated by the architecture or foundations of that agency. This means that educators cannot “empower” their students; that students must be supported as they develop their own understandings of how to use that agency.
• Epistemological foundations of pedagogy are historically gendered, raced, sexed, and really complicated. This involves much more than discovering and critiquing the central roles accorded to mainstream pedagogical practices. Instead, it involves critiquing the assumptions of pedagogy and discourses that serve to support these practices as mainstream.

• Finally, transformative practices do not occur through sheer force. This means that I must be prepared to recognize the long-term nature of the texts and course themes I develop; to engage in guiding the abstract with practices that transform classroom moments into collaborative educational experiences. Working towards what Thich Nhat Hanh says: “in true dialogue, both sides are willing to change. We have to appreciate that truth can be received from outside of—not only within—our own group…by engaging in dialogue with another person, we have the possibility of making a change within ourselves, that we can become deeper.”

These points guide the design of this dissertation to promote and import critical pedagogical practices that encourage critical consciousness. It is also how I strive to fulfill and export critical communication pedagogy into the larger education process.
CHAPTER THREE

Method: Driving hints, tips, and a rationale for exploring identity

Why research regarding educational identity is necessary: Rationale for the study

Over the last six years, I have done my share of driving and navigating my identity through the landscape of critical communication pedagogy. During that time, while writing this dissertation and reading the road maps of literature, I have begun to wonder what is an educational identity really supposed to engender?

The question above regarding identity has been popping into my head for years. Although the question came to a point of clarity, becoming both tangible and poignant, when I was filling out a rental car form. I was on my way to a conference where I would present some of my more recent thoughts on educational identity. Specifically, how I have come to understand education as an appropriation and negotiation of language, containing underlying philosophical and ethical questions that allow for the exploring or claiming of an identity. That is, I have become concerned with how issues regarding students are addressed in education through scholarly debate; topics have included students’ common tasks, social distractions, and chances taken by students in the development of a sense of self.

Beginning from the premise above, I construct a rationale within this chapter for exploring identity by examining two questions: 1) What problems underlie how student identity has been theorized? 2) How can scholarship (using methods like ethnomethodology) adequately address student identity and bring scholarship closer to understanding the complexities of students’ identity in relationship to education? Education—understood through these questions—requires teaching toward a sense of
critical literacy, questioning how to consider identity as a constitutive culmination of social actions. This type of education, from the students perspective is about how one’s identity is situated within a pedagogical and political framework, an endeavor addressed in critical communication pedagogy.

While education often gets highlighted for what is not being accomplished, I appreciate critical communication pedagogy at its core, for its focus on what can be accomplished. I tend to view the classroom as a place of hope, where students and I can gain glimpses of what kind of society we can live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills needed to make it a reality. Fassett and Warren (2007) argue through a series of ten commitments (discussed in chapter two) that by constructing a pedagogical reality where identity can be discussed, students and teachers share their identities in relation to educational contexts and the lessons being used to understand those contexts. From this relational perspective, students develop an understanding of theoretical and practical knowledge in which they ground themselves. Hence education builds worlds and also constructs identities. This is both a visionary and practical way to view education. Visionary because I, as a researcher, can listen and incorporate a variety of perspectives on schooling, including student’s voices. Students in turn, while listening to each other, are inspired by each other’s vision of schooling. This is practical because as the students discussed, for too long they have felt that teachers have been preaching at them through theory that is removed from the classroom. The literature that claims to speak from the classroom, in reality is long on jargon and short on empirical student evidence (a topic of further discussion in chapter four).

For my identity research to be effective, I learned from participants that the way education, as it is currently conceived, treats identity development may not only cause one to lose one’s sense of self, but also one’s familiar social network. At its simplest
level, the traditional values of an educational identity for students can be lost and social affiliations questioned. At the same time, the daily probability increases of encountering, living, or working next to people from other cultures and differing ideals. The encounter with strangers and the blurring of social bonds affects the social identity of individuals and groups. Disintegration accompanied by the loss of individual and social identity in schooling or in the individual describes a generative theme of why it is necessary to research facets of identity through a contextual exploration of education.

Researching student identity, in this context, is not only about understanding how to develop a critical reading of the world, but also to understand the process students may use to become citizens and utilize their voices outside the confines of the educational setting. As I research the possibilities of student voice, I plan to take notice of how students produce their voices, how critical communication pedagogy speaks to this process, and the different choices scholars might make in their research and teaching. We may notice opportunities—ruptures—where we might, as Butler (1989) says, “repeat the regulatory norm, re-signify and re-articulate possibilities” for classroom and student development.

**Road hazards: Problems of theorizing identity in literature**

Throughout my graduate career, I have often felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of paths in literature that I could travel as a student to understand educational theorizing. Sometimes these paths converge, at times historical nuances become apparent, and other times the paths miss each other completely. To cope with my personal challenges with academic theorizing, during my time in graduate school I have learned that one technique is to drive really fast so that your wheels sail over the ditches and gaps. This technique is a kind of denial, because the problems in literature still exist. However, if you actually want to inform other drivers, tourists, travelers, or explorers
about the impending literature road hazards, then you need to stop the vehicle and use methods that will allow you to peer into the ditches and gaps. As I began to peer into the gaps of identity literature, it became clear that an undertheorizing of such literature was taking place.

The undertheorization of identity in literature, I do not believe, has been deliberate. I say this because the promise for such research can offer significant improvements to the theoretical foundations of communication education and instructional communication. However, even with the focus on issues such as power in the classroom, immediacy, teacher/student motivation, and the consideration of student identity, the majority of research still does not address how the multiple identities of students are negotiated on a daily basis (Hendrix, Jackson, and Warren, 2003, p. 177). Further, the literature that includes student voice perspectives (Rosenfeld, 1993; Davidson, 1996; Clark 1999; Ayres, 2000; Galvin, 2001) makes assumptions about identity or simply questions what student identity is. Such works rarely considers the conditions of identity or the perceptions and expectations that inform identity, much less the students’ own dialogue as evidence.

The consideration of identity in relationship to the intersection of communication and critical pedagogy is not new; Hendrix, Jackson II, and Warren’s (2003) article, “Critical Progressive Pedagogy” asked scholars to consider “if [student] cultural identities matter when developing our best teaching practices” (p. 179). Arguing this point, Don Rubin (2003) underscored the importance of such work by writing that “social identities are negotiated in interaction, and instructional settings are key sites for such identity performances” (p. xi). Livingstone and Sawchuck (2000) note that it is more critical “to understand people [students] as embodied, active subjects exercising reflective and interpretive agency” (p. 132). This means considering students as having
the ability to consider, reflect, and interpret the communicative and constitutive elements of their actions toward their identity development. Even in recognizing the importance of understanding student identity in communication education research, Hendrix, Jackson II, and Warren (2003) grant the issue of undertheorization within their own research regarding identity. They write “our research only occasionally takes into account the complexities of the classroom” (p. 188). If we are to adequately address the problems, constraints, and pedagogical tasks related to communication education and instructional communication, then I believe student identity does matter.

Too often, for the sake of simplicity, Hendrix, Jackson II, and Warren (2003) write that researchers give attention only to the most salient student identities in regards to communication education and instructional communication issues (p. 185). The problem with this type of focus is that identities are then treated as “ontologically pure” (Shapiro, 2000). I believe that it is fairly safe to argue that students’ identities are complex, emergent, and relational to each other and to education. I believe that in order to accurately understand student identity in relationship to the variety of issues researched by communication education and instructional communication, it is more accurate to propose research that accounts for students’ actions as an accomplishment of their identities. While speaking on the critical communication pedagogy paradigm, Fassett and Warren (2007) suggest that we might ethnomethodologically analyze the experiences and voices of students to better understand the fluid and complex nature of their identity.

In this dissertation, I address the issues surrounding undertheorization by considering and utilizing a critical perspective to investigate student identity that includes students; therefore I propose to analyze student voice through student voice. Using ethnomethodology, I can look at the “doing of student” as a type of accomplishment, an identity created through language and action. By studying students’ use and response to
students’ perceptions and expectations, I can better understand identity through mundane and commonplace interactions. These interactions, further studied through an ethnomethodological lens prefaced in critical communication pedagogy, offer access to students’ accounts and accomplishments of their daily communication of “doing student.”

I suggest that using an ethnomethodological approach to research voice, as an indexical and reflexive accomplishment, can be useful in accounting for student identity. In light of the critical communication pedagogy paradigm shift to account for identity development, access is provided in this methodological approach to a related process that favors a focus on the critical through participants’ voices. It should be noted that “voice” in this context is when research participants speak for themselves, are empowered to find their voices, and are encouraged to express their own “voice” in communication rather than one mediated through scholarship.

**Ethnomethodology as an approach**

**Traffic signs: Identity as constitutive phenomena**

In order to understand how ethnomethodology will be used as a lens for data analysis, the following is a short summary of my view of what ethnomethodological theory is as an approach to humanistic research in Communication Studies.

Garfinkel (1967) writes that the term ethnomethodology, “refers to the investigation of practical activities, practical circumstances, and practical sociological reasoning as topics of empirical study, and by paying close attention to the most commonplace activities of daily life usually accorded to extraordinary events” (p. 2). Studies that employ Garfinkel’s concept of ethnomethodology argue that everyday social phenomena should be studied as meaningful phenomena and, as a common goal with
critical pedagogy, seek participatory understanding of the accomplished social actions. In short, ethnomethodology’s philosophical position seeks to understand accomplishment by exploring the rationalizations of how individuals socially construct their worlds. In ethnomethodology, the purpose of focusing on “the how” is that the process of accomplishment inherently informs how individuals rationalize their actions throughout the practical activities in their daily lives.

Regarding students, researchers could look at the most general activities of students’ daily lives (understanding how students demonstrate and recreate through action that they are students). To do so means asking students questions such as “how do you conceptualize your role as a student?;” how you determine a “good” or “bad” student?;” and “what sort of expectations do you have when in your student role?” Garfinkel (1967), in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* refers to ethnomethodology as an investigative technique to understand the rational properties of identity roles; this includes the behaviors or utterances whose meaning varies according to context. The perceptions, expectations, expressions, communication techniques, and other practical actions all can demonstrate how students accomplish their role. Garfinkel argues that organized accomplishments are the ways people live life or the ethnomethods of doing one’s daily actions (p. 11).

This differs from other sociological or communicative perspectives in one very important respect. Although we seek (in communication research) a larger sense of functionality, much of the scholarship and beyond what was discussed in the literature review, treats the social world as essentially orderly. In other words, we assume that patterns of behavior and communicative interaction in society are usually regular and systematic, rather than random and chaotic. Of course, there are a variety of ways to explain social order or communication styles in different contexts. However,
communication research tends to regard social labeling (problematic or accepted) as the outcome of value consensus in society. This methodologically ensures that behavior conforms to generally accepted norms. This is a point of contention for ethnomethodology.

Ethnomethodologists start out with the assumption that pre-given social order is illusory, based on a perception and expectation for what “normal” should be. For critical communication scholars, research can show that social order is constructed in the minds and deeds of social actors. In theory, society confronts the individual with a series of impressions and experiences that she or he must somehow organize into a coherent pattern or way of “doing” (Boden and Zimmerman, 1991). By analyzing the social world through social principles, research can evaluate language to determine people’s rationality, or in this study’s case, students’ rationality for accomplishment of student. An example of this ethnomethodological rationality in communication can be seen in the concept of the logical argument. A logical argument is sometimes described as “rational” if the argument is logically valid. However, rationality is a much broader term than logic because rationality includes uncertain but sensible arguments based on probability, expectation, personal experience and the like. Whereas, logic deals principally with provable facts and demonstrably valid relations between them. Another example to consider is that ad hominem arguments are logically unsound, but in many cases they may be considered rational to people if generally accepted by members of groups. Ethnomethodology argues that rationality and logic are constituted in interaction through members’ daily actions.

There are a few safety tips or claims I would make of using an ethnomethodological approach that also inform the interrelated features of ethnomethodology. Building from Garfinkiel (1967), Coulter (1973) writes that the
ethnomethodological approach tries to understand how people see, describe, and jointly develop definitions for a variety of sociological phenomena, communication in particular. In relationship to the jointly developed social world, Baldwin (1921) writes:

All our thought has led us to see that one of the historical conceptions of [wo]man is, in its social aspects, mistaken. [Wo]man is not a person who stands up in [her]/his isolated majesty, meanness, passion, or humility, and sees, hits, worships, fights, or overcomes, another [wo]man, who does the opposite things to [her]/him, each preserving [her]/his isolated majesty, meanness, passion, humility, all the while, so that [s]he can be considered a “unit” for the compounding processes of social speculation. On the contrary, a [wo]man is a social outcome rather than a social unit. [S]he is always, in [her]/his greatest part, also someone else. Social acts of [her]/his—that is, acts which may not prove antisocial—are [her]/his because they are society's first; otherwise [s]he could not have learned them or have had any tendency to do them. Everything that [s]he learns is copied, reproduced, assimilated, from [her]/his fellows; and what all of them, including [her]/him -- all the social fellows -- do and think, they do and think because they have each been through the same course of copying, reproducing, assimilating.

(PP. 96-97)

In relationship to understanding how students accomplish “being students,” Baldwin explains that there are conceptions of being a student that are historically reified and also are based on desires, particularly in its social aspects. I argue that students in this study do not act so that they can be considered uncritical or something that can be placed
into a predictable educational category. On the contrary, being a student is to be part of a culmination of actions rather than presented categories. Students, recognize that most of what they learn is copied, reproduced, and/or assimilated from other students and edicts of academic institutions. These students do and think because they are experts at the ethnomethods of student identity—copying, reproducing, and/or assimilating embodied and learned patterns. There are three primary reasons why an ethnomethodological lens is ideal to understanding the process used by students to conceptualize their identities: accountability, focus on the how as opposed to the why, respecification as a tool for understanding, and a development of generalizability.

**Using ethnomethodology: Accountability**

The conception of accountability becomes a conscious point of view for the contemporary notion of student. A key idea to understanding ethnomethodology is that students jointly develop their understanding of student and hold each other accountable for accomplishments and failures. Ethnomethodology expresses the contrast between the view of social actors with individualistic accomplishments and the contemporary view with its emphasis on the group. The importance of this change in point of view suggests a research approach that brings to light how society gradually builds its definitions. Only more recent conversations posed by scholars like Fassett and Warren (2007), can account for the present state of how students conceptualize their role or even how students accomplish the “doing” of student. This study explores this trend, while building off earlier research, of those who were seeking, doing, and now are claiming critical communication pedagogy.
Using ethnomethodology: Focus on the how as opposed to the why

Another ethnomethodological tip focuses on identifying the totality of experience; this relies on writing about the how as opposed to the why. The totality of experience is important in order to strike a balance between the objectivism of the student’s movements and the subjectivism of the researcher’s interpretation of those movements. As Schutz (1962) pointed out, the social world is a world of daily life, as lived by people with no theoretical interest. For students, this social world is a world of routines (ways of “doing student”) that for the most part are accomplished mechanically (i.e. going to class, taking tests, taking notes, studying, teacher-student relationships, complaining about classes to others). Students do not have identical experiences, but they identify similar experiences that in turn seem as though their experiences in social context are repeated. As such, they act as though there is an accomplished parallel. I wonder, though, what are these perceived parallels? How do students develop their sense of being a student? What goes into considering an accomplishment of being a student? By studying the how—that is, how students do studenting— we can better understand how social order is accomplished in our communication practices.

Using ethnomethodology: Respecification as a tool for understanding

This leads to another safety tip for navigating; an ethnomethodological approach for communication research purposes is about the respecification of social contexts. Ethnomethodology cannot be used to solve problems “constructively,” because ethnomethodology as Button (1991) puts it would constantly address the relationship between the social construction of [the problem] and the problem. Ethnomethodology becomes an enhancement tool for my dissertation because in the how of the data, I will look not to solve problems for students, but to consider through student’s voices how education and pedagogy can provide context for students to articulate their identities. I
encouraged students to consider how they are students, rather than the manner in which institutional standards react to them. Thus, looking at what Button calls “respecification” of how student voice is utilized, we can reevaluate our pedagogical social action in negotiation with social order. This means considering what we may fail to listen to when students use their voice (or put another way, it means considering developing a pedagogy that is specific to the discipline and more importantly in conjunction with students).

**Using ethnomethodology: Development of generalizability**

The final claim I make regarding the ethnomethodological approach is that it allows for a greater sense of universality or generalizability (macro-communication) through the interpretive work of students in everyday situations (micro-communication). Zimmerman (1978) addresses ethnomethodology’s research properties in that the properties of social life, which seem objective, factual, and transsituational (such as communication), are actually managed accomplishments (p. 11). In other words, “objective” and “factual” properties of social life acquire their status and ability for generalizability through the situated conduct of societal members. The goal for the ethnomethodological approach is to get a greater sense of how “objective” properties of social life are achieved (Fenstemaker and West, 2002). Here, genrealizability is contextual and produced in members’ actions. The approach is realized through the following definitions of indexicality, reflexivity, the notion of member, and accomplishment, all of which focus attention on language use through an actor’s actions.

**Understanding ethnomethodology’s analytical components**

**Indexicality**

Indexicality is simply the means that people use to make sense of a remark, sign, or particular action by reference to the context in which it occurs; that is, people index
communication through particular circumstances (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970, p. 339). In ethnomethodology, social life is constituted through language. Indexical expressions are those expressions that draw their meanings from their context. In this central concept, the work of ethnomethodologists’ focuses on the sense we make of a particular situation or activity. Given that communication is a product of our personal biographies (the experiences and expectations we bring to a situation), it is the contingent elements of the situation that create the communicative moment (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970). An example of educational indexicality lies in the metaphor for writing; drafting a paper “means” one thing to the undergraduate, another to the graduate student, and still another to the article-writing professor.

Through indexicality, we derive meaning, through reflection of the utterances, gestures, rules, and actions, which on their own seem meaningless, but when performed together make sense. The ethnomethodologist understands how to express the ongoing (re)construction of meaning and the sense of continuity that we maintain in our interpretive work. Once defined, a situation or person “becomes,” in our understanding, the “thing” we have defined. And the “objective reality” of that person or situation becomes an indexical feature of our next interaction and interpretive process.

For student identity, indexicality is the beginning of an account of the particular expressions whose meanings depend essentially on some sort of explicit or implicit position within common language. Therefore, some contribution by the student is necessary to understand the indexical expressions that give rise to their sense of accomplishment. Garfinkel (1967), in fact, speaks explicitly of “occasional expressions;” that is, of expressions like “this” and “that” whose meanings depend on features of the occasion of use. It is possible to gauge the full implications of these remarks, these indexical or occasional meanings, only if they are read in context with other expressions.
Moreover, Garfinkel’s acknowledgement for generalizability is in the indications for understanding perceptions and expectations. Like everything else in ethnomethodology, this study seeks to look toward the data to better understand student meaning and the structure for how student voice can be used in actualizing critical communication pedagogy.

**Reflexivity**

Although ethnomethodological studies address the accomplished nature of ordinary activities, it is through reflexivity that we can better understand the expressions within activities that serve to understand members’ production and management of meaning. Reflexivity, according to Pollner (1991), reflects upon how what members do in, to, and about social reality that constitutes that social reality. Thus, language and action are not merely responses to reality, but contribute to its constitution (p. 372).

For ethnomethodological research, there are two types of reflexivity that make an effort to make the world “seeable sayable:” personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity (Wieder, 1974). “Personal reflexivity” involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, and accomplishments shape our social construction of life and how this is treated at the intersection of “we” that have shaped the research “we” do. It also involves thinking about how commonplace knowledge may have affected and possibly changed us. “Epistemological reflexivity,” on the other hand, requires us to engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be “found?” How has the design of the study and the method of analysis “constructed” the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the communication phenomenon under investigation? Thus, epistemological reflexivity encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the
world, about knowledge) that will be made in the course of the research. Further, it helps to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings.

As a whole, reflexivity expresses that paradoxical characteristic of human existence whereby objects only exist in relationship to the interpretive meaning that they have for the people who behold them. In other words, interactions are never independent of the way in which they are institutionally constructed and expressed. Wieder (1974) writes that there is no pure objectivity, or for that matter pure subjectivity, everything is in relationship to everything else. By the very principles of indexicality, a researcher understands interpretations of another to be bound by the social and material context in which it is related.

This spiral of indexicality and reflexivity is the central interpretive process through which communication labels are produced and applied. It is also through this process that individuals are “understood” to be communicating, as well as, to see themselves clearly. The key component here is that we typically fail to see, or at least see and then forget that it is through our “work” that reality is constructed. It takes on a natural, taken-for-granted character.

Garfinkel (1967) notes that situations tend to offer insights to their reflexivity after decision have been made. His research cites one such example as the media’s interest in juror deliberations. Jurors commonly provide retrospective justifications for decisions, which they have already made. Through media help, they look backward in producing a quasi-legal rereading of the available evidence after having already decided upon a person’s guilt or innocence. They reorder their understandings so as to suggest that “fair deliberations” were guided by the same logic from the beginning--logic that was realized, in actuality, after the fact.
For this dissertation, students’ constant narration of their actions based on an after-the-fact rereading of their actions conveys much more coherent stories of their actions as students than they do in the moment itself—I’ll examine these construction/reconstructions in order to understand how decisions or definitions appear to be normal, natural, and “real.”

Butler (1997), using performativity, similar to ethnomethodology, discusses two cognitive rules that people use in organizing information to construct social reality: rules of consistency and rules of economy. The former suggests that once people have categorized events and persons, they organize past information and future perceptions consistently with these categories. For example, the “at risk” student may be tracked into a less rigorous academic schedule. Once a student is labeled “at risk,” teachers tend to search for and remember confirming cues. They may note the “at risk” status, lower participation, higher truancy, style of dress, personal habits—all of which would have been ignored and organized differently if they had not initially categorized the person as “at risk.” The economy rule, on the other hand, refers to a tendency to “lock in” categories. That is, once a general category is selected for interpreting a situation, people tend not to reorganize situational cues to test the application of alternative categories. Once labeled “at risk,” institutional norms are put in place to maintain said label (Fassett, 2003).

As a special case of this cognitive process, ethnomethodologists have been particularly interested in retrospective interpretation—a cognitive process whereby a person’s past behavior is reinterpreted on the basis of present typifications. Events or student patterns that were once disjointed or independently considered as meaningless take on a new significance. Goffman’s (1981) earlier work provides a relevant connection between Butler (1997, 1993, 1990, 1989) and ethnomethodology in his discussion of the
importance of understanding the process of retrospective interpretation. His larger argument is that typification is part of the “moral career” of those defined by difference (p. 148). The subjective understandings generated through current experiences allow for “turning points” during which the stigmatized individual may single out and retrospectively elaborate experiences. This serves as an account for coming to the beliefs and practices of perceived normalcy (p.149).

Again, out of the spiral of indexicality and reflexivity a sense of structure emerges as a practical accomplishment of everyday interpretive processes, confirming and elaborating changing identities. A need exists (subjectively for the individuals involved (i.e., students and teachers) and objectively for the institution) for new ways to document these emerging and unaccounted identities and voices.

Notion of member

Another element of concern in this review of ethnomethodology as an approach to humanistic research in Communication Studies is notion of member. This concept describes how a member is one who knows and does one’s self so fluidly that he or she are seen as belonging.

In ethnomethodology, observations are treated as expressions of underlying patterns or structures. According to Garfinkel (1967):

Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of ‘what is known’ about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other (p. 78).

People use notion of member to make sense of other people and how one forms a sense of place and a feel for the group. These are the ethnographic experiences that offer
the thick and rich detail, the micro-communicative moments that allow for greater sense of connectivity because of their generalizability or ability to relate to what has been observed. As Warren (2003) puts it in relation to performativity, we take bits and pieces of information, those presented informally in interaction and those that are a part of the “official record,” and construct a reasonable account of the individual that then seems to confirm our “reading” of the documents.

Regarding notion of member in relationship to sexual identity, Warren and Zoffel (2006) argue that in attributing intentions to others, people are sensitive to whether their actions seem to be caused by external forces (social pressures, group norms, or accidents). If external forces are not apparent, people tend to attribute acts to choice and to impart motives, dispositions, and intentions of the self (the way they should act). Ethnomethodologically, members are people who embody the ethno-methods of a particular group, or can “naturally” exhibit the social competence to be recognized and accepted. Ethnomethodologically, I am seeking to find the production of meaning in education, considering how students produce membership through their daily actions in ways that make them accountable to others.

Accomplishment

I was sitting in an ethnomethodology course questioning what exactly is the focus of ethnomethodology. The professor pointed out that this research lens provides the metaphorical stop sign that forces one to stop and to understand that communication is not a one-sided process typically inferred by observed/observer research. People do not always readily succumb to the process of being identified through categorization. The construction of identity often involves negotiation and bargaining. Often behavior is “normalized,” explained away as something that just is. Information is selectively interpreted; justifications are presented and evaluated. This is what makes the interaction
of ethnomethodology unique, the focus on the how, as opposed to the why, to arrive at identity as a communicative accomplishment.

Accomplishments, according to Garfinkel (1967), are the indexical expressions [taken-for-granted aspects of life] that emphasize identity under certain situations. While not ethnomethodologists, examples of ethnomethodological accomplishment are illustrated by the works of deCerteau (1974) in the use of language, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) discussions of metaphor, and Martin, Nakayama, Krizek and Bradford (1996) studies into the constitution of whiteness. This scholarship is extended by Fassett and Warren (2007) in their development for accomplished critical communication pedagogy. By pointing out that the accomplishment of language is used in the construction of social reality and control, individuals shape such control by their need for power, general hierarchies, efficiency, perpetuation of identity, and member accountability. This requires the perception of a stable and simple categorical system by which the complex world can be described.

In cases of identity, the process of negotiation is somewhat strained. The fixed categories and interests of an individual’s decision-making process and the degree to which power is constituted cause events and behaviors that might otherwise appear quite normal to be viewed through indexical and reflexive constructions that confirm the behavior or person’s identity in question. Once confirmed or conformed within a certain type, the action of the control agent toward an “outsider” is determined by the prescribed routines of social control (e.g., lack of critical pedagogues in communication education). Communication scholars who use ethnomethodology, such as myself (2006, 2007a) and Fassett, (2003), do not view the accounts of education provided by communication researchers as information on the reality of educational behavior, but rather as indicators and reflections of paradigmatic properties and routines of power.
Fassett’s (2003) work provides a utility for ethnomethodological communication research in the way she recognizes that participants in research may not understand the polarizations of the social world or how participants accomplish their membership in groups. However, through focus groups, she clearly demonstrates the strained process of negotiation. Her work with student voices in relationship to success and failure shows that a paradigm’s fixed categories and interests can influence a student’s decision-making process and how power is constituted. What makes her work unique in communication, even with its focus on education, is her claim that when researchers conduct studies, the work is not discussing “inevitable facts or natural givens, but rather the residue of individual attitudes and assumptions regarding the value and purpose” (p. 76). This suggests that events and behaviors that might otherwise appear quite normal actually provided the result of communication.

**Summary: Ethnomethodology and communication**

Ethnomethodology is usually thought of as a method to identify a systematic set of ideas and statements about the social world, while aiming to make sense of the social world. To be communicatively useful, these ideas and statements should be able to stand up to empirical observation and testing within the social world. If an approach is to be useful in the social world, it should also provide some conclusions that help us to understand or explain the (re)making of the social world. Thus, as Fenstermaker and West (2002) point out, we must be concerned with the mechanisms that sustain the institutional and social world. The approach should also be able to guide in the making of predictions that can be used to form sound observations concerning the social world. As such, ethnomethodology can help to improve the nature of understanding the everyday expressions of our social world. It helps communication by placing interactions in this kind of meaningful context.
Fassett and Warren (2007) and Fenstermaker and West (2002) make direct calls for the use of ethnomethodology to aid in the understanding of how human identity is accomplished. Given that ethnomethodologists study situated properties and components that make up identity conscription, it only makes sense to study the ways identity is developed through its mundane activity (i.e. communication). As discussed earlier, because identity is made possible through repetitious and performative communication acts and because of its relationship to critical communication pedagogy, an ethnomethodological orientation to this dissertation will allow the cultural data told by the participants to be treated as something that is constitutive, not additive.

Ultimately, the goal of critical communication pedagogy is to contribute progressively and proactively to the transformation of society and to the maintenance of social justice and equity within/through the communication discipline. It stands to reason that the transformation of schools will lead to students who will transform society. In fact, it is particularly this framing of the dominant mentality that critical communication pedagogy aims to challenge, shake, expose, and critique. For this precise reason, ethnomethodology should be employed to allow students to discuss their assessments of practical accomplishments, which give sense to and accomplish their daily actions (i.e., communicating, decision-making, and reasoning).

Critical communication pedagogy challenges scholars to ask the unaskable questions. Ethnomethodology provides a lens to explore and deconstruct structures of power and privilege that serve to maintain the status quo. In a sense, critical communication pedagogy uses the transformation of self and school as a metaphor and starting place for the transformation of society. This acknowledgement of our own complicity in the relationship between power and voice can be a starting point for alternative, critical practices. Fassett and Warren (2007) suggest that we might
ethnomethodologically analyze experiences and voices by making our reading and writing practices the object of our commitment to pedagogy. This would involve critiquing our pedagogical practices and looking toward alternative voices. This would also involve explicating how we frame and discuss texts in classrooms, how we view agency, and how we invite students to engage in those conversations.

As I was researching the possibilities of student voice, I took particular notice of how students co-produce their voices. Changing students’ belief that education can be a homogenous, externally produced process, sold ready-made for their consumption, directly lies in our ability and inability to produce critical pedagogy. Listening to my participants wants me to challenge my comfort zones. I want to take notice of opportunities—ruptures—where we might, as Butler (1989) says, “repeat the regulatory norm, re-signify and re-articulate possibilities” for classroom and student development.

**Gathering data: Focus groups**

**Methodological commitments to a process: Critical communication pedagogy and focus group participants**

The theoretical goal of critical communication pedagogy is the constitution of a humanizing vocation within education; it is about the voices of the students. Therefore, I plan to extend Fassett and Warren’s (2007) conceptualization of critical communication pedagogy to include the establishment of a nuanced, personal sense of self that is distinct in its attempts to identify or construct a space to engage in dialogue and practices. I will seek and understand how people see, describe, negotiate, and experience education and ways of knowing. In particular, I plan to explore various instructional settings that may offer perspectives that have gone unaddressed by the current literature. Also, I plan to provide teachers with a study of those alternative perspectives and voices that are not
typically recorded. As a teacher, I seek to provide a supportive environment in which
groups of students can “explore” their perceptions and expectations. It is precisely to
these tasks that Fassett and Warren (2007) speak of when describing the importance of
agency, voice, and identity in pedagogical development and research.

The core question of this dissertation is: how do students accomplish the “doing”
of student? This question, and the forthcoming answers in chapters four and five, can
help teachers better engage students in dialogue that questions existing knowledge and
problematises the traditional power relations that have served to marginalize identity. For
the scholarship of critical communication pedagogy, this means understanding how
student identity is perceived and expressed through student lenses of power, privilege,
culture, and accountability. I believe that this fundamentally means that my instructional
communication and communication education research must make a commitment to
study and analyze in such a way that will illuminate mechanisms of power’s production
at the point of its experience upon students (Nainby, Warren, and Bollinger, 2003;
Stewart, 1995). To demonstrate this point, I analyze student identity development within
critical communication pedagogy’s paradigm, conducting ethnomethodologically aimed
focus groups that explored students’ perceptions and expectations of their education
experiences.

Focus groups: Working with the travelers, tourists, and explorers

Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalize on communication
between research participants in order to generate data (Merton, Fiske, and Kendall,
1956). This makes a convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously;
it also explicitly used group interactions as part of the method, allowing participants to
build meaning together. This means that instead of needing to ask each person to respond
to a question in turn, participants, students in this case, are encouraged to talk to one
another: asking questions, exchanging stories, and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view (Bell, 2003). I began in the development of the focus group questions after, like Fassett and Warren’s (2007) first commitment in critical communication pedagogy, I began to recognize that students engage in the practice of constituting their identity in their communication. The coupling of the method and commitment was particularly useful for exploring students’ knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what they think, but also how they think and why they think that way.

The general idea behind my use of the focus group method was to engage in a group processes could help student participants explore and clarify their views in ways that would offer rich data. Group discussions were particularly appropriate given that my research seeks to better understand how students’ interactions play into the community cultivation of a student identity, more specifically the perceptions and expectations that inform that identity. Through the attached preliminary open-ended questions (Appendix B), I wanted to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions, and pursuing their own priorities. When group dynamics work well, the participants generally will work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions. In this regard, I considered that as a practitioner of critical communication pedagogy, the power of participants’ discourse would show identity as being a fluid and complex accomplishment.

This group work helped me navigate the many different forms of communication that students use in day-to-day interactions. Gaining access to such a variety of communication is useful because students’ knowledge and attitudes are not entirely summarized in reasoned responses to direct questions or through other research provided
by literature in this area. Ethnomethodological analysis of the forms of communication may tell me as much, if not more, about how students see, describe, and jointly develop their knowledge and experiences as students (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1970). In this sense, focus groups reveal the dimensions of cultural understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques. Through conversation with students, I sought the accountability of student identity in their dialogue, considering that culture plays a role that is central to its complexity, not an additive or a by-product. Within students’ dialogue with each other lies a facilitating reflexivity to better understand their accountable perceptions, expectations and the circumstances of [identity developments] constitutive elements (Coulon, 1995, p. 24).

Tapping into students’ interpersonal communication was also important because I could highlight students’ similar or differing values or group norms. Through analysis of the operation of sense making, consensus, and dissent, I identified shared and common knowledge. I could embrace a focus on concrete, mundane communication practices as constitutive of larger social structural systems. This made the focus group’s data collection technique particularly sensitive to cultural variables and the study of dominant cultural values, similar to Fassett (2003), exposing dominant narratives regarding “at-risk” students.

Focus group methods, in general, are also popular with those conducting action research and those hoping to “empower” research participants because the participants become an active part of the process of analysis. In Fassett and Warren’s (2007) sixth commitment to considering how language is constitutive of social phenomena, group participants may actually develop particular perspectives as a consequence of talking with other people who have similar experiences. For example, group dynamics can allow for a shift from personal, self blaming psychological explanations (“I’m stupid not to
have understood what the professor was teaching;” “I should have been stronger--I should have asked the right questions,”) to the exploration of structural solutions (“If we’ve all felt confused about what we’ve been told, maybe having additional articles would have helped,” or “what about being able to take away a tape recording of the course?”).

Focus groups as a method can facilitate the expression of criticism and the exploration of different types of solutions that are invaluable if the aim of research is to improve educational techniques. However, in the case of this dissertation, this method was especially appropriate because I was working with student populations who felt that they are, in general, disenfranchised with their education and were often reluctant to give negative feedback or who felt that any problems resulted from their own inadequacies.

Taking into account the focus group process, I made the assumption that students understood their situations and the choice to be taught or to become an active learner. Even though the literature does not often offer the voices or the narratives of students, I believe that it should because those narratives are relevant. Those voices are rarely examined for their complex sense-making processes and their associated implications. This may be a reflection of theory development attempts, paradigmatic differences, and/or teachers’ own understandings of educational identity as social constructions.

Communication is about mediating the tools of social constructions. In order to learn how students in education make sense of their educational identities, I needed to explore their understandings of their educational perceptions and expectations. Therefore, I planned to address the following larger questions through my focus group interactions. How do students understand educational identity? How are these understandings communicatively constructed through their expressions of expectations and perceptions? In relationship to the previous questions, how do students conceive the teacher’s roles in
their own identity construction? How are these understandings socially and communicatively constructed? Finally, what factors play roles in the creation and maintenance of what it means to be a “student”?

In order to answer these questions, I engaged students in focus group discussions that served two functions: (1) they helped to establish a line of research in critical communication pedagogy that explores identity process in educational spheres; and (2) they provided me with participant responses that shaped pedagogical development and theory explanation techniques. The focus groups and ethnomethodologically focused questions functioned as the collection of the larger case study—an in-depth history of how each participant understands her/his perceptions and expectations of teachers in education.

**Focus group procedures: From recruitment to data analysis**

In order to understand how students’ conceptualize their identities, several focus groups were constituted. Focus group data collection occurred in the spring of 2006. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approved the research project prior to the collection of focus group data (see Appendix G).

In my role as an instructor and academic advisor for the Appleseed Community and at the Midwestern University I was able to recruit focus group participants. Data was collected through focus groups, in which six focus groups, with forty-four student participants were constituted. These totals include the six focus groups that were conducted; four of those were analyzed for this study.

**Participant selection for focus groups**

Posters were placed in four locations around campus; I attended ten courses where the in-class recruitment statement was read, as well as placed recruitment posters in three
departments and four learning communities. This served as the main method of recruiting individuals for the focus groups (see Appendix E and F). These students provided contact information, from which I then constituted focus groups by participant availability.

I also attempted to recruit focus group participants by asking confirmed participants to recommend other students who would make potential participants, in effect using a snowball technique to gain access to other students. This method was only marginally successful as many students who came forward and confirmed focus group appointments failed to show for assigned times. This may be attributed to the fact that students had scheduling conflicts, issues with pre-focus group questionnaires, or felt uncomfortable after talking with previous participants. A general description of participants can be found in Appendix A.

**Development of focus group questions**

A lengthy process was utilized to develop focus group questions. Separate focus group guides (pre-focus group questionnaire and focus group interview guide) were created. Focus group questions were based on ethnomethodology (i.e., questions that ask students to describe their understandings), Sprague’s (1993) article, “Retrieving the research agenda for communication education” (i.e., questions that communication specific pedagogy) and Fassett and Warren’s (2007) book *Critical Communication Pedagogy* (questions that ask about power and how their choices are constrained or enabled by institutional norms) served as contextual guides to elicit information regarding how identity is constituted by students. The preliminary focus group guides (i.e., those that are not included in this analysis due to concerns of compromised responses) were considered pilot groups, as the data collected was either compromised or inadequate. In my role as an instructor and academic advisor in the Appleseed Community, I had access to information that I had utilized as background information
and validity checking for the focus group data of the first two focus groups. Given major inconstancies and factual errors made by participants of two particular focus groups (The Philosopher Gods and The Dukes) because of information I had access to, I felt it necessary to dismiss their data.

Based on that decision, the focus group questions and protocol were revised in consultation with my doctoral advisor. Careful editing of my focus group guide was done to ensure that the wordings of questions were precise and that my introductory contextual statement was clarified prior to conducting the other four focus groups. Questions that yielded less relevant information were removed. Probing questions (specific to each focus group depending on the conversation in those groups) were added to gather more detail on salient issues. Focus group guides were honed throughout the focus group period, between April and May of 2006. Participants' responses remained confidential and compensation (lunch or dinner) was provided for their participation (see Appendix B and C for copies of the focus group guides and the pre-focus group questionnaire).

**Focus group methods**

All conversations were conducted per HSRB policy and were conducted with a minimum of four students present. At the start of the focus groups, the students reviewed the HSRB Consent Form and each participant received a copy (see Appendix D). This consent form outlined the purpose of the study, what participation entailed, participation risks, and ensured confidentiality of participant responses as data was processed. Questions about the process and confidentiality were answered and permission was secured to tape record the interview. With the consent of all participants, focus groups were tape-recorded to accurately capture all comments and assist in the analysis process. Addresses were recorded and stored separately from the interview notes for the sole purpose of mailing thank you cards for participation or the necessity for follow-up
interviewing. Further, I had an additional individual present (doctoral colleague, on HSRB service fellowship) during the latter four of six focus groups (who to took notes) to allow me to focus on participant discussions.

*Focus group data analysis*

After each focus group I analyzed the data for emerging themes using my notes and those provided by the other observer. The intention of this process was to reduce moderator bias by capturing information through field notes and by having a total of two individuals hear each focus group. This process ensured that nothing would be inadvertantly left out of my notes. While this process was time-consuming, I believe that it thoroughly captured participant dialogue and the holistic totality of their conversations and experiences. Themes that recurred frequently were noted. The themes were summarized separately for each of the four focus group’s perspectives. Similarities and differences between the perspectives were noted. These themes also served as the framing of chapter 4 in which I explicate these re-occurring patterns and discuss their implications for my research questions.

*Limitations in focus group data gathering process*

I encountered a few limitations in the data collection process. As discussed earlier with the first two focus groups, I looked at information I had access to as an instructor and academic advisor and found inconsistencies in participants’ dialogue that resulted in a need to exclude those groups from my study—this reduced the number of overall focus group conversations. In the data collection process, the main limitation of focus groups was that most participants had self-selected and had a desire to talk about how students’ conceptualize their identities.
Bias may also have been introduced during the focus group process. For instance, my role as an instructor, academic advisor, and community member of the Appleseed Community may have influenced participant's responses to questions regarding student attitudes and roles. Also, participants’ may have biased the information gathered because of the conversational style of the focus groups. Participants may also have reported only socially desirable responses because of peer participation. It is also important to note that many participants’ did not directly state or consider themselves “good” or “bad” students, even though responses identified their behaviors as such. These kinds of concerns are common in focus group research methods; yet, this method also reduces participant anxiety and allows members of the group to talk to each other and, as such, this method often provides unique access to information that can only gathered in this kind of setting.

For the focus groups, the main limitation was low attendance. In one focus group only four out of the twelve confirmed participants attended. Anecdotal information revealed that scheduling conflicts and peer disclosure were the reasons for low attendance. The final limitation is one that is often experienced in the dissertation process: lack of time due to fellowship funding. Given more time, I could have completed more focus groups and hopefully included additional conversations. These dialogues may have held perspectives of people not represented in the sample, such as juniors and seniors who have taken more basic courses. Yet, given the consistency of information across the groups, I feel confident that the information gathered here still represents a heuristic view at how students make sense of their roles as educational members.
Along for the ride: Participants²

I arranged for six focus groups of six to twelve participants each, of which four were utilized for data analysis. First, I met with two groups of students—these groups of students participate in an educational learning community at a large Midwestern university (through which they will at some time take a course in communication studies). This community attempts to develop an educational environment that is steeped in an interdependence of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service. The students are academically motivated and ambitious learners who want a dynamic education within a supportive social community. These students work closely with faculty and residence hall staffs to build a morally principled community founded on collaboration, trust, and respect for each other’s differences. Second, I met with two groups of students who are taking the same introductory courses at a large Midwestern university. This community is contextualized through enrollment management-related data, demographic data not otherwise collected as a result of the admission and registration processes. Information detailed in the student demographic report presents a picture of participants that seek opportunities for their education to help them become “very well off financially and to possibly become some type of community leader.” These students are very positive about their chances of making at least a "B" average for their courses, earning a Bachelor's Degree, finding a job in their field after graduation, get a job to help pay for their college expenses, and being satisfied with their education. They do not place high value on using their education to influence the political structure or to contribute to arts, literacy and science.

² Focus group demographic information can be found in Appendix A
Because identity research in critical communication pedagogy is a new line of research, it was appropriate to convene sample participants primarily with affiliations to communication courses. These communication courses discuss socialization, politicalization, and issues of agency, voice, and power. While this could have been something of a road hazard and dilemma, because students might have been socialized to the issues that I am exploring, I find it acceptable on four grounds: (1) these students have, as the result of their educational experiences, have knowledge that can explain themselves as students; (2) wherever possible, I ask for clarification and question the use of institutionally-determined identities; (3) this is a choice I made, in part, by convenience and, in part, by wanting to hear students explain their heuristic understandings how the accomplishment of “student” happens in their everyday contexts; and (4) their perceptions and expectations of university understandings.

**Expectations for focus groups: Navigating the curves**

The focus group is an appropriate method of inquiry in this dissertation because: (1) like the focus of critical communication pedagogy, this method is centrally concerned with documenting and understanding attitudes rather than measuring them; and (2) the data generated by the focus groups provided me with reflective and articulate examples of participants’ own experiences with their process of identity development. There are a number of advantages to using focus groups in this manner. Focus groups: (1) are cost-effective; (2) yield a large amount of verbatim raw data from interview participants; (3) may result in synergistic, unexpected results as participants come to new ideas together; and (4) help the researcher determine whether he or she is pursuing a fruitful line of inquiry (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990).
As with any method, there are limitations, as well. First, results from my focus group interviews are not readily generalizable because of their small sample size and the way in which participants may interact to interpret and answer questions. However, as I mentioned above, this is not the intention of the present study. Second, the nature of the topic, educational identity development, may have caused some participants to feel uncomfortable due to past educational experiences and, thus may have been unwilling to participate in the discussion. In order to mitigate this second concern, I attempted to: (1) underscore participants’ voluntary participation in the study, as well as the potential benefits of the discussion for future research, and (2) provide participants with an initial screening questionnaire that would prepare them for the kinds of questions they may be asked (Zeller, 1993).

In what follows, chapter four, my study of students’ identity construction through their perceptions and expectations illustrated the above points and began to address the following questions as well. (1) How do students understand their educational roles? How are these understandings socially, communicatively constructed? (2) Correlatively, how do students and teachers develop their educational expectations? How are these understandings socially, communicatively constructed? (3) How does each of these discursive understandings shape students’ and teachers’ understandings of each other and the educational system? And, (4) what factors play a role in the creation and maintenance of what it means to be a student?

When the project began, I expected focus groups to be the primary means by which I understood the students’ narratives regarding their identity process. I also expected focus groups to function as an auxiliary means of understanding because of their ability to allow students to support each other in the sharing process. Having been part of focus groups as a participant and as a co-researcher, I realize the richness of the
focus group method for understanding my particular socio-phenomenological study. This realization due to course work, past research, and my current interests has caused this research design to evolve into a larger study that I believe will help expand the larger field of communication.
CHAPTER FOUR

Exploration and accomplishment of the student identity

One afternoon last May, I ventured outside with Comrade Mike after a focus group to the “Thinking Tree” for coffee and a chat; the tree was planted in honor of Johnny Appleseed. Comrade Mike told me that this tree, which is the center point of his learning community, has a mystique that has woven itself through this university in Ohio. The tree seems to serve as a place for students to center themselves, collect their thoughts, and better understand their “student identity.” The tree, hidden in the thick surrounding forest of superficial buildings that are organized spaces, is a reminder for those who still set their lives to the Socratean-forest's socialist rhythms, just as they had for thousands of years: learning with those under the trees, eating what the forest grew, sharing what they know for the community betterment. But that is now a distant memory for the 18-25 year-old students who make up the majority of my participants; these students of old were an invisible presence, felt more than seen. I better understood why participants would stare out the window at this tree when I asked them to offer an early memory of when they were a student, but I am getting ahead of myself; those are the student’s tales.

On the first day of my tenure in this little Havana, the ides of February 2003, Mike, our “discipline teacher” and the chief communist ideologue at Appleseed’s Learning annex in Ohio, came to my office jubilant, flushed like Che Guevara after an anti-imperialist speech and beaming with good news that another major publication (US News and World Report) had recognized our glorious commune of learning communities. Comrade Mike, who wore the first lab coat to a set of focus group interviews to seem hip
and impressive once, was the progeny of Irish chemists exiled to a pedagogical-like Moscow of learning communities. He had been educated there and sent to this learning community to dazzle young minds with the long droll of communal education. He had been up all night, he told us, listening to the spoken works of Paulo Freire’s notions of pedagogy, post-Brazilian exile. I celebrated with him, expressing my ardent enthusiasm for the pedagogical revolution that was to ensue, I hoped to draw his attention to the fact that I was writing in this area for the last five years and capable already of glorious critical conversations with students. But like a Cuban nationalist, you simply do your part.

Less than two years later, I have found several questions that both maintained and requited my interest in pedagogy. Through it all, I was still in love with the emphatic passion of that discipline teacher. While I was not surprised that I was never called upon to be a formal explorer, I wanted to guide students into the foray of militaristic explanations of what critical pedagogy was to the 2004 cohort of students. I still felt pride in working with the students, giving them their community issued rifles with ammunition made from communication, philosophy, education, and critical studies articles written by scholars like Foucault, Fassett, Warren, Giroux, Freire, hooks, and others. While the comrade explained that the Appleseed Revolution and Appleseed’s working people were under attack from American educational imperialism, an attack that might lead to critical war, I dutifully plunged myself into doing my part with research that would defend this sense of critical pedagogy. Comrade Mike even took the extra step of congratulating me in person when he asked me to consider a dissertation that would popularize our movement. I was so moved I could barely shake my head yes—which was a lie because I had already started—and then mumbled that I would only be doing my duty. In reality I felt like a Cuban nationalist in 1962. His revolution was mine. Mike had been to Brazil,
where he had found extraordinary people willing to die in order to learn with freedom. The people’s process was through the tenets of what Giroux (1983) coined as critical pedagogy, a fusion of critical theory and the study of educational practices started by Paulo Freire during his exile in Brazil. Comrade Mike said he had met a son of a son of a son of Freire’s, I was unclear if this meant he had met his actual son of a son, his great grandson, or one of his scholarly step-children, nevertheless I was enthralled. At this moment I knew that my encounters with critical pedagogy and the Appleseed Revolution seemed fated to a family-like vacation, which came with all of the communal baggage I hoped to leave behind. So, I walked off to the “thinking tree” to further plan my dissertation and write…

For most students, partaking in this research study was only a 5-10 minute walk from their dorm room. However, most took a half-hour and, upon seeing the food, seemed to get cautious looks on their faces that triggered a second-sense that they were about to plunge into the abyss of unknown questions and answers. Somehow, Jimmy John’s gourmet sandwiches were going to make it a little less painful.

These stories, these students, are about learning, about the identities learning promotes, the distortions of truths that eventually obliterate the truth and thus gives us the myths—the morally instructive myths—and ethnomethodological exploration into the culture of wants and needs. I am conditionally interested in the historical stories of students: who they are, how they came to be, how they “do” student.

In this chapter I direct my remarks toward description and meaningful categorization of participant responses; this will be followed by chapter five, serving as an extended analysis of the significance of these findings. Chapter four is organized under the following assumption: students move through the educational process in a rationale manner; that is what students do, they do for good reason. To show how this
occurs, I examine: (1) the social action of “doing student.” This means looking at how participants view institutional realities that are being maintained and how participants define themselves, as students and members of an institution. From these definitions, I examine (2) the development of produced actions as they become apparent; that is, how participants view students (themselves) moving through types of distinctions (i.e. “good” or “bad”); how students treat educational identity as a sum of methodic productive choices; and, finally, how participants make reflexive rationalizations of being “bad.” The larger implication of this ethnomethodological process is that students make “do;” they are successful in the production of their roles. Through participants’ perceptions and expectations, I look at (3) the process of “doing student,” how one is a member of “student,” and how participants perceive the environmental conditions that produce the borders that maintain such institutional realities.

Turning my back on such evidence as standardized competency scores, I have set out to find student participants who have the capacity and willingness to share their insight on their complex and meaningful identities. I seek to find how students came to be students. I find here a collection of lively, revealing profiles of the student mantle. While these students are all different, these interviews show an astonishing similarity in the beliefs, methods, and attitudes about how their perceptions and expectations help define who the identity of the participants and how they accomplish “student.” It should be noted, Castro has Georgie Anne Geyer to write about his political complexities; Lenin had his wife, N.K. Krupskaya, who wrote about the revolutionary’s softer side; Bill Clinton had Nigel Hamilton to catalogue his trials and tribulations. These participants, these students, for their voices to be heard, for better or worse, have me to write their voices and seek to enable space for their agency to be contextualized to the best of my ability.
Accomplishing student: Being a student is about maintaining institutional realities

In the following, we hear how the social action of “doing student” is fundamentally constructed through student reflexivity and accountability. Given how ethnomethodology tries to understand how people see, describe, and jointly develop a definition of their situation, I found that there was an intersubjective intelligibility of social actions by students. The action of holding themselves and others (reflexively) accountable ultimately rests on symmetry between the production of actions and recognition of the boundaries of the roles within the production of “doing” student. Striking this symmetry is one of the predominant methodic actions used by students. Garfinkel (1967) wrote that “the activities whereby the members produce and manage settings of ordinary everyday affairs are identical with member’s procedures of making those settings accountable” (p. 1). Participants share in their conversation that being a student means that the symmetry of “doing student” is a societal assumed mantle. This means that being a student is an achievement made by moving through settings of ordinary social activity (i.e., classes, residential living, through student-like activities, and in most cases school or spaces where they recognize learning is taking place).

The assumptions that participants make can be seen in how they design their actions in relation to their circumstances. This means to recognize the action for what it is: a mundane practice, something not thought about, something just done. The production of recognizing their actions is dependent upon students supplying, and trusting one another to supply, an array of unstated assumptions, conditions of what a student is, who is good or bad, what the environment should be like, and how they arrived at those expectations. As the participants’ dialogue shows, to recall how one “does student” is to be reflexive of the redetermined productions (i.e., maintain, elaborate, or alter), and the circumstances in which it occurs.
**Defining what it means to be a student**

“The Reservoir Dogs” is the collective pseudonym of eight participants, who signed up for my research study. They were eight seemingly normal students, varying in degrees: two biology majors, one math, three English, and two communication majors, between the ages of 18 and 20, and generally recognized to be freshman. When they presented themselves as participants, their general appearance was convincingly as young students. They were tall, short, slim, larger, all with conservative haircuts, but youthful and seemingly inexperienced faces, none with facial hair. Their dress seemed usual and did not distinguish them from anything other than typical students of their ages or class standing. Their manner was appropriately “student” with a slight awkwardness that is presumptively typical of freshman.

The students sat around a table in a conference room. The first participant picked a name Mr. White, a reference to the movie *Reservoir Dogs*; the others followed suit with Mr. Pink, Mr. Blue, Mr. Blonde, Mr. Orange, Mr. Brown, Nice Girl, and Joe. This group’s purpose in presenting themselves in this way was explained:

Mr. White: As students, quite often we are faceless, nameless, and quite often gluttons for punishment. I’m not trying to sound all high and mighty, but we live double, triple, and even quadruple lives just to pass or make it though school. I don’t know if I have a grasp on who I am most of the time. Most of the time it is easier to treat being a student is like a character in a Quentin Tarantino movie, cutting back and forth through time is like the shifting of the student identity, sometimes good or bad, sometime learning and other times not…”
Mr. Pink: I picked this name because I have a hard time knowing what I am supposed to do, most of the time I like things to be easy, to follow my logic, my understanding of things. When they don’t [class rules, assignment directions, etc.] or there is too much at stake like passing a class, I just follow directions or orders. I figure, school is going to be difficult, insofar as classes typically entail asking us to take a hard look at ourselves and our social contexts. I can’t recall ever when people [other students or teachers] seemed to care who I really was, only what stigma-laden group I fit into.

As the participants began interacting with each other, Mr. White, as the first voice typifies the importance in understanding just who these participants are as students, as members of an academic institution. With Mr. White describing student identity as “cutting back and forth through time,” it is clear that identity is one reflexive obstacle that is used to describe and comprehend the social order that defines identity. This raises questions regarding how students define themselves. How do students make their productive choices to maintain an identity? What is clear is that for Mr. White, the student identity is hard to identify, it is multifaceted when the voice of the student is actually engaged and accounted for. This is also what makes Mr. Pink’s remark particularly interesting as he begins to illuminate how his motivations are integrated in normative models that contextualize student identity; the indexical expressions of what he is told a student should be like. His comments like: “there is too much at stake like passing a class, I just follow directions or orders,” or “I can’t recall ever when people seemed to care who I really was, only what stigma-laden group I fit into,” begin to show some of the initial patterns of how ‘students’ will draw meaning to regulate their
behaviors. These indexical expressions translate to students’ perceptions and expectations that are used to define the self within an institution.

Further at stake in participant dialogue is how their self-regulation informs their perceptions for how others should act as well. It seems that there is an immense pressure to practice being a student in a certain way; it can be seen in the pressure to be a student in the traditional institutional sense. In considering pressure of defining what a student is in relation to their role of the academic institution, I had to take particular note of how one participant described the landscape of what he or she believe a student is versus the ideal:

Mr. Blue: I think that the landscape between what today’s students is and what ideally a student should be is very, very different. Today’s student in my mind is someone who, through a process of their formal education, has just become so at ease with the fact that their job as a student is just to go in and take notes and do the homework and pass the class and move on. That I don’t know if they don’t challenge themselves to make each class, each note, each lecture their own and to apply it to their own life in their own way, but I personally think that there is a large difference between what a student is and what a student should be.

What is significant about the noted feelings of Mr. Pink and Mr. Blue is that the notion of membership, being a student implicitly feels impersonal, pressure-laden, and these feelings woven into the fabric of students everyday social practices can make the difference between feeling part of a very standardized process or having experiences define who the students are.
In fact, beyond “the Reservoir Dogs,” other participants noted some sort of implied standard definition as to the components of an academic institution, particularly the classroom experience in which students play a role. I believe that it is important to remember those participants’ perceptions and expectations are built from their cyclical experiences that have affiliated them as students who have moved through various stages of education (K-8, 9-12, and now college):

Seneca: Sitting in the classroom the teacher is the one standing or has a bigger desk and you feel as though you’re being told how to think, how to act, and how to be the person who you are. As a student, this makes you feel as though you just sit, watch the person who is in charge, and wait.

Anaxi: You think that you know you’re a student, I mean for me I knew I was a student because you’re being taught. I feel that as long as you’re being taught something then I feel you’re a student if you’re learning.

Significant in the dialogue of Seneca and Anaxi are the indexical expressions of two diametrically opposed constitutions of defining students within the context of academic institutions. On one hand is the indicative characteristic, “being told how to think…to act” and on the other is comprehension of context, “knowing you are…because you’re being taught…you’re learning.” So is being a student about participating in a rote process or is it about a desire to learn and expand one’s worldview? This indexicality points to the natural incompleteness of academic institutions’ understanding the student identity. I believe this also typifies the undertheorization of identity in communication scholarship, but also a lack of really understanding how students define themselves.
within their actions. Of equal importance, this raises issue to how do the types of student identities account for each other’s perceptions and expectations?

The majority of the participants simply stated “being a learner” or “the one not in the front of the room,” as a way to define being a student. However, a few participants shared their reasoning behind their understanding of what constitutes being a student through existing marked contrasts: being a good student or being a bad student. Conversations amongst the participants began to align themselves along these lines.

In the literature reviewed of student roles, it has been traditional to treat the conventional categories “successful” and “failing” students or “good” and “bad” students as starting points from which to portray the different outlooks, life changes, habit changes, and the activities of different types of students in relation to social structure. I wanted to explore the treatment of the student identity status as a produced and reproduced fact. It is the constitution and reproduction of the ordinary facts of “student” which is the object of inquiry. The reproduced differentiation of culturally specific positions of “good student” and “bad student” is thus, as Garfinkel (1958) put it, the terminus of investigation rather than its starting point. This is because of the overwhelming fact of social structure. In reproduction, I propose, what scholars can look at is the outcome of a mass of indiscernible, yet familiar, socially organized institutional practices. The organized practices are a pastiche or collage portrayed that is significant on the surface. These practices signify, mainly, something of an identity:

Spart: It [being a student] means you’re attending to some form of learning, being out there, school in the traditional sense obviously is a way to view being a student and hopefully learning would be a way to demonstrate that position.
In Spart’s comment the mantle of “student” is comprehensible as an abstraction to be studied or assumed. The participant’s specific abilities toward an abstract sense of identity surfaces out of learning a process that is a precondition for the production or definition of student identity. In other words, the ability to understand what it means to be a student is defined as understanding the qualities and values of practicing students.

At stake in the participants’ various definitions of “student” what is typically viewed on the surface by the participants’ teachers, advisors, resident advisors and other students. Any one of these people can take a look at students in a single glance (through assignments, meetings, classroom or residential hall activities, etc.), yet participants recognize this practice to be superficial. If one wishes to deepen the significance, or reconstruct what it means to be a student, one has to allow himself or herself to challenge the overt surface understanding of what it means to be a “student” institutionally.

What to look for when trying to define “students” is how participants describe some of their deeper recognition of the organized practices that define being a student:

Mr. Orange: I think that you will always be a student; you will always be a teacher in some way. I don’t think that they are exclusive titles.

Mr. Blue: But wouldn’t those conceptualizations of what a teacher is be based on what society places on us [as students]? That we’re restricted to what we can do in a classroom; like it’s not, like, we can, like, when you’re little — you’re not allowed to talk back to a teacher, you’re not really allowed to express your opinion when you’re learning, like when you’re little. I think we’re kind of raised that the people who are older than us are kind of, like, more in charge and they know more, so you should look up to your teachers and listen to them.
Mr. Blonde: I want to add that I guess you could say that they’re being a student by learning, maybe learning, maybe making mistakes but learning from the mistakes. I’ve heard people say that mistakes aren’t all bad because if you find something that doesn’t work one way then you try it another way and eventually find out a way to do it. I guess that’s a student, learning something at least, coming away with something.

In the participants’ attempts at verbalizing the contextual understandings of how being a student is defined, their statements above show a clear apprehension in considering what it means to be a student. It is fair to consider the classroom as a type of social world. For students, in the traditional sense, but also in the participants, Mr. Brown, Mr. Blue, Mr. Orange, Mr. Blonde, and Mr. Pink we see the tension between the shared values that are considered beyond us (how we want to act) and that rule us (how we are conditioned to act).

As other participants address below, being a student means taking into consideration one’s actions or as Mr. Orange put it: “you will always be a teacher in some ways, always a student in others.” What should be considered when defining “student” is the individual as some type of learner. It is from that point of identity distinction that the educational process moves forward. What we will actually hear in participants’ dialogue is that to be treated as a learner is key to the student identity, but the qualities associated with being a learner certainly do not come without participants’ (as students) trepidation:

Mr. Brown: I just think that being a student is more a synthesis of knowledge and ideas, and then the application of that synthesis is an advancement of your own
thought processes to further develop your own theories and ideas. I haven’t gotten to that part yet, because every time I try to further my ideas in my classes, it seems that I am wrong by the teacher’s standards.

Mr. Blue: I’ve had similar experiences; the critical stuff feels like a set-up or something I am not ready to do yet.

Mr. Orange: I agree, My student identity is comprised of somebody who…tries to grow in their base knowledge and tries to learn… but that person is not who I get to be as a freshman.

Mr. Pink: I would say that feeling, that Mr. Blue and Mr. Orange are talking about, is why I tend to do only what I am told in the classroom. If you follow the syllabus to the letter then you don’t get made fun of or put on the spot by the teacher.

While these participants speak of feeling limited in their capacity to be holistic learners, their initial thoughts make it unclear if the feelings are institutional or self-prescribed. It is useful to bear in mind that these participants were, in effect, presented with two separate, but overlapping, problems in maintaining the image of a student. First, they have the problem of dealing with those who typically take them at face value and those who know nothing of their desires to move beyond the already recognized conceptualization of student. The majority of the participants said teachers hold fast to the adage, “teachers teach, students learn.” This includes those teachers who are preoccupied with generating critical thought. Within the students’ sense of community,
participants are wary of being “given” the ability by teachers to express their opinions freely in the classroom. Second, students are compelled to deal with a range of people—advisors, teachers, residence hall staff, and other students— who reinforce the need to be accountable (to whom is unknown) and follow the rules (whose indexicality is at issue) that define the “being of a student.”

In listening to all of the participant accounts through ethnomethodology, there is a distinct difference from other communication perspectives regarding student identity. Although we seek in Communication Studies, more specifically communication education research, a larger sense of students’ use of learning as tools of functionality, I have found that the research tends to treat the social world of education as essentially orderly. In other words, scholarship assumes that patterns of behavior and communicative interaction (the indexicality, reflexivity, accountability, and accomplishment) in the classroom can be regular and systematic, rather than random and chaotic. Of course, there are a variety of ways to explain educational order, communication styles in different contexts, or simply the choices students make. However, students are critical of identity labeling and want to reject social labeling (problematic or accepted) as the outcome of the value consensus for education in society. However, in order to cope, they recognize that behavior conformity or adopting some of an institutions indexicality to generally accepted student norms can ensure being recognized as “doing good student” on the surface.

**Accomplishing student: Understanding how students make choices**

In respect to the practice and accomplishment of making choices as it relates to identity, for students there is significance to how their choices are viewed in relationship to the larger notion of the student image. Earlier, participants addressed this identity as a synthesis of two intentions: one manifested in the image of “being a student” and the
other belonging to a larger institutional process. As we will hear, part of students’ task of maintaining themselves as students is having to develop a sense of what constitutes an accomplishment of being a student. This production I have categorized into notions of being a “good” student or a “bad” student. All of the participants were continually anxious about being a successful student or at least having that appearance; they all had become acutely aware of the ways in which being “good” or “bad” can have implications for the conduct in ordinary social activities. Amongst each other, fitting in is still important, but this does not always translate to the skills of “doing student” in an academic sense.

As students move through their understanding of that student image, being a student is not “denotative” (unambiguous) complexes of choices that make up the mantle of “being a student,” but “connotative” (ambiguous) complexes of actions taken in order to maximize the choice possibilities. This is where the students provide their own space for interpretation. The students’ interest is concentrated on how they are being represented; for them, the world is purely a pretext for the realization of their student mantle and its possibilities. This is why, ethnomethodologically, members of groups pay much attention to how members make their decisions (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970). Beyond making assumptions that students follow traditional rules of “being a student,” we begin to understand how students “actualize” those rules; in this case actualization is in learning how to be a student. In short, we begin to get a picture of a person searching for information as to who he or she is, who he or she can be, and how to be that person. These implications are both great and overlooked. By considering the activities of being a student, all of the participants addressed studying for predetermined amounts of time or taking particular classes as a condition for being a student, but it is up to the student
through his/her choices and actions to determine his/her identity classification of “good” or “bad.”

**Who are the good students and how does she/he feel bad**

While exploring how to understand the choices made by students in their development of the student identity, participants stressed that learning is situated in learners’ social, and therefore profoundly interactional, practices. In the following excerpt one participant discusses how being a student is accomplished but also collaboratively (re)organized by learners and teachers, structuring specific opportunities for choices regarding the learning process. Participants’ student identities are therefore reflexively redefined within courses of action they take and emerging from their language competence as it relates to other (interactional, institutional, sociocultural) competencies.

Seneca: I think a good student is someone who actively works hard to make sure that they learn it, no matter how they learn it through experience, through studying, through outside, whatever. But then there’s also a lot of like high school mentality is that you’ve got to do the work to get the grades, some of this is through personal experience, like, that does absolutely no work and still pulls out As, but that doesn’t necessarily make them a good student. But then you’ve got someone that will spend 4 hours studying just to get that B or high C, but they’re probably a better student than someone who barely does something and gets an A…Consider college classes, like, general education classes aren’t bad, they’re not evil classes, they’re classes to give you an early base of knowledge, something other than a grade. They’re there to jog your memory on things you’ve learned throughout your entire learning experience. The thing that about it is that
universities require you to take those classes, and by requiring you to take a class like that it forces you into this ‘you don’t have a choice’ mentality, and then you kind of fall into this idea of ‘I’ll, like, go through this class even though I don’t need it, though I’m smarter than that.’ And you just become this type of person who doesn’t accept where they’re at, first of all, and doesn’t see any benefit of where they’re at.

Seneca suggests that being a good student takes a certain amount of openness and willingness to take risks that might not pay off tangibly; that is, her knowledge may not be perceived as immediately usable. It is interesting to note how Seneca recognizes the inequities in the grading process in her first comment and thus has made a choice regarding the opportunities for learning to be about a greater sense of personal growth, something that transcends grades. At stake is a suggestion that the events of being a “good” student often engender a personal frustration at participants’ own inability to make choices that allow for the type of openness that Seneca suggests.

Euclid: For a second, going back to the idea of what a student’s become. Gen-Ed courses wouldn’t be necessary if your high school experience was more engaging and was something that you could take with you past high school. If they were more than memorize this, pass my class, pass this grade, and move on. If it were something more that you could bring with you to each level, Gen-Ed courses wouldn’t be necessary.

Phyrro: I think for a lot of students, education in general has become more of a requirement than a privilege. People say, ‘oh I have to go to college, I have to be
a student so I can succeed later,’ and in a lot of ways that’s true, but I think that
the dedication is lower now than it used to be because it is seen as something that
you have to do and not something that you aspire to.

Anaxi: Maybe if all throughout high school they tell you that you need to know
this stuff because it will help you—well you need to know this stuff because it
will help you prepare for college. And I remember that when I first got here I can
maybe remember maybe one class that gave me the knowledge base for the stuff
that I’m going to need here. And, like, maybe they structure it so you are doing
the majority of your learning in college. Like they expect it now and maybe if
they actually put in more class choices and get all of this general crap out of the
way and then come here and have to do more general crap. Like, I understand if
you didn’t know what you wanted to do, you’d get a nice little sampling of
everything to see what you like, but for someone like myself coming in with a set
major and then having to take something that has no bearing whatsoever rather
than just getting the required credit, it almost makes it seem pointless and makes
you want to try less at it.

I believe that this exchange raises an important issue regarding what choices are exactly
being made and to what end the courses taken apply to the student taking them. At stake
is that these participants are not seeing how education demonstrates that life goals can be
enhanced through school. I am a firm believer in the concept of education being relevant
to the individual and I base my pedagogy upon the individual’s own best doorways to
learning. But from the dialogue between Seneca, Euclid, Phyrro, and Anaxi, there is a
seeming disconnect in how general education courses can serve to help students make informed choices. With school populations including a vast array of students who bring to school diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs, it is of particular importance that students make the most of their educational experience. It is to the benefit of the students to understand their individual accessibility to learning—what their strengths and limitations are, what their goals are, and what tactics they can apply in their learning. Students ought to be able to communicate their needs to accomplish their daily actions. With participants viewing education as something that needs to fit into compartmentalized goal oriented tasks, how are students communicating their choices?

From what we will hear it boils down to behaviors, which inform the choices that students make. Participants’ dialogue demonstrates a belief that being a good student appears to be a set of very orderly choices; in reality it is potentially chaotic. In the following dialogue, participants construct order amongst themselves as a series of sense-making impressions and experiences, which he or she must somehow organize into a coherent pattern of behaviors. Behaviors in this regard become a defining mechanism for which to understand what constitutes a “good” student:

Phyrro: They’re [good students] willing to learn, they’re willing to accept the ideas and not question; well maybe not necessarily question, it’s alright to question, but, like, not get angry when they have a difference of opinion with the teacher or others. Good students are always asking questions, and then they’re always engaged in doing something.

Seneca: I think that a good student is someone who tries their best at everything they do and participates and goes in for extra help, but is not afraid to fail. I think
failure is part of being a student, and part of learning, so if you are willing to try your best and still risk failing, and try again.

Euclid: Good students strive to increase their knowledge of subjects and they do things outside of classes that might not directly pertain to what they are doing in classes, but they feel that they can benefit from, and they try their best to grow through their experiences and try to learn from what they do throughout their lives in ways that will help them as a lifetime learner.

Phyrro: In addition to that I think a good student is someone who takes an active role in his or her education. A good student is not someone who passively sits by and allows themselves to be baked. A good student plays a willing role in their education.

The consensus among these participants is of a person who functions as part of the educational social world. Who they are, how they practice “good students” is through a series of patterns they have built for making sense of and coping with the variety of situations that they encounter everyday. As Phyrro points out, “a good student plays a willing role in their education.” Sometimes we know (or think we know) something so well that we do not notice when it changes. And this is exactly how choices are being made—students are not recognizing the pattern of their behavior, which they carry in their mind as they make choices that would signify them as “good.” Their student identity has become so fixed that it is incapable of accommodating new options that could help them make different choices. The taken-for-granted education world that students all inhabit is to some extent necessary in order to avoid confusion that would be experienced
if they saw everything as if it were the first time. Amongst all of the focus groups this is a key distinction— to accomplish the qualities of “good students” is understanding things like agreeing to disagree, knowing that failure is a possibility and part of the process, the ability to ask questions, increasing knowledge, and being an active learner. When participants began to describe moments of recognizing “good student” behaviors, they seemed to have what appeared to be a genuine appreciation for the differences in their experiences, but also how similar those experiences were.

From participants’ descriptions, it becomes clear how descriptions of social reality play out as a thematic frame for those moments then the perceptions and expectations of “doing good student” are confirmed and reinscribed in high school and college as well. For practical purposes, Schutz (1962) discussed that this phenomenon of collectivity is the totality of social reality. For the participants it is the sum total of similar academic occurrences within their socio-cultural world. While students’ experiences, perspectives, motivations, goals, and intentions are different; they act as if they were the same, for all practical purposes their perceptions and expectations are, equivalent. In this uninterrupted excerpt, the participants’ lived experiences are in direct relation to their expected interactions. This helps constitute their perceptions, expectations, and choices to achieve a distinction of “good student:”

Anaxi: I just remember back in high school I can remember people who would put everything that was, like, socially based on hold, and they would always be studying and doing work, and going out with people and doing stuff was always secondary to them. Like especially in this environment [college and our learning community], those people carried over the skills of time management, it seems so crucial because there’s always parties and social stuff, good students seem to
manage their time and limit dealing with the outside stuff that could possibly or endanger that learning process.

Euclid: With what Anaxi just said, I think that in some ways he’s right, a good student knows how to budget their time and they know and understand that they need to put time into their learning. My best friend likes the Spanish language, he doesn’t speak it naturally, and during high school he took four years of it and he would always go to class and study Spanish the way he would as a normal student, but in his free time he would go out with his friends and he would go to like Spanish masses at the local church or they would go to predominately Spanish communities and hang out and do service for them and he would be able to grow with his language there. It is probably how he is surviving Advanced Spanish now in college.

Phyrro: I agree with what Anaxi and Euclid said. My roommate is a good student and one example is that she goes out with friends often, but, like, last night she had an exam today and she was willing to, rather than going out with friends, after dinner, she took that time to dedicate to studying what she would have to understand, what she had to learn. So I think that good students are willing to make that sacrifice in order to achieve or get a better understanding.

Seneca: Last semester I took a couple of classes with some kids from home…my one friend was constantly asking questions and engaging in the material,
challenging the prof to present the information in a way that was better for the class. My other friend however just sat there and took the notes, did the homework, did everything a stereotypical student should do. He was very passive in the role that he played, not what I would call a “good student”.

Phyrro: I have a question for Seneca. Was there any type of correlation to how those students did? Was the student who was more passive, did he do what he thought was well in the class? I’m not talking grade wise, I’m just saying when they finished that class did they accept the kind of result that they got out of it?

Seneca: Personally, I never really had the conversation of ‘do you like what you got out of it?’ I know both of them passed with As but I would be fairly safe to say that the one who sat in there and was engaged in the material and was pushing the prof every period, was probably the one who got more out of high school classes and will take more out of that class and other college classes in the long term.

In these remarks, an interesting theme emerges. Although participants identified “good students” as making sacrifices, the above dialogue actually describes a balance of academic and social time. The participants assign the qualifier “sacrifice,” implying that giving of one’s time for academics is less important than giving it for social development. I found this dual accountability of constraints to which students are oriented significant because in their dialogue they bring to the surface a nature of managing, constructing, and reconstructing an educational identity. In the greater sense of “accomplishing
student” there is the issue of achieving credibly “good student,” in both a behavioral and instinctual sense. It is not enough to just be a “good student.” There are problems of managing appropriately a social demeanor – the behavioral manifestations of student: “give up free time,” “play an active role,” “to dedicated studying,” “constantly asking questions and engaging the material” along with other qualities that the participant’s indexically, emphasize the being “good students” as punctuated by an individuals actions. They are habits shaped by modeling and experience; therefore the choices that participants make inform who is “good student,” and how one practices “good student.”

Those participants who identified themselves as “good students” felt compelled at all times to secure their “good student” identity by expressions of achievement. It is through the demonstration of academic skills and posturing their learning capacities that display the “good student” appearances and performances. The performing of “good student,” meaning to understand how the participants delineate between “good” and “bad” student is purely contextual. In this context, the work done by participants to secure an identity socially and the way that they socially structure achievement can be seen in the practice of the participants’ daily activities as students. As the following conversation shows the relevancies of “doing student” extend to the tasks of “doing good student.” This is, in part, to those students who know what it means to be held accountable for the “good students” actions, because of their academic successes or feelings of being accountable to failure:

Phyrro: Like getting As, like, on the records, like, what would be academics, like your transcripts. Like, your transcript might not reflect how good of a student you are, there are other things that come up outside the classroom.
Seneca: I think that a good student is someone who gives it their best effort, because a lot of people may not get the grades that would make them in the category of a good student, but they try their best, and I think that that’s what makes a good student is trying, not necessarily having a 4.0 or getting all As.

Anaxi: All throughout school I was personally an okay student. I didn’t get perfect grades. I was always disappointed, but I think it was because I was not a good test taker, and I think the reason I’m doing so well in college is because a lot of it is if you know it, you can write about it, you can talk about it. You don’t necessarily have to put it on a piece of paper in an hour, what you know. You can participate and actually learn rather than memorize.

Euclid: I agree too because any time that I would have a test in high school or grammar school, I would study the night before and cram the information in because they would say it’s a multiple choice test, here you go, show me what you know about history’ or something like that. And I was a poor test taker, too. The only way that I would pass the class is when I would cram the night before. You could ask me two days later and I would have no idea.

Phyrro: I was the same way, like in high school I felt like I was a really good student. I studied constantly. And even in college now I study constantly and I still don’t get the straight As like I would like to have. But I mean I study all the time, and it’s just, I don’t know.
The participants’ dialogue shows “traditional academic success” is a central feature of the student identity. Regardless of feeling that “transcripts might not reflect how good you are,” “…or might not get grades that place them into a category,” or “always [feeling] disappointed,” the participants demonstrate a way of thinking about performance. Their dialogue speaks to their rationalization to demonstrate their successful attempts through how they can display their academic understanding beyond their test—how they distinguish a “cram the night before” for last minute rote memorization and how one tries to study but does not quite get it. In these participants, I see three participants with skill sets that stand out; one (Anaxi) who has figured out a method to maintain “good student,” another (Euclid) who may have learning habits that are not conducive to learning, but rote memorization, and a third (Phyrro) who has a desire to learn, but possibly not the support system to maintain his/her learning. These three participants typify the types of students who are seeking help, but rationalize their confusion of the academic process because they do not know how to ask for help.

As additional evidence of the above point, three of “the Reservoir Dog” participants had similar experiences with “good student” appearances and performances. The dialogue of participants demonstrates that the ability to participate with a particular group often made participants feel as though the choice of being a “good student” had been made for them, which in turn had an effect on how they felt about being a student. There is a cultural analysis being performed by the participants, their categories for what constitutes “good student” in college seemingly were designed for them by their understanding of educational groups. These are groups designated by schools to foster academic achievement and learning efficiency. Herein lies some of the participants’ perceptions that the skills to being a “good student” were part of some mysterious program like honors, G.A.T.E. (gifted and talented education), and college-prep. The
developments of maintenance behaviors to support the appearances and performances of the various academic programs quite often are not those intended by teachers and administration:

Mr. Pink: I always felt like it was a competition, like who could be on the honor roll. Why are these people in this class, why are there honors, but like why do we have to have labels? We had, from my sixth grade year on we had a program called TAG, it was for gifted students, and that always made like the non-gifted students feel like crap because they would leave in the middle of one of our classes and go to this other classroom where they would learn high educational things because they weren’t being challenged enough apparently. And it was just really like degrading.

Mr. Blue: We had this program at our school we called it GNT, and it was the same thing. The students in our class, well part of them, would leave part way through the class and go to a different room where they would just do different things because their learning abilities were higher or whatever. For me, I know I felt like ‘well, why am I not in the program?’ because I always did fairly well in school, and looking at my grades compared to the people who were in the program, well, we had the same grades. I know it made me uncomfortable and I know, like, it split up the class and people didn’t always like the people who were in that program because they thought they were better than us for whatever reason.
The above statements demonstrate a complex construction of self-educational worth. Mr. Pink locates feelings of educational worth in vocalizing that being good is directly connected with a perceived “competition,” which is signified in feeling as though he does not quite measure up, and thus feels like “crap.” He is left wondering, “Why we have to have labels?” Mr. Pink is feeling “degraded” because as students, they didn’t leave the confines of a perceived lower educational space. Contrasted with Mr. Blue, who received the same grades as those who were in his school’s GNT program, but those good grades were not good enough to feel successful. As we have seen, Mr. Pink and Mr. Blue fail to see the advantage of the classroom separation, which in turn, when presenting one’s self as a student, has made them feel as though they are standing outside an educational “gate.” As in earlier comments by participants, the natural way of presenting one’s self as a student, is based on being able to manage the incongruities presented.

In the case of early (K-12) academic programs these two participants and others within the various focus groups systematically emphasize the aspects of what it means to be a student through the enactment of behaviors and motivations by their participation in particular programs. These enactments are how students hold themselves accountable as “students” in an institutional sense, which is then aligned with their own perceptions and expectations of “doing student.” Simultaneously, the students’ notion of worth is demoted in the aspects of being “good students” because the very system they make choices in has already created an unintended perception of a “good student” archetype. This participant belief is based on the constitutive elements of these educational skill programs or the activities needed to perform in order to gain membership. For participants, as students whether intended or not, closely align their own self-educational worth with these programs, regardless of the institution’s ironic “separate but equal” intentions. These participants perceived obscurity of what these academic programs were
intended for and the educational motivations to be part of those programs seemed to lead the participants to lose themselves in their perceptions of what “gifted and talented” programs were about. Rather than it being viewed as an opportunity to focus more on where their skills lay, the labels made participants feel less valued and educationally less important.

While listening to the students’ perceptions of “being good,” the participants’ personal perceptions and expectations and what they have come to expect from traditional institutions expectations of them, the dialogue between the participants and academic institutions produces a temporal relationship. For participants, we hear that they can return to an image they have already seen in the academic institution’s perceptions and expectations for them, and the institution’s expectations can become the participants’ perceptions. However, we should be cognizant of participants recognizing fissures of institutional identity classifications as a rationalization of the students’ worth. They will seek clarification in order to return to specific elements of the student image that provided a sense of stability and comfort for their identity at some level. To accomplish this, participants focus on the AP/honors designation:

Mr. Blonde: Just to go back to something we talked about earlier, so would these be people that we are calling ‘the academically good students,’ being good? How are we making or able to make that delineation?

Mr. Blue: Academically good, because I think the only reason they were in particular program like honors, gifted, or accelerated is because they had the grades, they had it on paper.
Mr. Brown: I can see like within people I knew how some of the non-honors students might feel that the honors students or students in the NHS might be given different privileges, like counselors or like how your teachers treated you if you got better grades within your class by their standards.

Nice Girl: To be in an AP or honors you signed up for it, and I think a lot of times because of the prestige that those classes had, people who were not necessarily eligible for those classes were still able to sign up.

Mr. White: That’s kind of what we had to do. In order to get into an AP class, you had to take a placement test; you had to get the ‘OK’ before you could be in it. Your teacher had to ‘OK’ you to be in that AP class no matter if it was English, history, biology, whatever it was, you had to have an ‘OK’ from your other teachers, and at least a B or higher to get into the other classes.

Mr. Orange: See we didn’t have that; you could just sign up for it if you wanted to be in it. It didn’t even matter what kind of student you were, good or bad. I took an honors English class my sophomore year of high school and there were people in there who had no idea, had no clue, and it was just, I think what Mr. Pink said earlier about how they felt like they needed to make up for something.

Mr. Pink: Our AP and honors classes I know at my school were given up weighted grading too, we were graded on the 5.0 scale, so all the other classes were on the 4.0 scale so a lot of people would try to get into those classes or take
them not because they were interested, but to boost their GPA. I got the sense that
the school labeled those people as “good students.”

Among the many visible ways students are judged to be “good” or “bad,” it is
given that the manner in which students are perceived by institutional placement tests,
teacher approval is bound to be understood by students. The participants attested to
primarily grading scales, placement tests, and class assignments as guides to their
possible perception of student type by other students and their academic institution. Some
of the dialogue may seem trite and defensive, nevertheless, it became part of the
participants’ perceptions of how to “do student.” While the academic distinctions may be
part of a larger processes, and strategic plan to foster academic success by placing like-
mined students together. Participants fundamentally believe you must judge yourself in
the eyes of your stakeholders; in this case your teachers who are representatives of the
academic institution.

The mediations between perceptions and expectations are not immediately
accessible to participants, and I would venture to guess for larger student populations as
well; therefore how students and participants view the maintenance process of
institutional realities becomes a vital component of defining the students and the choices
that will guide students’ movement through/in their identity as part of an institution.

**Who are the bad students and how do distinctions let him/her play good?**

In presenting themselves as student, neither good nor bad, the participants steered
clear of locating themselves directly within the perceptions and expectations of the “bad
student.” Instead participants opt to make disclosures concerning who exactly a bad
student is by treating these types of student actions as conditions. In their dialogue we
hear careful avoidance from saying or doing anything that might permit others to include them within a category of “those” types of students.

Considering the mediations between the perceptions and expectations of being a good or bad student are not immediately accessible to participants, the indexicality or distinctions of how participants view “doing bad student,” become a vital component of defining the student and his/her movement through/in his/her identity as a member of an academic institution. The problems and relevancies to the classification of being a “good student” extend to the tasks of not fitting into the earlier mentioned structure and behaviors of “doing good.” This raises the question: if the relationship between competing identities, students who act with both good and bad qualities find those behaviors in conflict; than how do they want to be perceived? Or ethnomethodologically, how is it these type of students play with such distinctions of membership?

Mr. Blue: [A bad student is] someone who pushes off their work, someone who doesn’t go to class, they think they can do it later. I don’t know. I like to play baseball outside, and I like to have fun, and I don’t like doing my work all the time. I’m a procrastinator, but I think a bad student is someone who is accepting of whatever role they have to do in class, and dislike class in all aspects, like they don’t see any type of benefit in being in any type of class. They don’t do any of the work or they don’t put any of themselves into any of their classes.

Mr. Orange: For a “bad student,” it’s someone who comes here and gets lost in the fact that there are a million other things to do other than what they came here to accomplish. And it is someone who allows themselves to get caught up in the social aspects of it— the nice weather that I’ve seen and experienced myself,
frequently inhibits students from doing their best. It’s just someone who willingly and knowingly allows themselves to get caught up in everything else and chooses to put education second.

Nice Girl: I agree it’s just that they make education secondary. They never do more than necessary to pass the class to get the grades that are necessary to get through it. They don’t view it as ‘well I need to learn this stuff so it can help me in the future when I get a job.’ They view it as ‘well I’ve got to get an A so I can graduate’ or it becomes, like, secondary or even last priority.

Mr. Brown : They don’t apply what they’ve learn and they’re undedicated. Maybe that’s a harsh word, but you know talking about putting other things in front of education, even thought that’s technically what you’re here to do. I can’t stand it when I see them in my classes; I always know that the class will be that much less interesting.

To the above point by Mr. Brown, “I can’t stand it when I see them in my classes; I always know that the class will be that much less interesting,” participants in the focus groups agreed that the distinctions between “good” and “bad” students were something that was tacitly assumed, that “the othering” was a kind of distinction that should not be talked about, that there would be no critique of the bias that shapes and informs the process of being “good” or “bad” (this included the social etiquette in the classroom). Although no one ever stated the rules that would govern the conduct, it was taught through example as is clear in the below dialogue, which becomes part of the student’s recognized, judged, and accomplished culture:
Mr. Pink: There is a degree to which you are in class and you see how things are going and a bad student doesn’t interact and doesn’t interact and is sleeping all the time, especially in college a person who sleeps all the time, especially in class. It’s like if you’re going to sleep don’t come to class, because realistically you’re not going to learn.

Mr. Blue: I think that they [bad students] sleep and they’re lethargic and lazy about everything in class and they always don’t do assignments, or rarely do them, and rarely ask questions, and when they do ask questions they’re silly questions that are like out there.

Mr. Pink: They’re trying to pretend that they’re interacting.

In other words, the greatest conceptual abstraction is found in the vague holding of each other accountable to their judgments of the distinctions. In sum, the academic world is an institutionally provided-for domain of accountability for activities engaged in by students (Heritage, 1984). The perception of “doing bad” through the actions of interacting, sleeping, coming to class, doing work, asking silly questions, or pretending to interact is not excluded from the judgments made by others regarding who you are as a student. But it does blur the lines between who is a good and bad student. More importantly, Mr. Pink’s statement suggests that amongst the students’ community there is a phenomenon playing with the distinctions for a given end. As the emerging dialogue between participants shows, there is a demonstration of being “bad” that indicates a procedure for deciding student identity which adds up to accomplishing characteristics of
either “good” or “bad.” What should be considered are manner in which the assertion of playing ‘good student’ can have upon the larger student community:

Mr. White: I don’t understand [Mr. Pink], play out that [pretending to interact], how do you pretend that you’re interacting?

Mr. Pink: Well any student can go into a class, not read any material and still basically go through the motions of being in the class and kind of participating. Like I can go into any type of biology class during the week and step in and sit down and know that I can, if the teacher asks a question, I can raise my hand from past knowledge of what I’ve learned in high school and what I’ve learned through other things like “Jeopardy” or something and I can talk about anything in the world and I can basically bullshit my way through. Anyone can do that, I can walk into any communication class and they can be talking about critical pedagogy and I can sit down and talk about something totally ridiculous that nobody is ever going to care about. Anybody can play any role they want as long as they put their mind to it. They can go to a class and not care about it; they can do anything they want.

Mr. White: Ok, I agree with what Mr. Pink is saying, it’s very easy to go to a class and involve yourself, but at the same time involve yourself in a way that’s not practical to what is trying to be accomplished by the teacher and the students in that classroom. This is when other students can make the ‘bad student’ feel very
uncomfortable. I have been in classes where the ‘bad student’ doesn’t want to represent that mantle out of fear of being chastised by his [or her] peers.

Thus, participants recognize the movement through the mantle of “student,” regardless of whether one wears the mantle of a “good” or “bad” student as a necessity for social acceptance. For students to assimilate the distinctions of a “good student” in order to be deemed acceptable to the hierarchy of codes for learning. The value placed on being ‘bad’ is addressed by Mr. White to mean that you bring a value that is deemed unacceptable and disruptive to student social order, you can be punished for that behavior. At stake for the students who choose to “pretend“ is retribution through what I have witnessed as an instructor: open hostility, course requirement anxiety, and social disapproval. For students who are predominantly interested in being learners, the status of “being or doing bad,” serves as a legitimate ground for initiating morally accountable sanctions for said behavior. In this context, it is not enough to as Mr. Pink says, “pretend to interact,” a student must be genuinely perceived and accounted for as practicing a particular “student mantle.”

As expressed by Mr. Blue below, reflexivity is the process where your accountability to the social activity, (in this environment, learning), becomes something that you just do, which happens to inform the mantle that one wears. While no one participant offers an admission of being “good” or “bad,” participants are clear about being a student who is accountable to the mantles, through which one can travel. Mr. Blue explains this process with amazing clarity:

Mr. Blue: The greatest distinction between “good” and “bad” student is the point where the student chooses to take on being a “good student.” It is where they make the learned information their own, and put a new spin on it and makes it
applicable without thinking about. I don’t typically think about the process, I just am a student, I learn, I adopt, I accept, I reject, I act, I learn. I think that there’s always a way to make learning meaningful.

The importance of Mr. Blue’s statement is that in participants’ dealings with their institutional world as students, they are presented with one strong and paramount problem: the presentation of themselves as students who are seen as they choose themselves to be seen. The task of accomplishing this has to be carried throughout the students’ dealings with the academic institution; this includes, but is not limited to, professor, advisors, parents, and each other. Further, the perceptions and expectations placed upon them has to be managed as a condition, something that they just do. It is a part of their perceived development as a student. This means students need to act beyond suspicion with those they may meet in their courses, but also seeming credible to those who might know their pasts as students.

To the above point, students subscribe to a natural order of making choices, within which being a student is treated as a developmental process. While as students, they are held accountable to two particular institutions: academic and student-social. There is intricate knowledge to the management of daily life within these contexts. Students, regardless of their perceived success or failure, seek to conform with (and thus reproduce) the ability to make choices to participate in institutional order as “good students” through their actions.

**Accomplishing student: Educational identities as productive choices**

As I was observing, the participants discuss the choices they make as students, the impression was given of someone constantly lying in wait, always ready to make an instantaneous choice. I could not help but think of the rouge traveler, looking for that
strange adventure while exploring a new city. She/he wants the excitement, but does not really want the uncomfortable unknown. Yet students are not pursuing their adventure in the open cities of foreign countries, but in the cities of cultural values, and their tracks can be traced through artificial spaces like classrooms and choices they make in these classrooms. The acts of resistance by students to adopt the cultural conditions of “good student” can be seen in the choices made by students. Related to the above discussion understanding how students make choices, is to appreciate that educational identity is the sum of productive choices.

While there is a non-acknowledgement of their role as a “bad student” in their dialogue, I am not arguing that these participants are “bad students.” However, one can see in their dialogue these participants practicing those behaviors and they hold a significant amount of resentment of the “bad student” general attitude. “Doing student” is demonstrated by the results of choices made. In saying this, participants seem to presume in their talking that the typical characteristics of “doing good student” have some kind of antithesis. In a simplified way, because one is imbued a “student” by larger society, choices become the apparatus that is so decisive for the educational identity of “doing good or bad.” Choices are a part of a culture; consequently, this culture is recognizable in them. Roughly speaking, participants have been very clear that there are two kinds of cultural choices that can be distinguished: choices that promote learning and those that hinder learning. All of the participants of one particular focus group who took pseudonyms of various elements (in particular) were very clear that it is not an issue with skills, but with choices made by students to not fit in with structured notions of “good student:”

Ice: I think that a bad student isn’t necessarily someone who isn’t catching on or isn’t getting good grades. I think a bad student is just someone who doesn’t care
they don’t ever put forth effort or they take everything as a joke. I know I’ve taken a few classes where you know that people are capable and they have so much potential of being a good student and doing good work but they don’t put forth the effort and I think that in general it’s a lack of responsibility and caring on their part.

Fire: I feel that we are trained to get tools to navigate our school systems, but we have to either make it part of us or not.

Aire: I think that a bad student is someone who complains about anything and everything, like the simplest test or homework assignment. They make choices about what to do, and they make it seem like the teacher is the one at fault and they’re the one who is stressing them out with work or anything like that. I think it’s just the maturity level of the choices made that makes good students and bad students sometimes.

Water: I think that I understand what you’re saying but I also think that it’s the teachers’ job because they’re there to teach you, but if they don’t teach you the way that you should be taught I feel like we are being funneled…

Earth: [Interrupting Water] I think we are being funneled into this good student mold that it sort of sounds to me that to be a bad student you have to get out of this funnel by making choices and taking responsibility for your learning. So it takes work to be a bad student and I think that it’s the opposite that everyone’s
natural student behavior is that you need to get the most out of the least amount of work, with the biggest results, which is generally what we describe as a bad student—do little and expect lots, but that’s not the case. They do little but don’t get lots and um it takes work to be the good student to be able to work hard for something good instead of expecting it to fall into your lap.

As I understood the above participants, there are many tools that can guide students through the traditional socialized world of education in order to bring them to the place where choices are ultimately theirs. In this process they change the expectations into their perceptions, which influence the choices they have to make. Through given tools, developing their own, growing mentally, and educationally maturing, they create their own perceptions and expectations. The choices that students then make, I would argue acquire an unnatural, improbable form; it becomes cultural. This production of their perceptions and expectations is the result of their own working through issues disconnected from context in which they are taking place. Believing, as Ice points out that there is a “lack of responsibility,” or as Fire addresses, “making it [training, education] a part of us or not,” or as Aire points to a blame shifting who is really responsible for making educational choices. The results of many of their choices are admittedly produced by how they think it should naturally be as a student, but hardly seem to have been realistically informed by notions of equity, race, respect, complexities of social action, building community, or the promotion of social justice.

Choices made by students can be traced to a variety of institutionalized events and practices. As Earth points out there is an underlying expectation that “we are being funneled into this good student mold…that to be a bad student you have to get out of this funnel by making choices and taking responsibility for your learning.” An educational
identity in this regard is made relevant to the choices made in the mundane activities of students’ daily lives. As we have seen, to accomplish student is not confined to contexts in action, but to the choices made in relationship to possibilities being presented. Moreover, being a “good or bad” student is not managed by hard-fast rules, but by a student’s ability to make choices in regard to a range of issues that typically inform students’ perceptions and expectations.

The perceptions and expectations in the usual sense are extensions of who the participants are in relation to their choices made. This point bears repeating— the choices are part of a culture and, consequently, this culture is recognizable in them. This point can be seen in the participants of “The Reservoir Dogs” group, as they began to discuss their own identities and how these interactions closely aligned with their own indexical accounts of being “bad.” As we consider the preservation of a student identity, identity is conceptualized as a site of negotiation and contestation for the “self.” Given the fluidity of such identifications of being a “good or bad” student, we can look at educational identities as productive choices, a viable point to locate continuities and discontinuities. For students, an educational identity has its use extended to include a space where they develop their ability to survey (a variety of perceptions) and control the expectations placed upon them. The discussion provided a slippery slope of disavowing their classification of being a “bad student.” The ensuing rationalization was one of “sometimes a good student” and “sometimes a bad student;”

Mr. White: Personally I believe that it is impossible for anyone to sit in this room and say that they are a good student every minute of every hour of every day. The big difference between developing your own identity is that except for those moments that you’re not a good student, what do you do with the rest of that
time? With the rest of your day? With the next three years? What do you do with it?

Mr. Blue: I definitely agree with Mr. White

Mr. Brown: I agree with Mr. White too.

Mr. Orange: I agree with Mr. White in understanding that there are degrees of being a good student, and there are degrees of being a bad student, and I think that everyone kind of feels that middle ground where, ‘yeah I’m a good student and I go to my classes and I take my notes and I try to implement the information into what I do and I try to critically understand things.’ But then there are points where you slack off on work or skip a class or two and I think that everyone is in the middle ground, I don’t think there is anyone who… I think it takes away from your being a person and your own humanity if you try to be too much of a perfect student and study all the time and only do work all the time.

Mr. Blue: I think it all comes down to your personal definition of a good student…how you practice being, and the choices you make…it all comes down to personal definition and then the general social definition.

Mr. Pink: I agree with Mr. Blue, because right now I’m at the point in my semester where in certain classes I have started to add up points so I can figure out what I have to get in classes. I know other people do that. You’re at a point where you’re like ‘OK I’ve got my final exam and I accept a B in this class.’ So
you add up points and you say ‘well I can get a 50% on my final exam and I can still pull my B.’ And then I think to myself, ‘well if I get a 90% I can get an A.’ And there are certain levels of how realistic that can be, especially for certain classes.

Most interesting about the above discussion, is I am left with a nagging question regarding Mr. Blue and Mr. Pink: When did the choices made by students regarding which mantle to wear (doing good or bad) become secondary to just passing though or to earning a letter grade, rather than learning? What does this say about their values or the value of what, as an academic institution, we are imparting? So much of the earlier dialogues on how being a student is about maintaining institutional realities and the choices made in order to understand what it means to be a student set up a service-like relationship: school serves the student, helps them to acquire knowledge in order to make the most informed choice regarding their educational identity. An educational identity associated with graduating was considered the culmination of students’ ability to negotiate their values in relationship to larger society. Is this still true if the students are just searching for a way to pass through? Do they still have those negotiation skills?

**Accomplishing student: Rationalizations of productive choices**

Not discounting the above questions, participants do not appear to grasp the reflexivity of choices made by students. Reflexivity, like choices, displaces query from the foundations of traditional social science explanations and discourse. Reflexivity, as Rorty (1979, p. 320) says, is an “abnormal discourse” that can disturb or even disrupt the complacency and obliviousness of social action. In this case, the moments students feel uncomfortable, challenged, or as though their educational identity is threatened, students quickly rationalize that they had an “off moment” and will do better in the future.
Participants’ reflexivity serves them as a guide to venture beyond the “off moment” to the mechanisms that allowed the choices to settle into an expectation that took place. This type of reflexive rationalization can uncover their assumptions and practices that make the discursive reality possible, intelligible, but also open to change (Pollner, 1991).

Lynch (2000) and Pollner (1991) share a paradigmatic position that offers a thought on how students, who are confused by the choices, can reposition themselves when everything seems to be slipping from their control. As one oscillates between the reflexive and the mundane, regardless of the space in which educational identity exists, he or she is producing the most unremarkable, banal, and taken-for-granted features of perception and expectation. It is these features that, as Pollner (1987) says, mask the realization of a mandate that requires new ways of thinking to recognize and describe the grasp “old ways of doing things” have on student’s actions. Reflexivity from this ethnomethodological and student-based position becomes a provocative and a promising reward for the effort if students are willing to take that risk.

Students typically function in the role of choice makers in the academic institution’s learning aspects. Of course there are intentions and interests concealed behind choices presented:

Seneca: I think a bad student is someone, like I said earlier, a good student is someone who applies themselves and tries to learn anything possible that they can, I think a bad student is the opposite of that. Someone who doesn’t apply himself or herself and doesn’t want to learn, just sits there because they need the grade.
Euclid: I agree I think that a bad student is just someone who is there because they have to be, like in high school, you have to be there. They would much rather not be there, they are just doing it because it’s required of them. I feel that you’re a bad student if you don’t want to learn, if you’re just going along and whatever and not putting forth as much effort as you could, and possibly distracting the class, so it is harder for them.

Anaxi: Going along with the ideas that Seneca said, I feel that the class clown is usually thought of as the kids who are not as smart, kind of joke their way though class. But I think a lot of times it’s just like insecurity and maybe they aren’t doing so well and they want to joke around, maybe they’re doing really well and they are embarrassed because other students are not. I know in some of my college classes, whether its good or not, I often try to hold back because I feel that I have a lot to say because I do my homework and I study a lot, so I know more about the material. But often-times I feel bad for participating so much because I don’t want to get that stereotype that oh there’s the book worm, she’s trying to take over the class. I think it’s almost hard to find that in between point.

Phyrro: Not to be too serious, but I guess I agree with everyone. It is really hard to know how to be good or who is good. The same goes with how to be bad or who is bad. I try to make the best choices I can, but I never seem to know when others or I are doing it right. I guess it is a part of me [my educational identity] that is a struggle to figure out.
I find myself struck by Phyrro’s solemn moment. It seems that participants themselves are stuck trying to figure out how their educational identities fit within the most basic of elements of learning. Given that a foundational education claim is “meaning is the construction of learning,” participants are laying groundwork for a significant argument that their perceptions and expectations are in flux. This is because their observations and (taught) interpretive practices are generating an ambiguity of what “doing good or bad student” means in a variety of educational settings. Radical referential inquiry, by contrast, would recognize that reflective inquiry occurs in an ambient area of perceptions and expectations.

In relationship to the larger dissertation, by considering educational identity more directly in the pedagogy development process, we can more directly address the participants’ call for a space to engage in praxis. Given the way participants are talking about their shifts in “doing student,” the context of educational identity seems clear that students have an understanding that there is conflict in how best to move through this process of “doing student.” In the participants’ dialogue, like Phyrro saying, “I try to make the best choices I can, but I never seem to know when others or I are doing it right,” I clearly hear that they are try to make choices, but seek more guidance toward a reflexive process, a critical process that allows them to more freely explore how their self is constituted in particular environments. More simply put, they would like assurance that they are “doing it right.”

As participants continue to discuss their struggles regarding how much to put themselves out there, their dialogue demonstrates an understanding that the educational
institution (the roles played by students, teachers, administrators) is to help them be learners. Participants understand that the educational institution can provide tools to learn with and a space in which to learn from a variety of cultural objects if they make particular choices. But choices made regarding educational identity do not work in that sense according to participants. I want to consider that an educational identity is not meant to change the world but to serve as a guiding mantle that can help students make choices on how to change the meaning of the world. Educational institutions are mainly a place to play out ideas and grow:

Phyrro: It’s kind of hard to be the best student that you can be when you’re worried about that type of stuff. Like the whole participating stuff I hold myself back too, and I do it because I don’t want to be labeled I guess.

Euclid: I can agree with that, coming into college and having lectures with hundreds of people, I’ve noticed that a lot of people don’t talk if the prof asks a question everyone will just be silent. And I know if you’re the one that talks up everyone just looks at you, so it’s kind of hard to want to say something during a big lecture when no one else is talking.

Phyrro: It is really intimidating to, like, talk in front of that many people. Its really scary and that’s why I don’t do I because I just I don’t know, I think I’m going to say something stupid and everyone will laugh at me and I don’t like that.
Euclid: But, like, sometimes in smaller classroom settings it’s intimidating too because you feel that you have to participate because there’s not as many people, but you also feel that what you’re saying is so much more paid attention to. You feel that you have to know exactly what you’re talking about because you expect to be called upon, you expect to participate, so sometimes it causes you to prepare more for classes or be more concerned about it.

In this regard, reflexivity becomes an important component in building participants sense of community. As scholars and teachers, we recognize how community is created when students struggle together to achieve a common goal. Sometimes the opportunity for collaboration arises out of the conditions of coursework, the class taken, or values of the school. But, for a reflective community to emerge, a manageable educational environment needs to foster a process to create opportunities to work through peer pressure and general fears of speaking and idea exploration. For participants’ these are the cornerstones of the learning process and being a student.

In the next few excerpts, through reflexivity, we see students who feel programmed to respond without thinking and the choices made by them are more about rationalizations of one of the possibilities contained within a programmatic structure of pedagogy. Currently, this activity of peer critique has taken on the mantle of being critical and building confidence to express ones’ ideas. Where the student doing the critique probably does not view his/her actions as “doing bad.” However, the number of choices that can be made it express ones’ self is numerous, yet overwhelmingly participants make the choice to remain silent:
Phyrro: There is a girl in that class that if I say something she automatically completely tears it down, and she makes me not want to talk ever. And I know the subject, I’ve been in it five years, but every time I talk she always has something to say. Like she’ll try to correct me, like she even tries to correct the teacher, so it’s just really frustrating.

Euclid: Yeah, I know “bad” students like that; they think that since they know it, they think that they are better than all of us. Because I actually do study my materials at night and I try to learn as much as I can, but because of them I don’t participate.

Anaxi: I would consider that more of a bad student in that people like that can downplay other students and put them down and not be a motivation to fellow students. I think that hurts the entire class and that’s what makes a bad student, someone who makes the other members uncomfortable and are almost pompous in the way that they think they are right all the time, even when they might not be. That girl she [Phyrro] was talking about, it’s like she degrades people. I wouldn’t talk in that class.

While communication researchers (e.g., McCroskey and Richmond, 1983; Wanzer and McCroskey, 1998; Rosenfeld, 1993; Ayres, 2000) researchers allude in some of their work to issues of agency, voice, classroom power, and identity, critical communication pedagogy is the first attempt by the communication discipline to directly work with these kinds of social justice issues. Turning the commitments of Fassett and
Warren (2007) into practical teaching tools that could be integrated into existing pedagogy, would be a step toward liberation for Phyrro’s frustration, Euclid’s not wanting to participate, and Anaxi’s not wanting to talk in class.

Participants as students are keenly aware that educational programs being developed function as a part of a larger institutional program. What that program or its purpose is, they are not always sure, but for some of the participants, they know that learning in college is supposed to help them figure out who they are supposed to be or what kind of valued citizen they can become.

**Accomplishing student: Conflicting outside perceptions and expectations**

With the notion of being a “bad student” looming, participants expressed being tied psychologically to different corresponding elements of a natural developed pedagogy.

This want for learning to be ecological is contrasted with a conflict to their understanding that they are not machines to be programmed with a sense of citizenship. They recognize that classes taken function on their behalf, helping them to learn. But they are also aware that classes function on behalf of the academic institution, which functions on behalf of a larger agenda, which functions on behalf of a socio-economic agenda, and so on.

As dialogue shows, there is unfortunately a question of ownership to the learning process. At times it seems that the participants are irrelevant; their primary concern is who is developing the academic programs and how to appease them. Participants recognize that in many disciplines, there is an overwhelming pressure to develop learning with more accountable objects, events, and activities. Often beyond academic requirements, students are treated with a “double-edged” sword. With participants addressing success defined by outside parties (i.e. parents and other family members
paying for school, competing values, defined success, *US News World Report:* “Best Colleges,” etc.) they are left wondering who is teaching society about academic senses of accountability outside the scope of classroom settings:

Phyrro: I think that as long as you try then you’re still going to be a good student in history, even if you’re not really good at it. But it’s also— it is harder to try when you’re not succeeding or if you feel that no matter how hard you try you still can’t get a good grade, you still can’t get recognized or you try to speak out in class and get shot down. Who I am supposed to listen to is a lot to handle. It’s harder and harder to keep trying I guess, so the academic system kind of sets you up to fail, even if you are not academically a good student, it is harder to be an all-around good student in the multiple classrooms I am a student in. I think that’s where the term ‘bad student’ comes in, when you’re not being praised for everything. Even say you get a C on a test they’re still like ‘hey you can still get an A.’ I know my parents were always pushing ‘A, A, A,’ instead of, like, they don’t see what I’m doing in the classroom, they don’t see if I’m trying there, they don’t know. My parents considered me a bad student if I got lower than a B, but my school says if too many people get As than things are too easy.

Anaxi: My uncle is actually the one paying for my college, and if I don’t get a 3.0 or above, he is going to stop paying for my college, but that bothers me because he’s like 500 miles away…they [relatives] don’t see how I act in class. Isn’t learning supposed to be about my growth?
Euclid: Going off of what Phyrro said, I think that one of the biggest motivations is outside motivations…I have a very close friend who did not do as well in school last semester and his parents gave him a really hard time…they compared him to me in that ‘why is she getting the good grades and you’re not.’ And I think that by comparison it kills any motivation that could have been there.

Seneca: It’s true, my mom always compared me to my cousin. She’d be like ‘your cousin’s going to the same type of school you are, he is taking the same kind of classes…’ I have a hard time connecting stuff [in school] to my life but my mom feels that studying and going to class should be enough.

Phyrro: Not only that, but with me I have three older brothers and two of them didn’t graduate high school. It was a big thing that I got good grades, ‘because you don’t want to end up like your brothers, I don’t want to see you with your brothers grades.’ That was one thing that always was in the back of my mind when I was in school and even now since none of them went to college. It’s always in the back of my mind.

As discussed amongst the participants, there is a “double-edged” sword of accountability to structured objects like grading criteria. In general, participants have received messages by teachers and parents that “good students” are defined by grades, as opposed to a learning process. Consider Phyrro’s parent’s creation of a sense that being a ‘bad student,’ is defined by grades less than a B, which is in contrast to his perception that it is what “I am doing in the classroom…trying.” This is contrasted by the threats of
Anaxi’s uncle of financial repercussions for not producing a particular grade point average. Euclid’s friend’s parents and Seneca’s mother, who use comparison to judge their students’ learning process, further polarize being accountable to particular perceptions and expectations.

Conflicting outside perceptions and expectations are quite contradictory with recent discussions of educational philosophy, classroom development, pedagogy, and critical communication pedagogy, for that matter. We have to recognize that, as scholars, we are asking students to buy into a reversing of what they perceive as “objective, institutional facts,” for a more holistic sense of learning. From the participants’ dialogue on this point, institutions are not providing a built structure to understand this “new” social structure or how to express that to others [family, teachers, advisors] that they may be accountable too. These notions of accomplishment make up a significant sense of how students understand the objective features of what is considered normal or “good.” It also sets-up the confusing elements of social facts that comprise what is “bad.”

This is an important point in considering that the social facts of “grades, grading criteria, and transcripts” are treated both as a “factual” and “natural” determinant of knowledge and ability. The empirical data is fascinating, considering that participants insist upon these criteria’s binding powers as a provision to their learning process. The perceived definitiveness that serves the student’s actions—studying means grades serve as “facts,” that grades show knowledge. Often this is sharply defined in a “natural” context—that is the way it was for parents during their educational experience. It becomes clear how conflicting outside perceptions and expectations serve participants’ identity binary of “doing good or bad student” as communication phenomena. The students exert a scheme of interpretation as grounds for their choices, but also their
educational identities and their subsequent development of their own perceptions and expectations.

In this capacity the perceptions and expectations requires a student to serve in one aptitude, but are in turn unable to function in another. The traditional protocol of determining academic success (i.e., grades) or the learning process does not seem to serve the actual breadth of what students perceive they are required to demonstrate in the totality of their student identity. In this regard, power has moved from the students to the teachers and academic institutions. There seems to be a game of using benchmarkers like grades as a power match. While this is not a new phenomenon, the fact is that most students are willing to forsake learning in order to participate in this game—a hierarchical power game, supported by parents, teachers, academic institutions, and society at large. As a teacher, I find this very problematic.

**Accomplishing student: Perceptions and expectations as signs of belonging**

Academic values are ubiquitous: in texts, research journals, articles given to students, in the classrooms, residence halls, and in the general spaces where students foster their educational identities. What does this signify? Thus far, participants suggest that academic identity is signified as perceptions and expectations in and through educational programs. Participants recognize these programs as society driven concepts that compel them to reify identity ascriptions in their [participants’] behaviors and actions. Most people outside of education view the process of learning as functioning in a vacuum, something that does not happen in the “real world,” but can. Admittedly, participants will concede that the state of educational identity is reflected in the values that they interact with, but they do not worry too much about these larger implications. Most philosophies of education will therefore seem to participants a complete waste of mental energy. In contrast, the objective reality is that being a student is an ongoing
accomplishment of collaborative activities of daily life. In most regards, the activities of learning are mundane, and taken for granted as part of a “natural process.” Within this study participants assert that the social structures of education and the social reality of being a student are reproductions of institutional settings and accounting practices of its participants.

As participants tacitly accept that they are looking at their educational identity and their role in the world as one and the same, they also struggle to make both relevant. In considering the everyday environments that comprise the space where the student identity is fostered, participants provide insight to how the environment contributes to the shaping of their student identity. Therefore, in the participants’ dialogue we see them looking for signs within the environment to furnish an explanation for all of the happenings, a key to understanding how one belongs.

It is clear that educational institutions attempt to promote an environment of an increasingly organized and ordered society, which, by participants’ standards, permit less free and spontaneous expression of choice. The individual who feels his/her accomplishment of student is in conflict with the environment, whose personal values differ from his/her situation, who feels tension toward his/her classroom and even toward other students, feels trapped. While not surprising, students offered characterizations of the classroom that demonstrate their understandings of what to expect, but also begin to show colorations between their behaviors, good and bad, and how the environment shapes some of how they “do student:”

Seneca: I know like coming to college you kind of have the preconceived notion of, I don’t know, ‘the Gilmore Girls classroom, like Harvard, the big auditorium, the plush chairs, like ‘Legally Blonde.’ The kind of lecture halls that are in there,
and I’m campus tour guide and we take incoming students through three different sized classrooms, I say on my tours, ‘I know one of the shocking things about this classroom is that it looks a lot like your high school classroom except that it doesn’t have all of the little posters, and that it might have a little bit more technology in it, but basically the same set up, the blackboard, the desks they don’t all match they don’t all look nice. ‘It’s just kind of like in college they kind of assume that the environment doesn’t really matter, but personally like I find that in Canton Hall our classrooms there are more comfy chairs and the colors sometimes makes it more inviting in a way. Whereas in other classrooms the stuff is mis-matched, and I feel kind of silly thinking that way, ‘what difference it’s just a classroom, it shouldn’t really matter, it’s just a lesson,’ but like, I have the privilege of being in nicer classrooms through Appleseed and then through the honors program; our honors room is nicer. That I sometimes feel it’s more conducive to learning in a way.

Euclid: I definitely agree with that, like, last year I took classes in Appleseed and I definitely learned a lot better, and then going and having a class in Midway Hall where there’s no windows at all you just sit in a cell basically and it reminds me of a prison and I can’t — I would just drift off and stare into space and not pay attention at all. Just sit there, and you could definitely tell with my grades and everything like that. I still would participate, but it was just boring and it seemed like time went so slow. Like here [in Canton Hall] we have, like, the hall, which
is like, all windows, and I like it because I don’t get as bored and it’s so bright in here and you can look outside. I don’t know, I like windows.

Phyrro: The design teacher says, because we have a class in Midway Hall and it’s a lecture and it’s like a cell, she said a lot of the reason why these buildings aren’t successful is because there isn’t natural light coming in. I definitely think that being in a classroom that has windows and isn’t a cell is definitely more conducive to learning.

There is innocence in the participants’ talk of educational environments. I hear them speaking of academic institutions as ones that are faced with both black-and-white and colored conditions. As soon as I naively asked them to talk about their perceptions and expectations of the educational environments they interact with, I realized that they were embarking on the very type of discussion they were trying to avoid. The collective actions of academic environments are full of anecdotal features that are recognizable to participants as constitutive, essential, and accountable within particular institutionalized frameworks.

At stake in the dialogue below is a perceived process enacted by education that supplies resources for the maintenance and repair of a student identity binary. The participants’ dialogue below shows this accomplishment by academic environments in relationship to student identity. Within teachers’ attempts to disrupt “norms” there lays a reproduction of the relevant accounting (defining success/failure, grades, taking courses, perceived lack of choices, threats to graduation) that maintains, reinforces, or renews the larger institutions’ perceptions and expectations of students.
In education, there cannot be a black-and-white state of things because black-and-white cases are borderline. It is like trying to define success or failure in education, defining who will make a good or bad graduate teaching assistant by his/her socio-economic status, or even asking students to classify themselves into conditions of “doing good” or “doing bad.” Black and white states of education are theoretical; they can never actually exist in academic worlds. But black-and-white questions do exist because there are concepts for the research conducted, scholars developing conference themes, books being published, acceptance and rejection letters sent to graduate students, and participants who can trace how their perceptions and expectations for institutional realities were reinforced. Simply because of the participants’ historically recognizable stories black-and-white exists:

Seneca: My perceptions and expectations would definitely have been reinforced throughout kindergarten and beyond because we sat in a classroom that was set up as a cubical, like cube-shaped, and from kindergarten on, that’s how it was. And when I came to college that’s how it was as well, so I guess that’s how I or we came to these notions.

Anaxi: Often I have classes that make you sit in a circle. This was new when I came to college. If you’re sitting in a circle you feel like you’re accountable, like you’re being watched. My sign language class, we have to sit, it’s at 8 in the morning so everyone’s tired, but we have to sit in a U-shape, except when we take quizzes. It is such a visual experience. In the circle, I feel accountable to what we are doing in class, plus it is easier to make eye contact, which makes it easier to participate.
Phyrro: I think exactly what Anaxi was just talking about, in that one of the things we went over in IPC [speech class] was the idea of panoptics, if you think you are being watched at all times you’re going to be on your best behavior, so if you’re being watched and sitting in an environment where everyone is watching you, like in a circle or in an environment that is bright, you’re always being watched and yeah, and you’re going to participate and not fall asleep because you don’t want to look stupid. Eventually though participation becomes second nature.

The dialogue above accounts for some of the ways academic environments can legitimize the rhetorical judging of peers. Hearing Anaxi identify her perceptions and expectations as being shaped from “kindergarten on, that’s how it was…college as well,” and hearing Anaxi and Phyrro discuss their student identity as an environmental condition; it becomes clear that the developed and accepted process is panoptic in nature. One cannot help but think of the rhetorical process of feeling constantly watched and the ensuing discipline for failure to comply. The watching and discipline in the form described above carries a power that intends to produce docile bodies (Foucault, 1977). Within the described environment, the student is seen as something to be manipulated, shaped, and trained. Also, the method for participation relies on certain techniques of teaching and learning, regardless of critical pedagogy. Studies know that individuals are visible and the supervision is continuous. An examination of education shows that the power at play is invisible, but renders everybody visible. This normalizing of students’ judgment has a goal that submits participation is about corrective action. Therefore, in order to accomplish student, to belong as a student, institutional environments are developed to account for students perceptions and expectations. This process holds fast to
the notion that a students’ environment fundamentally grounds the terms of their motivation to act with particular behaviors.

As the uninterrupted dialogue below shows, these behavior decisions (toward “good” or “bad”) are based on the participants’ perceptions and expectations, beginning with environmental expectations for their understandings of what constitutes “student,” but then follows suit to what they (or are conditioned) believe belonging should mean. Ways of communicating and performing related with student identity which were in previous dialogue is taken for granted, has begun to become subject to hesitancies and tentativeness which are characteristics of an emerging reflexive awareness. In turn, they may also be signs of changes in the constitutive perceptions and expectations held by participants:

Mr. Pink: I think a learning environment should promote an amount of community to it, it should promote unity within the student body to a degree, and I think it needs to be like ‘here’s your class, here are your peers, you have the ability to go and interact with them and we’re going to leave that available to you.’ I don’t believe that should be pressed upon people, ‘we’re going to leave it up to you, but we’re going to force you to do this with your community.’ I think that community is important, I think that is a key to learning, especially in a learning environment. But I think that another key to a learning environment is that the prof or teacher promotes learning, and critical learning in that, because just learning is kind of what Mr. White was saying a little bit ago. You can just become this mindless entity in class and just take in what you need and write
down and memorize, but I think that you need someone who promotes critical learning.

Mr. White: On that note, I’d have to say that some of the stuff that Mr. Pink was saying was a little idealistic in the fact that a learning space, it’s very hard to argue that a learning space is anywhere where you desire it to be. More or less a learning space I think by standard definition is anywhere where there is a teacher in front of a group of students, trying to impart knowledge. Whether that is simply telling them that this is the way it is, or whether that’s a prof working with the students to help them form their own ideas on what education is. I think it’s just a little idealistic to say that it can be wherever you want it to be and that it’s all socially constructed.

Mr. Pink: I understand on where Mr. White is going on this counter argument, I think that it is idealistic that any place is a learning environment to a degree, but I know that if I went to a casino in Vegas and lost a million dollars playing slots, I’m going to learn something from that experience, it’s going to be a learning environment. You’re going to learn from almost anything you do in life. And I agree, a teacher in a classroom with students imparting knowledge on you is the easiest idea for that setting. If you go and ask somebody what a classroom is, if you have a hundred people, you’re probably going to have three people with the ideal classroom idea. But I think it’s important to recognize that that can occur.
Mr. Blue: I think, idealistic or not the classroom for me is wherever you experience learning. And it’s a broad connection but I’m going to try to make it, going to Catholic school with my faith specifically, I’m not an avid church-goer, but my argument was ‘I don’t have to go to church to experience my faith, I experience more through outside of home, like going on my senior retreat and experiencing more than just going to a building one hour once a week.’ I know it’s kind of a weird connection, but, like, it’s the same thing in a learning environment, you don’t have to go to a specific place at a given time with a teacher there to be part of a learning environment. It could just be you sitting in your room reading the book, taking notes for yourself, wherever you learn then that’s your classroom.

Mr. Pink: I think that coming into college everyone has their view of a learning environment and this is leading into the idea of a good student or a bad student. Depending on what someone’s vision of a learning environment would be, it’s important to understand that a good student in someone’s eyes falls into their primary learning environment or their ideal learning environment, the environment that they accept and I think that that is important. Everyone has a good student in mind, like my good student is not the same as Mr. Blue’s good student or Mr. Orange’s good student or Nice Girl’s good student, and my bad student isn’t the same as Mr. White’s bad student, but you have to understand that everyone’s good and bad students have qualities that link them, through the
experiences that everyone has had throughout their schooling. And I think that is important to recognize, that there’s no bad student and there’s no good student, there’s something in between and everybody just has to kind of come to terms with recognizing their own belief system.

Mr. Blue: I think coming from high school you have this generalized idea that like for me, before I got here my idea of classroom was ‘you go to this place at this time and you learn this, you write notes and you learn them for the test,’ but then you get to college and you take classes that are outside the norm that you’ve been sort of brainwashed with for the last 12 years and you begin to see that it doesn’t have to be like it was in high school. It doesn’t have to be a set learning place. Once you’ve experienced that you can kind of take it and go with it when you go to other classes, well, like ‘I don’t just have to sit here and take notes and learn it for the class and forget it.’ It’s just that initial challenge of those past ideas that sort of opens your eyes to ‘I don’t just have to accept that.’

The variety of participants’ environmental management strategies and procedures, the resistance of traditional environments in relationship to their attempts to develop routines for their daily life as “good students,” takes on the features of a “membering test.” In almost any occasion of their student life, institutionalized features of student identity and their status are being produced and reproduced by “normalizing expectations (they way they were trained for it to be)” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 69). The participants further suggest that, institutionalized educational identities are being produced and reproduced in a natural “matter of fact,” dating back to kindergarten. For some, fissures
of moral accountability simultaneously support its reproduction. This moral accountability is seen in teachers who change the participants’ expectations with differing actions or who hold the students accountable to the discrepancies in those past logics. To make these observations on the socially organized character of “doing student” is not to deny the facts that reproduction is done, but to stress the experiences that make students feel more in control of their learning, to feel like they are “doing good.”

I conclude this chapter by noting that the accomplishment of student as I have laid it out, in understanding who students are in their actions, how students make choices, the participants’ rationalizations, and their sense of belonging, is filtered through a larger belief that these glimpses of student identity are fleeting. Student identity is possible to see when focusing on the mundane actions of students in everyday life. As a result, the monolithic nature of academic institutions’ reproductive processes can be preserved as principally indiscernible to those who participate actively in them. As all of the participants’ dialogue suggests, these realities continue to exist as a “factual” and “natural” part of being a student. As students make choices, their perceptions develop, and expectations play out in various academic settings. From the participants’ perspective, a student identity simply has always been a mantle given by an academic institution, not one that has been honed, developed, and learned.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: The critical turns, the critical exits, but not a turn-off

My name is Nicholas. Not too funny of a name for a teacher, I know. But I am part of a larger trend of teachers who are trying to connect better with their students. I call them by their first names, so why not offer the same courtesy? My power as a perceived professor is as obvious as the syllabus that has my name on its green paper.

My parents were teachers. Students called them by “Mr.” and “Mrs.” They met in a lab while working with special education students. After their lab sessions their time was spent discussing speech pathology, the new Slingerland method, and the emerging disciplinary conversations regarding the confusions in classroom power. They didn’t name me after that discussion, but after the place where they drank wine and ate pizza. Not many people are named after a restaurant; I would venture to guess that it is usually the other way around.

My mentors’ names can be found on the cover of a new book, *Critical Communication Pedagogy*, a book that would have been helpful to my teaching much earlier. I have known them both for as long as I can remember my interest in critical pedagogy. They, for all purposes, have been my mentors and advisors throughout my trials, tribulations, and attempts to navigate the exploratory waters of the communication discipline. What this all means is that they try to keep me out of as much trouble as I inflict on them and their work.

They give me a hard time, but I have never felt caught or trapped by their idiosyncratic desires or my own developing pedagogical commitments. Their questions, stories, and reminders keep me in check, a state of constant self-reflexivity.
But really, I feel like a little brother.

They conclude their book with a chapter entitled “Grappling with contradictions: Mentoring, in and through the critical turnoff;” I conclude this dissertation with a play on that chapter title. Although, like a little brother I jest with this play on words, there is a serious undertone that is consistent with an ongoing theme of this dissertation—listening. One of the most challenging aspects of practicing critical communication pedagogy is a building of community where colleagues and students respect one another, value their learning process, and listen to each other. Building a community that listens to one-another is the antithesis of the critical turnoff, being so focused on what a critical imperative can do, standing so tall on a soapbox that people are turned off to what you are saying. We often do both, as we as critical pedagogues are driven to correct what we see as injustice. Admittedly, it is a delicate balance. While Fassett and Warren have built a foundation for the paradigm shift of critical communication pedagogy, scholarship and academia have taken a very passive approach to bringing its possibilities to full fruition. To have a space where scholarship can freely write about and practice a pedagogy that is steeped in contextualized learning would mean that critical pedagogy has found a disciplinary home in communication. That is the point of critical communication pedagogy, a commitment to scholarship and teaching that shares the stories of lived experiences— to never treat theory and practice as things separate from lived experiences.

I know about critical communication pedagogy, but I also constantly question my practices of critical communication pedagogy. I am a teacher who claims to live its philosophies, I have written about it in my past, I shared my struggles of its use before it had a name in my master’s project, made it an active part of my teaching, I discuss it throughout this dissertation, and I even have heard its call from this study’s participants. I
have played with my delicate balances, sometimes making advisors proud, other times demonstrating that I have missed their lessons completely. Through it all, my success and failures, I know about critical communication pedagogy, but I never stop constantly questioning my practices of critical communication pedagogy. I was a happy teacher practicing critical pedagogy\(^3\); the operative word is \textit{was}.

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“So class, there it is, our journey with \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed} is over, but your individual commitments are just beginning…” I felt great. This time reading through this text with this class really felt good, it felt, I don’t know…critical. I feel as though I treated the students with respect, valuing their discussions, their journey, treating their enthusiasm for the pedagogical discussions with all the passion I could muster. I felt emotionally spent, but happily so. I felt I nailed the complexities of their student lives. My engagement of the commitments of critical pedagogy had been finely honed into critical moments that would stay with these students for the rest of their lives. Just as soon as I finish these words and close the book, I look up and see the faces of the students.

They look as though they want to kill me. One student, Sarah has already slit my throat with her eyes. Andrew G. and Andrew H. look angry and utterly dejected. Andrew G. is gleefully painting every page of the book with my blood, making them as red as the cover and the fury in his eyes. I am very uncomfortable at this moment: Andrew H. speaks up, “Are you kidding, that’s how this ends? You telling us to piss off, it’s our turn now?!”

\(^3\) Critical communication pedagogy had not yet been named during my days in the classroom, and \textit{Critical Communication Pedagogy} was published during my fellowship year.
I feel caught in this moment, caught in the complexities of the question and Andrew H’s anger, caught in the space between the fluidity of desire and the fear of what his question begs. Caught. I feel caught. My head is hurting with my thoughts in this moment…they are visibly angry and confused. I am confused and scarred, but I keep it to myself. Stirring in my head are questions that are my attempts to rationalize this moment: What have I done? What harm have I caused? How can I make this right? Did I miss something? What do I know about practicing critical pedagogy? Doesn’t that come from students’ desires for something different than what they have had? Maybe a consideration for what they want?

Andrew G.: Would you listen to this?

Sarah: Do we have a choice?

Me: Pedagogy of the Oppressed wasn't meant to be taken so literally. It's a nice story, the teachers and students, the oppressed and the oppressor’s practices. It's bound with moral fiber…but asking students to believe it? What is it, to stop buying into the hypocrisy of the binaries? It…Pedagogy of the Oppressed…is really just a nice story. It's just that, just a story. I believe that by now we all understand that education is based on a mistranslation. Greek scholars, their schools, their philosophies, were mistranslated. It was an easy mistake to make…because there was only a subtle difference in the educational approach.

Greek scholars viewed themselves as helping students, as they went on an exploratory journey to develop society’s understandings, as critical citizens. Some students got it, others didn’t. Fast-forward a couple of millennia. Somehow, when
people started developing an accountability structure for American education, they remembered this process, but not its meaning. Leave that for a couple of hundred years to stew and next thing you know you have grades. You have a criterion for success and failure. You have generations of people who have been through that system reifying it for all of its power, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and other forms of oppression…What I’m trying to say is just because the structure is written that way doesn't mean your practices have to make it so.

I look around trying to see if this gives the students hope. It's not important whether this story is fact or fiction. I just want them to believe that learning can be different. Learning can be about their desires. The students don't want to hear anymore unless they feel listened to.

**Three critical turns: Lessons learned**

I have spent quite some time listening in this dissertation: to the literature on my shelf, to articles found in journals, to friends, to colleagues, to advisors, to former students, and my participants. Of all these groups, I want participants and students who read my work and this dissertation to hear very clearly that I have learned much from them because I was willing to listen. Listening fuels the significance of the following findings of my study. Listening is what typifies the following three critical turns I advocate in this conclusion: 1) my need to understand the participants’ conceptualizations of educational binaries; 2) to realize that students are not apathetic but making very sophisticated choices; and 3) to understand how student’s are fulfilling teacher’s self-
fulfilling prophecies. In this chapter, I call together lessons learned and scope out possible pedagogical directions for critical communication pedagogy.

**Critical turn: Understanding of educational binaries**

It was in that crucial moment of dialogue with Andrew G., Andrew H., and Sarah that it hit me (and this moment is also one of the points of this dissertation): Student have been aware for many years, well before literature emerged regarding classroom power, agency, and compliance gaining strategies, that binary tropes in education exist (good student/bad student, pass/fail, competent/remedial, relevant ideas/irrelevant ideas, access/disability, etc.) I cannot help but wonder where my own thoughts are on considering what it means to “be a good/bad student” and how I react to such student behaviors. Throughout my graduate career, I have read literature discussing the rejection of economic determinism while hearing student stories of professors unwilling to separate the financial factors that dictate students’ need to balance full-time jobs while being full-time students. I have participated in faculty meetings and “gone to lunches” with provosts and deans that had conversations centered on discussions regarding the apathy of students’ willingness to share in critical enlightenment, critical immanence, and reconceptualized critical theories, all the while disregarding the hegemony taking place. Do I ignore attempts to discuss who gains and who loses in specific academic moments? Do I ignore the complex ways that power operates to shape consciousness, perceptions, and expectations? I have participated in conference panels at both the regional and national level, discussing the selection of communication texts and development of a pedagogy that attempts to share power so that students can learn how to control their own lives and partake in developing social justice, but when the test is in front of me, I grade accordingly. When students’ critical writing is in front of me, I place their work into binaries of pass/no pass. I assign grades of pluses/checks/minuses and label arbitrary
point systems with larger grading criteria in mind, while calling the work critical and my grading “as objective as possible.” If I have taken anything from this dissertation, it has been that when I operate from binaries, regardless of my critical discourse, I am culpable in maintaining those binaries.

From an educational perspective, the participants’ message to me was quite clear. As students who have occupied various academic settings, they have become accustomed to feeling disenfranchised. The students’ process of making choices in how they will “do student” has become obscured by habit. In the same way, we take for granted the familiarity of an environment like our home; where we live, where light switches are placed, where we sit at the dinner table, or the side of the bed we sleep on, and take notice only when that changes. Participants expressed a frustration of feeling redundancy all around them, despite the fact that everyday the choices they make and the questions they do not ask could have a very significant effect on how they “do student.”

Students’ stuck in the perceived binaries of “good student” and “bad student” have not understood how to question the binaries that frustrate them. Often, students have not seen the possibilities of exposing the fallacy of the binaries by simply asking questions. Students’ inability to ask questions with reflective underpinnings causes them to grapple unnecessarily with the binaric mantles of “doing good” or “doing bad.” The questions left unexplored leave them feeling bitter, uncritical, and as simply caving to the pressure of (re) constituting their identities in the eyes of the educational institution. In relationship to educational institutions, participants did not understand how their choices reinforce the social systems that give power to educational binary tropes. Through participants’ expressed perceptions and expectations, they do not view the “doing of good student” or the “doing of bad student” for its true, insidious, and quite hegemonic nature.
Under hegemony these students who have expressed how they accomplish the “doing of student” are giving their permission to have binaric choices presented to them. While the hegemony is a subtle, almost invisible, form of control, which everyone (including the academic institutions and the students) believes a particular educational process is the only way, the right way defined by “doing good” or “doing bad.” Apple (1999) writes that educational hegemony acts to “saturate our consciousness,” so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, become the real world, the only world (p. 36). Nonetheless, they are left taking courses, holding each other accountable, perpetuating feelings, “doing student,” and graduating, entering the work force…feeling as though they were not smart enough to do anything different.

**Critical turn: Not apathy, but the making of sophisticated choices**

Much of my research regarding student identity became located in participants’ discussions regarding how they accomplish being a student through their choices, their distinctions, and their negotiation of the education process. Students perceived apathy is based on their understanding that there are no real negative consequences to their choices. When students are part of a class comprised of 300, they recognize and make a rational choice based on a realization that a relationship with the professor will not happen without effort on their part. When teachers complain of being overworked (with grading, committee, and administrative responsibilities) they understand how to use a syllabus, as an academic contract, to make choices regarding the incentives to learn beyond the course guidelines. Feeling as though academic choices are limited and their efforts are framed within grading binaries, and teachers not teaching with context (accounting for issues of social justice, agency, and identity) there is no reason to demonstrate caring for learning. The results of my research were not unexpected from a critical communication
pedagogy perspective. The positions of performed apathy and learning needing to address social justice, agency, and identity perspectives have been argued for years by Paulo Freire (1984); Jo Sprague (1991, 1993, 1994); Ira Shor (1992); Alfie Kohn (1993); Peter McLaren (1993, 1999); Ron Pelias (1999); Deanna Fassett and John Warren (2004, 2005) in their (2007) germinal text *Critical Communication Pedagogy*. Students who have come into contact with professors who teach from a critical perspective question why I, like many other scholars, continue to debate issues of “disciplinary relevance.” While kitschy conference themes are apparently relevant for the communication discipline, to students discussions focused on “the health of the discipline,” “looking forward, looking back,” “rockin’ the discipline,” “creating sites for action,” “reaching out, reaching in,” and “radicalizing roots,” have caused students to perform apathy because they view our discussions as antiquated to their situations.

Scholarship addressing students’ feelings has left them feeling as though their situations have not been listened to. Actually, it often appears by our presentations, publications, and pedagogy, as there is no connection between our scholarship and their desires for learning. The performance of apathy is a response that treats coursework as if subject matter exists simply as knowledge on its own independent behalf, and as if study of social sciences were the mere act of mastering it for its own sake, irrespective of any social values.

While scholars discuss the performances by students as being apathetic to learning, in fact students are making very particular choices that leave a range of critical perceptions and expectations that can demonstrate how they learn. John Dewey (1916) wrote,

“since it is highly important for practical reasons to counteract this tendency [a separation between theory and lived context] the chief purposes of our theoretical
discussion are to make clear the connection which is so readily lost from sight, and to show in some detail the social content and function of the chief constituents of the course of study...The material of school studies...puts before the instructor the essential ingredients of the culture to be perpetuated.”

Through my service to communication department in various capacities, I have come to learn that departmental learning objectives for coursework are decided through negotiation with the university and by professorial consensus. Professors have the ability to decide how coursework will meet the students’ desires and learning objectives. Because we do not spend the time through our scholarship to demonstrate that we have listened to students’ desires for learning, unbeknownst to us, they have developed and activated their interest in learning ad hoc of the larger educational experience.

I am reminded how Phyrro earlier spoke to a desire to imagine education that shifts from teaching simply what is required to an education that holds students accountable to contexts. When she says education “is seen as something that you have to do and not something that you aspire to,” the choices being made are very refined. What is clear from participants’ dialogue is that what I have read as apathy, is, in fact, the participants examining subject matter in terms of socio-cultural practice and their (students’) relation to power. The reflexive choices made by participants demonstrate an examination of how these relationships influence and shape practices. Further, the choices being made are connected to their perceived social context: “is this something I have to do or I should do” (Mr. Pink). It is only the vocalization of these choices and some of participants and students actions that give the appearance of being apathetic and divorced from social and educational context. The performance of apathy by students performs two functions: it allows for education to be broken down into characteristics of
use (to make decisions of coursework worth) and allows for education to be treated as a space for criticism and justification of their actions.

Recall Euclid who, like many participants, speaks to how “students will strive to increase their knowledge… to grow through their experiences… and try to be a lifetime learner,” if the environment will allow for this exploration to take place. Participants express frustration and try to reconcile the purpose of education, to overcome the split between tacit knowledge (based on their social culture) and objective knowledge (founded on coursework). This willingness is predicated on a pedagogical process that encourages their spirit of wonderment: participants attempt to make education contextually relevant, to feel the freedom to ask questions, and recognize the newness of learning. We would do well to remember Alfie Kohn (1993) wrote, “teachers must first maximize the opportunity for students to make choices, to discover and learn for themselves, and second, create a caring community in the classroom so that students have the opportunity to do thing together” (p. 87). In this way, students develop the means by which to actively express their educational choices as opposed to people who merely passively doing what they are told.

I believe that critical communication pedagogy takes into consideration students’ desires and will begin to make students choices more apparent. More importantly, students should be able to see that our pedagogy and scholarship respects them as educational stakeholders. Once this is recognized, they just might feel more comfortable sharing the processes of their sophisticated choices.

**Critical turn: Students as the fulfillment of teachers’ self-fulfilling prophecies**

One of the fundamental problems of current communication pedagogy is the persistence and reproduction of research regarding students’ social relations and student behavior that shows they are apathetic or not skilled enough to handle complex cognition.
For students, what is at stake is how they are enacting teachers’ self-fulfilling prophecies by allowing themselves to be perceived as apathetic and ignorant. At the level of action, students, as my study suggests, would like for the scholarship of communication education and instructional communication to pedagogically consider what it would mean to contemplate students’ desires, thereby disrupting the logic of apathy.

The message regarding the current state of pedagogy can be summed up by Mr. Blue: “I am just a student, I learn, I adopt, I pass or fail, I act, I move on, I learn...” While this process was used to describe how students’ move through general education courses, I am concerned about how students are fulfilling our prophecies for lowered expectations. While it is not the intention of communication pedagogy to create binaries or apathy, the manner in which we infuse choices into curriculum and pedagogy is doing just that. I recognize in Mr. Blue’s vocalization of pedagogy, like other participants has learned that education is about:

- Efficiency at the expense of experience
- A tendency to view human beings as variables in an equation
- Devaluing of feeling and emotion in research and learning
- An overemphasis on communication phenomena dynamics that lend themselves to measurement and a general de-emphasis on those profound human qualities that do not.

Certainly, in the participants’ dialogue, they are misinterpreting the purpose of current pedagogy for they will seemingly do what needs to be done, no more, no less. After careful reflection, I find that I am enabling students to engage in this self-fulfilling prophecy. When I find an error in logic or format, it is because I falsely assume students don’t know “how” to critically think. When I find significant errors in student work, I dismiss the work for one of three reasons: they do not care, they do not know, or they did
not see it. I believe that the first and last are the most frequent causes of my binary development and their performance of apathy. In other words, when push comes to shove, I have found that most students really do know how to think critically and act accordingly. That is, if I can help them learn to value and care about what they are doing and then help them manage the time they need to work through issues and coursework effectively, then their work will reflect a deeper understanding. I can not help but think of the missed opportunities when one participant, Seneca, who was a former student, came to my office and said she often wondered why we didn’t talk more about critical pedagogy in our class. I wondered how I failed to address the importance of contextualizing education. Epistemologically, I know I am attempting to address binaries and resolve perceptions and expectations for apathy in my research, but participants, and former students, are saying it is being forsaken in my pedagogy. Somehow, I do not believe that I am alone.

**Summary of critical turns: Call to listen**

A clear message in the critical turns is a call to listen to the constituents of education. While the empirical evidence of this study comes from students expressing their desires to be heard, I empathize with my colleagues who are frustrated with the quality of student work they encounter. I have been teaching primarily first-year students for the past six years. During this time, I have had many students who demonstrate passive aggressive behavior when it comes to completing applied communication projects or when they try academic writing. For most students it is about the least they can get away with or the later they can turn it in, the better. I have also had students with little interest in communication because they have had no personally satisfying experiences in recognizing the complexities of communication. Then there are those
students who fail to give themselves enough time to handle the complex process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing their work.

But, I do not believe that blame lies solely with the students. Having been a student, sat in several graduate teaching assistant bullpens, and been an instructor of record myself, most college professors would prefer to complain about poor work than simply refuse to accept it. Therefore, students rarely experience any significant penalties for inadequate critical work or fulfilling our prophecies.

This leads me to my modest proposal on the importance of listening, which was also addressed by David Russell (1995) when discussing activity theory:

Activity theory analyzes human behavior and consciousness in terms of activity systems: goal-directed, historically situated, cooperative human interactions, such as a child's attempt to reach an out-of-reach toy, a job interview, a “date,” a social club, a classroom, a discipline, a profession, an institution, a political movement, and so on. The activity system is the basic unit of analysis for both cultures' and individuals' psychological and social processes...Activity systems are historically developed, mediated by tools, dialectically structured, analyzed as the relationship of participants and tools, and changed through zones of proximal development.

(54-55)

Activity theory in general, and the “zone of proximal development” specifically, stem from Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978) who anticipated that such zones exist when a less-developed individual or student interacts with a more-advanced person or teacher, allowing the student to achieve things not possible when acting on his or her own. Like students recognizing educational binaries, they want to learn the tools to question the
“normative” behaviors of their education and to better understand the connections between theory and action. By considering students desires for critical perspectives the relationship between student and teacher takes on a dynamic facet that is understood not commiserated apathy, but through curriculum that begins from student experience and is structured into organized reflective disciplinary knowledge.

We must listen to our students’ desires. Most students are good students, they want to learn, they care about their education, and can practice the behaviors recognized by their peers and professors as “doing good.” But to demonstrate this means that the process of listening is consistently enforced, and the consequences of performing bad behaviors are clear. I believe most students will become better students if their call to be listened to is heard and pedagogy is guaranteed to be reflective of a higher critical standard. As Mr. Blue spoke of earlier of critical thinking, “information and learning…should be part of who I am… relevant to what I do.” This kind of critical communication pedagogy is but one tool to inform lived experiences.

**Exits and turn-offs: Enactments of critical communication pedagogy**

The contribution of this dissertation to contemporary social science is that within the communication discipline this body of research can serve as another example of critical communication pedagogy in action. On an elementary level, this dissertation is building a sense of tradition in how pedagogy is treated, explored, and possibly enacted in the communication discipline. I am also excited that this dissertation *is* something new. The conversations with students regarding pedagogy, disciplinary relevance, student agency and desire have shown that their voices can significantly reinvigorate our scholarship. Further, the usage of ethnomethodology in this study points to a very real need to talk to students regarding the effect our scholarship has upon their identities, their educational choices, their socialization process, language, their perceptions and
expectations, and the choices they make regarding education. This critical perspective I have put forward is unique because it points to how we can take advantage of an opportunity to consider the ways in which pedagogy can systematically transform the theories of practice for students. It is a very strange place to be critical. Often, I find myself continuing to wonder like Ronald Pelias (2000):

What does it mean to live with a critical eye? An eye that’s always assessing, always deciding questions of student worth because of the power I wield as an instructor. What does it mean to judge students? Why do we evaluate them the way we do? What does it mean to say students are not measuring up? By what right do I have to set certain standards? How can I not set standards? Can I rely on the students to want more, to learn more, to push themselves a little harder, a lot harder? What does it mean to judge myself as instructor? By what right do I evaluate the educational process? What is at stake if I am right? What is at stake if I am wrong (p. 220)?

These questions are at my forefront of committing to develop critical communication pedagogy. These questions have made me afraid, angry and led me to doubt myself, but ultimately I am thrilled that I have been willing to raise these questions *with* students.

When students begin to hold each other responsible to these questions, my pedagogy is forced to combine polar opposites like subjectivity and objectivity, freedom and discipline, individuals and groups, and the roles of being a teacher and those of students, and there is a melding of the classroom’s perceptions and expectations. Meeting with students at this critical level enables a learning process where people learn, not by
introductory assignments, but by being held accountable to doing something of academic worth. They learn from each other’s reactions, analysis, and good works.

While sitting in panels at conferences I have heard scholars sarcastically remark that those that can engage in this type of work possess uncommon traits of personality or character. But I can’t help but think of what one of the participants, Seneca, said while we were discussing the practices of conventional teachers: “of those teachers who manage to restrain and paralyze our voices [students’ agency] …that’s an achievement.” It is no less of an achievement to work with students, through our disciplines’ pedagogy, to develop those critical thinking skills. I cannot say that it requires a special person to be a teacher, because we know of thousands of well-intentioned “bad teachers” at work in our academic institutions. There would be no need for a paradigm shift, or this dissertation for that matter, if students were satisfied with their level of critical education.

What I want us, as scholars, to consider is that it takes remarkable skill to demean human beings, banking large groups of students, to hamper the critical skills of spontaneity and undermine students’ ability to muster their agency and voice. Regardless, I refuse to believe that those teachers are by nature callous and/or incompetent.

Teachers, like students, can learn and change. Certain communication methods and principles are foundational and some techniques can help facilitate learning more than others. I recognize that some professors and scholars will never be able to overcome their self-doubt, their willingness to engage in a critical life to become open and trusting. But, given the number of participants who want a change to conventional communication pedagogy, I believe that there are teachers and scholars in the academy (and in the communication discipline) who are willing as well.

At one point of this dissertation, I clearly let my paradigmatic bias influence which participants I listened to more than others. I had moments where participants’
dialogue seemed like pandering to an audience. At times this was funny, others quite frustrating, especially when the moral ambiguity of “doing student” began to take shape. Talking this over with a colleague of mine, Dr. Sharona Garrett-Ruffin, I was told, “you don’t have to like the participants’ responses, because they are the perceptions and attitudes of your participants in which they live their lives. They are no less critical than those who treat their education with the critical communication pedagogy commitments that you hold dear.”

I admit that I knew what I was searching for in this research, but I was surprised to find the empirical evidence of it. I do not hope that the following list of “doing critical communication pedagogy” (the principles, beliefs, and attitudes) drawn from time talking with participants will be helpful to any scholar, teacher, or students. I know they will. And I know scholars’ will to adopt; at the very least, the commitments of critical communication pedagogy will help students to find their critical voice.

Here is a checklist of what these types of teachers do to facilitate learning according to participants. Not everyone carries out all of these or holds all these beliefs, but their enactments of the critical communication pedagogy philosophy are now obvious to me as I finish this dissertation:

**When first meeting a class of students as a teacher:**

- Brings current students to a place where critical work of past students can be examined (the past voices, guide the future voices).
- Explains why and when conventional school unwittingly interferes with, or prevents, critical literacy.
- Begins demonstrating the acts of agency that truth-telling can bring to bear in the learning process.
• Gets students to do work that accounts for their voice, their peers, the teacher, and to communities beyond the classroom.
• Begins to know the learners as complex individuals, rather than a collective of students.
• Holds students accountable that they believe in the student’s abilities to work at high levels of critical reflexivity.

_Throughout the semester, a teacher or a critical communication pedagogue_

• Converses with students at their physical level, speaking and writing with a critical language that demonstrates the expectations they have.
• Does not conduct pseudo-lectures and discussions that ask for answers already in texts or in the teacher’s mind. These moments are about pushing the discipline forward.
• Develops dialogic moments between experience and ideas of students with those experiences and ideas of teachers and scholars in the discipline.
• Helps students to work out of experience into theory and vice versa.
• Guides students to surprise themselves and their teachers.
• Moves students from traditional academic success, while preparing for the occasional academic failure.
• Helps students exercise their imagination. Many haven’t used them since kindergarten.
• Benefits from students’ ability to share stories, even if they seem tangential.
• Avoids critiquing students out of trying with unreasonable or underreasonable expectations.
• Holds students accountable to being finders and receivers of learning.
• Aids students in understanding that competing paradigms can co-exist and share between each other. Allow students to demonstrate connectivity between disciplines to show critical understanding.
• Guides students into working with totalities of logic, helping to understand the big picture, rather than bits and pieces of theory abstract from daily life.
• As a teacher, is vulnerable to students, sharing feelings with them.
• Teaches in context so that the things learned can become familiar to them. This makes education both a conscious and an unconscious process.
• Helps students work through issues of spontaneity.
• Helps students come to their own knowledge.
• Cultivates rigor in the learning process.
• Helps students refine their uses of emotion.
• Makes practice an act with meaning.
• Avoids excessive critique and praise.
• Gives learners ample time to complete critical work. Considers making that part of the grading process.
• Helps students develop and refine their work as they bring it to completion.
• Never denies a student his/her life.
• Finally, when the burden of dealing with so many lives becomes overwhelming, take a vacation or a leave of absence, or move on to another profession, so that someone with passion can take their place.

While I was compiling these participants’ thoughts, I was thinking about how difficult it is for all the various paradigms and disciplinary niches to coexist—and I could
not help but think of those students’ comments and Pelias’ (1999) final statement in “The Critical Life” that made me want to become a teacher: “when all is said and done, you will know that you are not critical. Others can and will take your place” (p. 228). I must confess I almost fall prey to this statement every time I do scholarly work; I have at times wanted someone to take my place. However, I realize that this dissertation is not a piece to take the place of others’ work, but to aid in the critical reflection that critical communication pedagogy can have on students’ lives. It can also offer an alternate perspective to any professor who is looking for a way to engage students at a level we do not often think we can. This particular exit is my reflective response to those questions I pose every time I become fearful about living a critical life.

**Directions for future research: Reflections on the process and asking more questions**

Many things happened during this dissertation process, many epiphanies, many changes, many I still do not completely understand. I did not want to leave the confines of my dissertation fellowship. Getting lost in my thoughts regarding critical communication pedagogy had been an oasis. I didn’t like thinking of the dank classroom with disenfranchised students, students longing to be treated as critical beings, and me with no answers or edicts to develop faux critical moments. But there were also mitigating factors: I was getting seven hours a night of sleep, drinking wine with friends while having educational discussions, smoking cigars on my terms, oh… there was the getting paid to sit, think, and write.

Getting paid to think and write for some may seem like a highly anticipated vacation because of the imminent knowledge of what you can expect…to wake, think, and write. However, one particular day during this process stuck out in my mind because it took me back to a time where questions and a desire for an identity was all I had.
I was sitting at Calvino’s wine lounge in Toledo at seven-thirty p.m. and it was full of astoundingly dense conversations, kind of like being a kid at a dinner party and not understanding what the grown-ups are talking about. In a strange moment of déjà vu, I was instantly transported back to my childhood and for a moment had accidentally joined an English speaking Big Bird on a quest to find some kind of intellectual phoenix with the help of Chinese speaking children. While sipping on a glass of wine, I was caught by the conversation of a seemingly sophisticated couple talking about critical pedagogy. For me, they seemed to be the only ones speaking English through the cigar haze and slurred words of ever-flowing wine.

I share this moment of déjà vu because of what was said during that conversation typifies my working with participants during the research phase of the dissertation. Fred said, “Attention is patterned by worldview. What you see when you look at anything, whether a person, a building, a city, or country, is only a reflection—your worldview—coming back slightly colored.” Alas, the best quality of listening is the gained empathy. It was the value lesson that I learned when I first watched Big Bird goes to China; it has to come with your worldview when working with students. No amount of ethnographic work, pedagogical experiment, collection of data, development of learning objectives, coursework, or assignments can take the place of listening to gain empathy. That really is the point of critical communication pedagogy. If you teach with love for the discipline, you get back love for the discipline. Like the people of China helping Big Bird by trying to listen to his needs, like the scholars who practiced critical communication pedagogy without a name, like the gentleman who bought my wine that evening, if you treat with critical, you get critical back. If I learned anything from the participants of my dissertation research, it was to look at them or listen to them with any other perspective is to miss them.
From this point it may seem like a conclusion without a real ending, but I did not really want to leave my conclusions for some final chapter. Perhaps I could have done more to aspire conclusions in my work. But I have maintained a constant interaction between the theoretical notions of critical communication pedagogy and empirical evidence of students desire for its use in their learning throughout this dissertation. In part, questions and conclusions, my reflections and access to my reflexivity was presented in every chapter, in the sharing of participants stories, and at each critical turn, all to preventing this work from being part of a larger critical turn-off.

To invoke more of the early Greek explorers who were conscious of the tension between the convergence of disciplinary values and the desire for an affirmation of critical educational identities. I know that I can distinguish between conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions I seek for critical communication pedagogy are a paradigmatic home of epistemological and disciplinary pluralism, which also holds recommendations for advocacy in research. I do not want to continue being afraid of not having definitive conclusions, but I want to rejoice at being left with possibilities for continued discussion. I see it, as Fassett and Warren (2007) assert that there are possibilities for joint discussions with a variety of paradigms, outside of the communication discipline and within.

As Fassett and Warren (2007) write a turn-off, if you will, that attempts to stumble into the ideas of students that foster moments that are not about assessment, but about jointly working with students and other scholars to gather our resources. I do not want to find partners in crime, or be labeled as a disciplinary heretic, but I want to have a functional role in education as it was intended before that little misinterpretation. It is in this sense that I begin to approach all of those who have been exploring for “partners in crime,” and show why apologies to advisees can happen over a beer. I do not believe that
we need to worry about “rousing the guards” when attempting to engage in critical communication pedagogy because there are more of us then them, if we look towards our students’ voices as budding allies. This is all predicated on considering that in the mundane moments that comprise students extended-formative years, they are longing for, like critical scholars, pedagogical developments that serve as a gathering, as a point for conversation, and to be critically challenging.

It should be clear by now that making a commitment to “doing” critical communication pedagogy can only build bonds between students desires for critical learning and educators desires for critical exploration in our scholarship and pedagogy. Like countless others before me, scholars have typically concluded their work by noting that there are more questions to be asked than answers. In my attempts at addressing many of the questions of the critical communication pedagogy niche, I have considered that the educational process must have its established understandings of critical pedagogy and social justice repeatedly questioned in order to open new areas for inquiry.

The common theme of this project and, I believe, those that have come before me, has been an attempt to come more directly into contact with the raw data of student experience. The accomplishment of this goal is by peeling away the layers of innumerable theoretical and methodological barriers which interject themselves between scholars and the significant features of being a student. To this end, this dissertation accounts for student voice within critical communication pedagogy, and I believe it is quite fitting to end in the words of John Heritage (1984), “the instrument has been built: the challenge is to start working with it.”
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Association Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 2004.
APPENDIX A

Focus Group Demographics

The Philosopher Gods
Number of participants- 9
Number of males- 5
Number of females- 4
Number of freshman- 6
Number of sophomores- 3
Number of juniors- 0
Number of seniors- 0
Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:

• Midas, 15 ch
• Plato, 15 ch
• Zeus, 17 ch
• Mercury, 32 ch
• Athena, 30 ch
• Mars, 30 ch
• Herc, 30 ch
• Romeie, 15 ch
• Michelle, 17 ch

The Dukes
Number of participants- 9
Number of males- 5
Number of females- 4
Number of freshman- 6
Number of sophomores- 3
Number of juniors- 0
Number of seniors- 0
Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:
• Mary Jo, 15 ch
• Bo, 18 ch
• Luke, 15 ch
• Jesse, 19 ch
• Lee, 30 ch
• Jessica, 35 ch
• Boss Hog, 59 ch
• Roscoe, 15 ch
• Eonis, 19, ch

The Reservoir Dogs
Number of participants- 8
Number of males- 5
Number of females- 3
Number of freshman- 4
Number of sophomores- 2
Number of juniors- 1
Number of seniors- 0
Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:
• Mr. White, 16 ch
• Mr. Pink, 43 ch
• Mr. Blue, 16 ch
• Mr. Blonde, 16 ch
• Mr. Orange, 16 ch
• Mr. Brown, 16 ch
• Nice Girl, 60 ch
• Joe, 45 ch

The Greeks
Number of participants- 5
Number of males- 3
Number of females- 2
Number of freshman- 3
Number of sophomores- 2
Number of juniors- 0
Number of seniors- 0

Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:

- Seneca, 18 ch
- Anaxi, 24 ch
- Eucild, 30 ch
- Phyrro, 19 ch
- Spartan, 16 ch

_The Elements_

Number of participants- 5

Number of males- 2

Number of females- 3

Number of freshman- 2

Number of sophomores- 2

Number of juniors- 0

Number of seniors- 1

Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:

- Fire, 18 ch
- Water, 15 ch
- Earth, 90 ch
- Aire, 30 ch
- Ice, 30 ch

_The Presidents_

Number of participants- 8

Number of males- 6

Number of females- 2

Number of freshman- 6

Number of sophomores- 2

Number of juniors- 0

Number of seniors- 0

Participant names, with semesters (credit hours) in school:

- Bill, 15 ch
• George, 18 ch
• Nixon, 15 ch
• Hillary, 34 ch
• Ross, 16 ch
• Jackie-O, 34, ch
• Regan, 13 ch
• Abe, 15 ch
APPENDIX B

Interview Guide-Focus Group Questions

Being Student—How the FG participants develop their sense of “doing student”?

- Describe an early memory of when you were a student.
- How would you describe what it means to be a student? What is he or she like?
- How do you know when a person is a ‘good’ student?
- How do these students know that they are ‘good’? How do they get these skills to practice or demonstrate that they are a good student?
- Describe some of your experiences or interactions with good students?
- How would you describe a ‘bad’ student? What does he or she do or don’t do? How do you know when you see one in a class?
- Describe your experiences or interactions with bad students.
- What do you use (information, preconceived notions, experiences, popular culture) to come up with the characteristics used to describe students? Can you identify the different factors that play a role this understanding?

Perceptions and Expectations of the environment (classroom/teacher/student) — What do FG participants expect out of the classroom environment?

- Describe what you expect a classroom to look or be like.
  - Probe: physical space or beliefs regarding learning environments
- How did you arrive at these expectations? Where they taught? Who reinforced or challenged them? In what ways are these expectations a part of how practice being a student?
• Describe your expectations of the teacher. Describe your expectations of classmates.
• What are some ways other students have made you feel as though you should contribute to the classroom?
• What is the teacher’s role in this type of classroom?
• What are some ways other students have made you feel as though you shouldn’t contribute to the classroom
• What is the teacher’s role in this type of classroom?
APPENDIX C

Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire

Hi! Thanks for your participation tonight. A little more information about each of you will help me to develop a general profile of tonight’s interview participants. Please remember that everything we discuss will be kept confidential. As a participant, please keep all discussions regarding these focus groups confidential. So…

Please respond to the following questions:

1. My name for tonight (my pseudonym) is ________________.

2. I am: _____ male _____ female

3. I have been a college/university (graduate) student for _____ semesters.

4. My major is ________________.

5. Briefly describe your educational background (e.g., urban or rural, private or public schooling, colleges or universities attended other than BGSU, etc.).

6. What is/has been your greatest joys as a student?

7. What are/have been your greatest concerns as a student?

8. Here’s some additional information I think you ought to know about me:
APPENDIX D

Letter of Consent

Bowling Green State University

LETTER OF CONSENT

As a person that is over the age of 18 years old, I consent to serve as a participant in the research investigation entitled: “Accounting for Student Voice within Critical Communication Pedagogy: An Ethnomethodological exploration of Student Perceptions and Expectations.” The nature and general purpose of the study have been explained to me by Nicholas Zoffel, from the Department of Communication Studies at Bowling Green State University.

I have been informed that the purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which students come to understand and accomplish their perceptions of education. This study is to explore how student’s educational expectations are socially constructed. This research involves interviews and discussions with Nicholas Zoffel at a time and place we mutually agree upon. I also have been informed that I can expect to contribute approximately an hour and a half to two hours of my time to participate in this project.

The potential benefit of this project to me is an opportunity to learn how others and I have come to understand the roles associated with being a student. I have been informed that this study poses no greater risk than that of one’s daily classroom conversations.

I have been informed that my participation is voluntary. I have been informed that deciding to or not to participate will not impact my grades/class standing/relationship to the institution. I also have been informed that all information is confidential and my identity will not be revealed. I agree to be audiotaped during my interviews with Mr. Zoffel. Moreover, I have been informed that all data (e.g., researcher notes, audiotapes, etc.) generated in the course of this research will be locked in a secure location at either the researcher’s residence or his office at Bowling Green State University and will be destroyed upon publication. I am free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time. Any questions I have about the project will be answered by the primary researcher Nicholas Zoffel (419) 372-7820, or by Dr. John T. Warren (419) 372-2078, the project advisor.

Questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Human Subjects Review Board Chairperson, Office of Research Compliance,
On the basis of the above statements, I agree to participate in the project.

Participant’s Signature

Nicholas Zoffel
Department of Communication Studies
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH. 43403
(419) 372-7820
nzoffel@bgnet.bgsu.edu

Date
APPENDIX E

Recruitment Statement: In-Class

Hello, my name is Nicholas Zoffel and I am a 4th year student in the Department of Communication Studies. I am currently working on my dissertation with Dr. John Warren and looking to conduct some research. I am studying how students develop their expectations and perceptions in regards to their education. This research will hopefully lead to a better understanding of how education and school social grouping has shaped these understandings. Eventually, this research will be used to develop ways to teach Communication Studies more effectively.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years old, and then will be asked to participate in a focus group activity and answer a series of questions. You will be asked to engage in a conversation with other students, with the questions serving as discussion points during the session. The session should take approximately 1½ to 2 hours of your time.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out one of the individual confidential recruitment cards and I will be in touch with you. Alternatively, you can come to Kohl Hall 027 and see me. Thank you.

---

4 Individual Confidential recruitment cards would request the following information to be completed by potential participants: Name, Department, Email, Phone Number, Best Days and Times to Participate
APPENDIX F\textsuperscript{5}

Recruitment Statement: Poster

Department of Communication Studies
Bowling Green State University

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

We are looking for volunteers, who are at least 18 years old, to take part in a study of

\textit{student’s expectations and perceptions of university education.}

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to: \textit{participate in a focus group conversation that will consist} of involvement in 1 session,

which is approximately \textit{1 1/2 to 2-hour commitment.}

In appreciation for your time, you will receive \textit{lunch or dinner during the focus group, depending on when you participate}

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,

please contact:

\textit{Nicholas Zoffel}

\textit{School of Communication Studies}

Phone: 419-372-7820 or Email: nzoffel@bgnet.bgsu.edu

\textsuperscript{5} Potential participants saw the following recruitment poster, in accordance to HSRB recruitment policy through classroom, departmental, and learning community postings.
APPENDIX G

HSRB Approval

April 17, 2006

TO: Nicholas A. Zoffel
COMS

FROM: Richard Rowlands
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H06D261CE7

TITLE: Accounting for Student Voice within Critical Communication Pedagogy: An Ethnomethodological Exploration of Student Perceptions and Expectations

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of April 17, 2006, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on March 30, 2007. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me in writing (fax: 419-372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications:

c. Dr. John Warren

Research Category: Expedited #7
APPENDIX H

Curriculum Vitae

Nicholas A. Zoffel

2662 Cheltenham
Toledo, OH 43606
nzoffel@bgnet.bgsu.edu
419. 474.8212 (h) 408.835.6474 (c)
http://personal.bgsu.edu/~nzoffel

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Bowling Green State University, (August 2007)
Specialization: Critical Communication Pedagogy
Secondary Areas of Study: Critical Theory, Culture and Communication,
Ethnographic Methods, Service Learning, Distance Education
Dissertation title: “Accounting for student voice within critical
communication pedagogy: An ethnomethodological exploration of student
identity”
Dissertation committee: Dr. John T. Warren (Chair), Dr. James C. Foust, Dr. Laura
B. Lengel, Dr. Christopher Keil

Master of Arts, San Jose State University (May 2003)
Concentration: Communication Pedagogy, Popular Culture, Ethnographic Methods
Applied Communication Project title: “Popular cultural texts in the public
speaking classroom: An autoethnographic exploration of student and
instructor resistance”
Project committee: Dr. Deanna Fassett (Chair), Dr. Dennis Jaehne, Dr. Andrew F.
Wood

Bachelor of Arts, San Jose State University, (May 2001)
Major: Communication Studies
Degree focus: Communication Pedagogy, Intercultural Communication, Computer
Mediated Communication
Secondary Emphasis: Industrial Design (human factors, graphic design)
Courses Taught

Undergraduate
Introduction to Communication (Bowling Green State University, IPC 102)
Study of Extreme Social Practices: Service Learning (Chapman Learning Community, RESC 200)
Communication and Culture of Hydroponics: Farming in the Yucatan (Chapman Learning Community, RESC 200)
Computer Mediated Communication: Identities on-line (Chapman Learning Community, RESC 200)
Communication and Human Relationships (San Jose State University, COMM 10)
Public Speaking (San Jose State University, COMM 20)
Oral Interpretation (San Jose State University, FORENSICS)
Introduction to Communication Studies (San Jose State University, COMM 101)

Associate degree
Digital Imaging for Communicative Design (Stautzenberger College, WEB 260)
Introduction to HTML (Stautzenberger College, WEB 240)
Graphic Design & Layout Development (Stautzenberger College, WEB 266)
Web-Page Design: Introduction to Computer Mediated Communication (Stautzenberger College, WEB 244)

Fellowships
Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, Non-Service Dissertation Fellowship Award (April 2006)
Graduate Associate Summer Teaching, Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies (2006)
Graduate Associate Summer Teaching, Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies (2005)
Chapman Learning Community Faculty Assistantship (Fall 2004-Summer 2006)
San Jose State University Department of Communication Forensics Fellowship (1999-2001)

Academic Employment
Graduate Teaching Associate, Bowling Green State University, School of Interpersonal Communication, IPC 102 (Summer 2006)
Graduate Teaching Associate, Bowling Green State University, Chapman Learning Community, IPC 102 (Fall 2004-Spring 2006)
Graduate Teaching Associate, Bowling Green State University, Chapman Learning Community, RESC 200 (Fall 2004-Spring 2006)
Instructor, Stautzenberger College, Department of Visual Arts, (Fall 2004-Winter 2005)
Graduate Teaching Associate, Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, IPC 102 (Summer 2005)
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, IPC 102 (Fall 2003-Spring 2006)
Graduate Teaching Associate, San Jose State University, Department of Communication, COMM 20 (Fall 2002-Spring 2003)
Graduate Teaching Associate, San Jose State University, Department of Communication, COMM 91J (Fall 2002-Spring 2003)
Teacher, Temple Shir Hadash, Comparative Religion, (Fall 2000-Spring 2002)

Research Experience

Book Chapters

Journal Publications

Conferences Papers/Performances


Zoffel, Nicholas A. Negotiating praxis within the basic course. Roundtable discussion presenter at the National Communication Association Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. November 2005.


Zoffel, Nicholas A. How can I measure up when people wanna know, who are you? A roundtable discussion on negotiating identity through third space. Presenter. Western States Communication Association Conference, San Francisco, California. February 2005.


Awards

Bowling Green State University, Graduate College, Nomination for Outstanding Graduate Teaching (April 2006)
Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching (April 2006)
Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, Excellence in Graduate Research and Scholarship (April 2006)
Bowling Green State University, School of Communication Studies, Dissertation Fellowship Award (April 2006)
San Jose State University, Department of Communication Studies, Outstanding Graduate Student (May 2003)

Grants

Chapman Foundation Grant, Bowling Green State University (2006)
Chapman Research Grant for Professional Development, Bowling Green State University (2006)
Katzner and University Bookstore Grant, Bowling Green State University, (2005)
Currier Fellowship Grant, Bowling Green State University, (2005)
Thomas Klein Research Grant, Bowling Green State University, (2005)
Chapman Research Grant for Professional Development, Bowling Green State University (2005)
San Jose State University College of Social Sciences Lottery Grant for Travel (2003)
San Jose State University College of Social Sciences Lottery Grant for Travel (2002)
San Jose State University College of Social Sciences Lottery Grant for Travel (2001)
San Jose State University College of Social Sciences Lottery Grant for Travel (2000)
San Jose State University College of Social Sciences Lottery Grant for Travel (1999)

Service

Co-curricular Teaching
Co-Lecturer with Dr. Deanna Fassett, San Jose State University, Department of Communication Studies, COMM 101, (Summer 2003)
Co-Lecturer with Dr. Shawn Spano, San Jose State University, Department of Communication Studies, COMM 10, (Spring 2003)
Oral Interpretation Coach, San Jose State University, Department of Communication, (Fall 2001 - Summer 2003)

Academic Workshops
Outlining Strategies: Who am I and what do I know? San Jose State University, COMM 80, (March 2003)
Topic Selection Strategies, San Jose State University, COMM 80, (April 2003)
Topic Selection Strategies, San Jose State University, COMM 80, (Oct 2002)
Popular Cultural Texts in the Classroom, Lower-division Public Speaking course, San Jose State University, COMM 20, (Nov 2002)
Outlining Strategies for College Development, San Jose State University, COMM 80, (Oct 2002)
Critical Decision Making and Group Dynamics: Played Roles in Web Marketing Implementation, Diocese of San Jose: Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery (July 2001)

Co-curricular Service
GradStep Presenter, “Critical Pedagogy in the Sciences,” Bowling Green State University, (August 2005)
Guest Lecturer on Communication, Sexuality, and Gender Assignment, Lower-division Psychology Course, Bowling Green State University, Psych 101, (April 2006)
Guest Lecturer on Communicisucidology and the after effects of suicide on the family, Lower-division Psychology Course, Bowling Green State University, Psych 101, (November 2005)
Guest Lecturer on the Rhetoric of Free Space, Lower-division Interpersonal Communication Course, Bowling Green State University, IPC 102, (October 2005)
Guest Lecturer on Critical Pedagogy and Popular Culture Use, Lower-division Interpersonal Communication Course, Bowling Green State University, IPC 102, (October 2005)
GradStep Presenter, “Putting Your Best Foot Forward, Realistic Preparation for Graduate Assistants,” Bowling Green State University, (August 2005)
Guest Lecturer on Critical Thinking and Metaphor Use, Lower-division Interpersonal Communication Course, Bowling Green State University, IPC 102, (October 2004)
Guest Lecturer on Computer Mediated Communication and Visual Communication Methods, Lower-division Interpersonal Communication Course, Bowling Green State University, IPC 420, (September 2003)
Guest Lecturer on Popular Cultural Texts and their Use in Communication, Lower-division Public Speaking, Course, San Jose State University, COMM 20, (March 2003)
Guest Lecturer on Manifestations of the Machine and Garden, Lower-division Rhetoric and Public Life, San Jose State University, COMM 149, (March 2001)
Guest Lecturer on Critical Looks of the City Beautiful Movement, Lower-division Rhetoric and Public life, San Jose State University, COMM 149, (Oct 2000)

**Pedagogical Development**
Certificate, University of Toledo (September 2006)
  Collegiate Success Program—“Academic Coach Training”
  Director: Dr. Richard B Voorneveld, Oxford University

Certificate, Bowling Green State University (July 2006)
  Distance Learning—“Distance Learning: Creating, Mediating, and Facilitating the Course”
  Director: Dr. Michael Kudela, Bowling Green State University

Certificate, Bowling Green State University (January 2006)
  Service Learning—“Learn and Serve Ohio: Train the Trainers”
  Director: Dr. L. Richard Bradley, Ohio State University

**Curriculum Development**
IPC 102: Introduction to Communication Theory and Practice, Bowling Green State University (Restructured to work with BGSU and Chapman Learning Community Service Learning Initiatives)
RESC 200: Study of Extreme Social Practices: Service Learning, Bowling Green State
University (Restructured course to include National Institute of Health and Human Services guidelines for service learning)
RESC 200: Communication and Culture of Hydroponics: Farming in the Yucatan, Bowling Green State University (Designed course to include intercultural communication theory and research)
COMM 20: Public Speaking, San Jose State University (Restructured course to include popular culture emphasis and assessments)

**Academic Service**
Chapman Foundation Committee, Bowling Green State University (2004-2006)
Chapman Strategic Planning Committee, Bowling Green State University (2004-2006)
Academic Advisor in Chapman Learning Community, Bowling Green State University (Fall 2004-2006)
Research Coordinator for the Chapman Learning Community, Bowling Green State University (Fall 2005-Summer 2006)
School of Communication Studies Web Committee, Bowling Green State University (August 2004-2006)
In-House Book Production Editor, *Casting Gender: Women & Performance in Intercultural Contexts*, Bowling Green State University (Fall 2004-Summer 2005)
Research Assistant to Deanna Fassett, San Jose State University, (2002-2003)

**Professional Organization Service**
NCA, 2nd Vice-Chair Elect, Asian-Pacific American Communication Studies Division (elected, 2006)
NCA, Paper Reviewer, Ethnography Division (2005, 2006)
WSCA, Secretary, Communication and Instruction (elected, 2007)
WSCA, Panel Respondent, Instructional Division (2006)
WSCA, Panel Respondent, Intercultural Division (2005)
WSCA, Paper Reviewer, Intercultural Division (2005)
Pi Kappa Phi, Academic Coach, University of Toledo (2006 – present)
Pi Kappa Phi, Chapter Advisor, Bowling Green State University (Fall 2003 – 2006)
Independent Design Consultant for Westfield Shopping Center: Retail Space Design (2006)

Consulting Experience

Lead communication researcher and designer whose concentration was finding, supporting, and developing relationships between users and brand. Research worked to advance understanding of human symbolic process with a strong emphasis on identity development and theory-driven research, which translated into well-planned, innovative design strategies for business.

- Development of Qualitative and Quantitative research studies
- Development of technology practices and techno-use guides
- Development of branding campaigns and conducting of communication analysis for campaigns
- Conducting teaching and training seminars for education, business, and organizations
- Serving as an outside process consult using appreciative inquiry techniques
- Creating context-based design plans, graphical and retail interfaces, web design
- Designing of logos, graphics, marketing materials, print layouts, CD packaging, etc.

Performance Experience
San Jose State University Forensics (1998-2003)
Grossmont College Forensics (1996-1998)
San Francisco State University Forensics (1995-1996)

Professional Affiliations
National Communication Association (life member)
Western States Communication Association
American Educational Studies Association
Central States Communication Association
California Speech Communication Association