Critical pedagogy meets transformation: creating the being of communication activists

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FORUM: COMMUNICATION ACTIVISM PEDAGOGY

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Editors' introduction

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Regardless of where you stand on the political spectrum, there can be no denying that conversations of social justice are taking on greater prominence in recent years. Both the recent U.S. presidential election and Brexit have elevated the level of such conversations, but those elections are just two examples of growing disagreement on a wide range of ethical and political issues. Conversations regarding immigration, health care, public bathrooms, and more have taken on greater urgency. Moreover, Western democracies are not alone in increased attention to such issues, as evidenced by religious conflict in eastern Africa that is fraught with violence, or how disagreements over justice plague Syria and much of the Middle East. In this context, it is no wonder that many people are increasingly attentive to means of taking action on issues they are passionate about.

The recent formation of the National Communication Association's Activism and Social Justice Division puts a spotlight on the extent to which instructional communication and instructional communication research have advanced—or even should advance—the goals of social justice. To examine this issue, we invited two of the leading scholars on this topic, Lawrence R. Frey and David L. Palmer, to write a brief essay about the implications of communication activism pedagogy (CAP) for communication education research. Frey and Palmer are editors of the 2015 book *Teaching Communication Activism: Communication Education for Social Justice*, which extended the communication activism for social justice research perspective to teaching, providing empirical examples of communication educators teaching students how to work with affected communities and social justice support organizations to intervene into unjust discourses and to reconstruct them in more just ways.

In their stimulus essay, Frey and Palmer highlighted CAP's importance to and prevalence in the communication discipline. We asked writers to respond to their essay and address any of the following questions:

1. What impact may CAP scholarship have on instructional communication literature?
2. What should be the research agenda for CAP?
3. What ethical issues need to be debated regarding the practice of and research about CAP?
4. What are the challenges of engaging in CAP and studying those efforts? What are the solutions for confronting those challenges?

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Six essays offer unique perspectives on CAP. Some authors argue for the role of civic engagement in CAP, while others question CAP's institutional sustainability. As always, we sought to advance engagement through scholarly dialogue. Frey and Palmer offer a rejoinder that responds to the ideas of forum essay writers. Then, Stephen J. Hartnett, a nationally recognized scholar of communication activism from the University of Colorado Denver and current president of the National Communication Association, offers a response to the entire forum.

This forum is intended to continue much-needed conversations and offer a space where ideas are stimulated, new research studies emerge, and scholarly collaborations are nurtured. As our world and its social contexts evolve, we hope that this forum stimulates continued empirical exploration of the impact and implementation of CAP, as well as makes meaningful contributions to the debate over CAP as a practice.

STIMULUS ESSAY

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Communication activism pedagogy and research: communication education scholarship to promote social justice

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Social justice activism—"attempts to make a positive difference in situations where people's lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, racism, conflict, and other forms of cultural struggles due to differences in race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and other identity markers" (Broome, Carey, De La Garza, Martin, & Morris, 2005, p. 146)—has become an important focus of the communication discipline, as reflected, for instance, by the 2014 creation and fast growth (with almost 475 members) of the National Communication Association's Activism and Social Justice Division. "Social justice" and "activism" now permeate communication research, with 530 and 1,340 journal articles in the Communication and Mass Media Complete (CMMC) database citing those terms (when field is not specified), respectively, and a social justice communication activism research (CAR) perspective well established (e.g., Carragee & Frey, 2016; Frey & Carragee, 2007a, 2007b, 2012).

Social justice activism also has become a salient feature of communication instruction. Although a corporate model that provides professional training to prepare students for marketplace careers has dominated communication education (see Palmer, 2014), critical pedagogy that develops students' critical consciousness about systemic structures and practices maintaining oppression/injustice (e.g., Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1988), with the

assumption that consciousness will affect students' future social justice actions, has influenced substantially communication instruction (regarding critical communication pedagogy, see Fassett & Warren, 2007).

Most recently, Frey and Palmer (2014b), extending CAR, advanced *communication activism pedagogy* (CAP), in which communication educators teach "students how to use their communication knowledge and resources (e.g., theories, research methods, pedagogies, and other practices) to work with [oppressed] community members [and activist groups] to intervene into and reconstruct unjust discourses in more just ways" (p. 8). Communication interventions that students can conduct, with professors' guidance, range from interpersonal communication (e.g., offering interpersonal communication competency education to those who are poor and homeless to run successfully a customer-oriented small business; Papa, Papa, & Buerkel, 2012), to group communication (e.g., leading focus groups to teach middle school students to employ bystander interventions to prevent racial bullying; Cox & Geiger, 2014), to public (e.g., facilitating public dialogue about race relations and policies; Jovanovic, Steger, Symonds, & Nelson, 2007) and mediated communication (e.g., creating a video documentary to affect public perceptions and policies regarding treatment of Latino/a migrant laborers; Kennerly, 2014). Given this spectrum of interventions, CAP, potentially, can be employed in any communication course.

Although CAP relies on critical pedagogy, it extends significantly that, primarily, classroom pedagogy by "providing students with real-life opportunities to act collectively against injustice, putting meat on critical pedagogy's theoretical bones," thereby constituting an "applied critical pedagogy" (Frey & Palmer, 2014b, p. 26). Engaging students in real-life social justice communication interventions, CAP is a form of civic education but stands in sharp contrast to traditional civic educational experiential activities (e.g., service-learning; see Britt, 2014) that stress nonpartisan civic participation and charity solutions over student–community activism to transform conditions that (re)produce injustice. CAP, thus, constitutes an activist communication education that addresses directly social justice problems, seeking to develop an educated activist class, by inspiring students beyond matriculation to develop their roles as activists and to support activist communities and social justice initiatives. CAP, therefore, is openly political, seeing an ethical imperative to teach students, in addition to many other things, how to be political and political change agents, and rejecting the possibility of an apolitical education and opposing claims that education is, can be, or should be apolitical (see Jovanovic, 2014).

Unfortunately, although social justice activism has infused communication research and is making inroads into communication pedagogy, *Communication Education* (*CE*), the premier journal for communication instructional research, has paid it virtually no attention. Although there are some *CE* articles on classroom justice, there is only one article (a mere 3 pages) that includes "social justice" in the title (Rudick & Golsan, 2016), no articles include "activism" in the title, and no articles list either of those terms as keywords! In fact, of the 62 journal articles in the CMCC database with "critical" and "pedagogy" in the title, only two were published in *CE* (Banks & Banks, 2000, which, essentially, is a book review; Hendrix, Jackson, & Warren, 2003). The *CE* website reveals that "civic education" and "service-learning" have fared only slightly better, with four article titles each, with "community," as a site beyond the classroom (e.g., excluding "community college"), having nine article titles.

Given those statistics, Rudick and Golsan (2016) concluded that little had changed since "Sprague (1992) noted that the preponderance of instructional communication research was concerned primarily with questions regarding how instructors could behave in ways that encourage students to like the teacher, course, and content (i.e., affective learning) to increase cognitive learning" (p. 110). Calling for social justice instructional communication research, Rudick and Golsan argued that as "society moves ever closer to political, social, and ecological disaster, we fear that disconnecting learning from a social-justice understanding of education does not serve students' or society's best interests" (p. 112). Specifically, Rudick and Golsan called for "accounts that directly address the ways racism, sexism, and classism (among others) are communicatively maintained and negotiated in order to transform educational spaces toward social justice" (p. 112).

Although scholars should study how critical communication pedagogy affects students' consciousness of connections among communication, systemic structures/practices, and social injustice (as well as conduct more civic communication education research), it is equally, if not more, important to study how communication pedagogy—specifically, CAP—can be employed not only to help students understand and critique but to change social injustices. One reason is that, in addition to studying traditional communication education concerns (e.g., types and effects of teachers' and students' communicative behaviors on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning) and critical pedagogy issues (e.g., development of students' critical consciousness regarding injustice), CAP can investigate how communication interventions in which students participate affect both them and community members and/or activists. Although, admittedly, CAP research is in its infancy, Frey and Palmer's (2014a) collection provided empirical evidence (quantitative and/or qualitative) of how CAP interventions, informed by communication theory and research, affected students and the marginalized communities and activist groups with which students worked. For instance, Gilbert's (2014) performance advocacy course used the "everyday life performance" method (teaching students to speak, literally, in others' voices) to perform scripted stage productions (based on Gilbert's ethnographic interviews) addressing social justice issues important to two marginalized communities (Lakota Sioux tribal members and Holocaust survivors), with her research showing how those productions influenced positively students' perceptions of engaging in social justice advocacy, interviewees' appreciation of their stories being told, and audience members' movement toward a "social justice sensibility" (see Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996). Moreover, CAP often results in student products created for activist groups, such as a documentary and accompanying press kit about torture and extraordinary rendition that students created to aid North Carolina Stop Torture Now's efforts to end those practices (Murray & Fixmir-Oraiz, 2014), and researchers can assess whether group members view those communication products as increasing their capacity to accomplish social justice efforts.

Scholars also, potentially, can document material effects on social justice problems that result from CAP, such as Carey (2014) showing that students' environmental advocacy interventions contributed to removing old growth units and native strands from a national forest timber sale, and Cox and Geiger (2014) demonstrating how bystander intervention training that graduate students provided to middle school students reduced racist verbal bullying at that school. CAP's efficacy, however, does not rest on achieving effects, as social

justice issues are long-term, large-scale systemic problems, and, hence, realistic semester/quarter student educational objectives and community outcomes must be established.

CAP research also meets the elusive goal of integrating teaching, research, and service. Given additional challenges that CAP poses for teachers in comparison with classroom-only teaching (e.g., creating links and training and oversight of students working with community groups; see Frey & Palmer, 2014b) and for researchers in comparison with, for instance, survey research of college students (e.g., assessing community effects), coupled with the importance of research in today's universities, faculty members maximize the benefits of CAP teaching and service by studying their efforts. Moreover, although some CAP studies, similar to early CAR (see Carragee & Frey, 2012), constituted more post hoc reflections than predesigned studies, when CAP is approached as a research endeavor, important activities occur that otherwise would not, such as assessing students, community members, and activists before and after communication interventions. Importantly, all methodologies can be used in CAP research. We, thus, urge CAP educators who are not doing so to document and report their efforts.

CAP represents an important new form of communication education that responds to significant social justice issues facing societies; CAP research represents an important new form of communication education research that documents contributions that teaching makes to students, community members, and activists promoting social justice, and, ultimately, to creating more just societies. To accomplish those goals, communication scholars must engage in CAP, study their efforts, and publish their findings; in turn, communication journals, and especially *CE*, must be receptive to publishing that research, not because journal editorial boards advocate those positions but because instructional communication research forums must provide space for partisan scholarship challenging oppression, mirroring the democratic political arena in which multiple, often contrasting positions are welcome, and inoculating those journals from criticism that they favor particular partisan positions over others. This forum and another recent one on diverse instructional communication scholarship (Hendrix, Mazer, & Hess, 2016), hopefully, reflect *CE*'s receptivity and will encourage scholars to submit their CAP research there, such that in time, it will become a mainstream trajectory of communication education scholarship.

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RESPONSES

Look to our campuses for focus and inspiration

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Lawrence R. Frey and David L. Palmer describe communication activism pedagogy (CAP) as "putting meat on critical pedagogy's theoretical bones" and applying theory to real-life activist movements (Frey & Palmer, 2014, p. 26). Their hope is to inspire students "beyond matriculation to develop their roles as activists," and Frey and Palmer's examples of CAP instruction (this forum) reflect this goal. All of their examples refer to projects beyond the college campus.

Connecting students with broader social movements is a good way to inspire them. We should also recognize that many students arrive at college with a stake in social justice work and many engage in activism while in college. Supporting those efforts is another way of mentoring future social justice advocates.

Before it was a theoretical tradition, critical pedagogy was a movement that sought social justice for students. Paulo Freire and Myles Horton exemplify a mode of educational activism that, like CAP, rejects the idea that education is apolitical. Both Freire and Horton argued that the school itself must be a site of social justice work if education is to avoid serving oppressive and exploitative systems and be impactful (Freire, 1970; Adams & Horton, 1975). They looked to student needs to set the course of study, and they built curriculum around the activism that students were already doing.

That older pedagogical movement suggests another direction for CAP instruction and research. Looking to our campuses for focus and inspiration would (1) acknowledge education and social justice as deeply interconnected, and (2) position CAP to address the unjust practices that currently compromise higher education. Without that internal orientation, CAP risks joining traditional service learning programs in perpetuating the belief that activism is a privilege rather than an imperative (Endres & Gould, 2009; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Treating student activism as a privilege has proven an effective way of delegitimizing it. Recent campus protests, for instance, have been subject to ridicule. One social commentator characterized them as "wounded self-righteous hypersensitivity" in search of a cause (Douthat, 2016). Critics have mocked students for being unable to handle

microaggressions and have dismissed students' objections to controversial programming as free-speech violations (Heller, 2016).

Despite the ridicule, student activism has once again made urgent the question at the crux of critical pedagogy: can we even proceed with education without first attending to students' wellbeing? The issues we face in higher education suggest not, and they signal that we must connect education to social justice work for either to be viable.

Campuses currently face a number of social justice issues that CAP might address. One such issue is sexual violence. The dehumanizing and omnipresent threat of rape and sexual harassment corrupts the conditions for open and free inquiry that universities and colleges claim to provide. Emma Sulkowicz's yearlong 2015 protest "Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)" made vivid the ways in which sexual violence pervades campus spaces. Though Sulkowicz's performance spoke specifically about rape, it served as a reminder of all the invisible burdens students carry with them as they go about the seemingly benign process of becoming educated. In a similar protest against systemic racism, student athletes from a number of universities have joined professional athletes in refusing to stand during the national anthem. The Texas "campus carry" law that allows concealed handguns at schools has prompted protests by students who believe a perpetual threat of gun violence is not conducive to learning. The University of North Carolina is challenging the state's antiLGBTQ law (HB2) on the grounds that it violates students' rights. Many campuses are advocating on behalf of students ensnared in the recent executive order that bars citizens from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the U.S. On my campus, students struggle with food scarcity and rising rents.

These immediate threats to physical and mental wellbeing compound other systemic problems in higher education. The decline of state support for higher education, for instance, has shifted the bulk of tuition onto students and ushered in exploitative labor practices. Universities and colleges now rely primarily on contingent faculty for teaching, an arrangement that impoverishes and devalues both faculty and students.

It is hard to imagine how CAP instruction and research will develop without addressing these problems. Attending to student wellbeing, restoring public funding for higher education, and resolving academic labor issues is social justice work. It is work that must be done before we can expect students and faculty to engage in broader social movements. For students who lack basic support and resources, the chance to engage in sustained activism beyond their campus will be remote. For contingent faculty, the terms of their contracts will impact their ability to engage in CAP and will influence the kinds of activism they can undertake. Addressing these issues and supporting student activism are reasons to look to our own campuses when building an instructional and research agenda for CAP.

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A call for an ethic of transformation in communication activism education

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Lawrence Frey and David Palmer present a provocative call for communication education and research that is urgent and opportune. The call is urgent because the global human condition—including climate, war, poverty, hunger, racism, and inequality—is at the breaking point; the Anthropocene era has few desirable characteristics. The call is opportune because, globally, citizens are clearly searching, indeed, yearning, for workable solutions to significant problems. A 2016 Harvard University survey found that the majority of millennials reject capitalism (Ehrenfreund, 2016); Podemos and other left-leaning groups surge in Europe; and "Pink Tide" left governments flood Latin America. Meanwhile, populist conservative movements are on the rise: the Tea Party, German and Hungarian anti-immigrant movements, and fascists in Ukraine. From any perspective, tepid compromises for the status quo are unworkable. Recognizing these conditions, the ethical praxis of Communication Activism Pedagogy (CAP) directly addresses inequality and injustice by teaching communication theories and practices that can be used to overcome undesirable social conditions.

Ethical and workable

To enact a social justice pedagogy that is both ethical and applicable, CAP needs to develop *transformational* and *transitional* approaches that apply communication theories and practices to achieve social justice. CAP needs to be transformational, emphasizing the *relations* of power. Hence, one course objective should be for students to recognize that reforms may mitigate instances of injustice, but structures and relations of power may remain. As Malcolm X argued, pulling the knife halfway out of my back is not really progress. CAP should do more than address social *conditions*; it should help students to unpack structures and practices of existing social *relations*, including the effects of

economic and political power on discourses, media framing, and popular culture. The ethical imperative of CAP is to teach the transformational potential of communication as applied to social change.

CAP also needs to illustrate a transitional approach—identifying first steps that can lead to transformation. Projects in one course are unlikely to realize dramatic social change; CAP must organize collective student reflections to consider how some actions contribute to further awareness and organization by communities in action. Ethically, CAP stresses the urgency of alleviating oppression and exploitation, yet linking curricular topics of immediate social problems to social transformation necessarily means introducing theories of transitional change, from attitude formation, persuasion, and propaganda to more overarching theories of hegemony and ideology that explain societal and cultural shifts. In short, to expect workable student–activist projects, CAP must place immediate objectives within transitional strategies leading to social transformation.

Transforming society, transforming pedagogy

Recognizing injustice is an important first step, but it is insufficient for determining appropriate actions. Even well-intentioned actions may be insufficient—or worse, counterproductive. CAP must encourage students to move from symptoms to diagnose social causes, including discourses, structures, and social practices that normalize inequality. Conditions of inequality can be posed as questions for discussion and investigation, providing a pedagogical template for CAP. For example, is racism an individual choice or does racism exist without racists? Is social inequality unfortunate and unsolvable, subject to correction through reform, or are conditions of inequality the outcome of social relations and structures of power?

As part of its commitment to teaching transformative human relations, CAP instructors should practice Socratic and Freirian methods, engaging students in questions about observable conditions of injustice, locally, nationally, and globally. CAP also needs to introduce critical quantitative and qualitative methods to prepare students to include community experiences in gathering credible evidence and identifying causes of social disparities. As part of its transformational mandate, CAP should highlight structures and practices of consolidated media, popular culture, and political economic relations among corporations and government agencies.

Questions of social transformation should be paramount in classroom discussions. CAP should include historical cases, including those that reveal how reforms have reinforced power structures that cause injustice. For example, the Nobel Prize-winning microloan project for impoverished Indian women entrepreneurs did nothing to alter inequality; health, education, or women's empowerment, because microcredit "does not fuel an escape from poverty" (Tozzi, 2013, para. 6). Institutions often respond to challenges with reforms that simultaneously strengthen their power. Classroom activities, thus, should include critical assessments of proposals that become reforms impeding social transformation. The film, *Birth of Nation*, for instance, offers a narrative worth considering: having a more benevolent master does not end slavery.

This is not a call for a specific political agenda for CAP but, rather, a request to confront the actual conditions of contemporary life. Capitalism organizes normative social relations of inequality globally that are neither natural nor preferred. For 600 years, there was no

unemployment or homelessness within the Iroquois's communalist, egalitarian society. In contrast, contemporary capitalism exudes exploitation (profit from others' labor and creativity), inequality (accumulation of wealth through dispossession), alienation (isolated consumers with little political power), and oppression (access to resources determined by race, gender, nationality, and social class).

To make these issues clear to students, CAP instructors might include readings that diagnose market globalization, media privatization, and government policies—even at the risk of appearing anticapitalist. Doing so may be difficult for both CAP scholars and students, but attending to social justice begins, in part, with classroom discussions about how to change the world. Ethically and practically, communication activism pedagogy and research need to be transformational in content and application.

An educational and practical transition to transformation

CAP curricula and teaching should challenge structures and practices of injustice, inequality, and racism. By emphasizing transformation instead of reform, CAP promotes solutions that mitigate immediate problems and, simultaneously, transition students and change agents to better understand social power and strategies for change. As CAP students learn how to contribute to democratic movements, they will be become citizens capable of building transformed societies of social justice, creativity, and human solidarity.

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Beyond the charity-service paradigm: building ethical platforms for social justice education with those most affected

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I propose that the largest challenge *and* benefit of CAP is bound up in a small but significant word in Frey and Palmer's (2014) definition of Communication Activism Pedagogy: *with*. Working "with oppressed community members" challenges the paradigm of higher education service learning that works "for" or in "charity" to the oppressed. Charity-based paradigms may be supportive in critical direct-service based tasks, such as those necessary to operate community food pantries, but can prove quickly problematic if students

attempt premature and underinformed public activism and outreach. It is the word "with" that creates capacity for communication students to intervene in radical and productive activism in their communities, and it ultimately distinguishes CAP from charity-based service learning.

Over the past four years I have taught 10 courses that partner with oppressed community members and activist groups. I have also volunteered as the service learning liaison for a local nonprofit organization, supporting required student community engagement for other university courses. Below I have detailed seven major suggestions to be considered as we expand CAP scholarship, build curriculum, and enact social justice in our classrooms to work emphatically *with* oppressed community members. I hope this is a starting place and that as we collaborate toward more robust CAP in the future, this list will be challenged and expanded.

1. Maintain an ongoing dialogue with oppressed community members and activist groups—from curriculum framing through course implementation and reflection. Too often, service classes for which I have been the nonprofit liaison have promoted instructor course expectations and assignments that contradict, compromise, or derail community or organization goals. Students consistently worked to meet the goals of their instructor over those explicitly identified by their partnering community groups. It is critical that instructors make their assignments innovatively compatible with the sometimes fluid goals and agendas of community organizers.

2. While the word "with" might suggest otherwise, reject the service-learning-sanctioned assumption that students flooding social service agencies are gifts to the community. At a minimum, we should refuse to compromise the social justice work that is happening before and beyond the inclusion of students. This demands strategic preventative support aimed toward students' ethical development and investment in community activism. We must reset student expectation—toward democratic collaborative practice and away from alienating charity paradigms. The logics of privilege within late capitalism, from which the majority of my university students have benefited, have created huge barriers in student understanding and solution-building. Many students have benefited from supremacist systems that have denied others access to the justice our classrooms might advocate and, ideally, activate. Before students work with community partners, my curriculum invites students to build strategies and new paradigms for self-reflection on the logics built within entitlement and promotes the skills of radical listening and collaborative learning.

3. Realistically assess the skills you, as an instructor, can teach—and students can master—to the benefit of the community. We cannot move students into communities without a clear sense of how students will be prepared to engage there. We must be able to articulate a reason for the partnerships we hope to forge—beyond attaching the increasingly popular service learning designation to a course. Ideally, we will emphasize communication skill-building that is learned alongside of, challenged by, and learned from oppressed community members and community activists.

4. Remember that genuine social justice participation cannot be bound to a grade. I do not mandate that a student's individual graded coursework be used as publicity for a movement. I create space in a course for nongraded collaborative publications that have been produced with and ultimately approved by those who understand themselves to be most affected by injustice. I set students up to succeed in their social organizing

even if they might not succeed in the class by imagining collaborative projects that could be useful to the movement even if they were accomplished at a "C" or "D" grade level. I insist that the majority of graded work be preparatory for real-world engagement, or deeply self-reflexive instead of mandating the distribution of premature or weak social interventions. If students exceed the course goals and produce something publishable, I encourage them to share it with organizers. Speaking on behalf of a movement is an exception for exceptional work—it is not a rule.

5. Invite students to reflect on the potential consequences and possibilities not just for outreach, but also as we organize together across difference. I insist on accountability to ethical and nonjudgmental engagement between students and community members. I stay physically present and attentive when students work with socially targeted, demonized, and criminalized populations. Together, we collaboratively set guidelines for working together. We question prejudice when it arises, attentive to speaking in ways that can be heard. For CAP to be truly politically inclined, we must refuse to create shelter for ignorance or prejudice that clogs up the already-exhausting work of organizing.

6. Remember that social justice is not bound by the semester. Set reasonable goals for a semester and imagine the semester as a bridge into ongoing collective work. I spend as much time as I do in my classroom each week supporting and facilitating community organizing spaces that continue to welcome invested students after the semester.

7. Work collaboratively with other educators and activists who share your investments and commitments. I never forget that I am learning from and allied with people who have smart ideas about ways forward when I am unsure. I will not let risks—even those I have noted above—serve as reasons to maintain higher education's disengagement with radical social justice or allow weak service models to compromise the work of social justice. We must find the narrow path forward.

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Check for updates

Long-term impacts of communication activism pedagogy: guiding principles for future research

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Communication activism pedagogy (CAP) illuminates an array of ways to intervene into oppressive systems to promote just conditions, and CAP's transformative effects on students and communities have been substantively demonstrated (Frey & Palmer, 2014). Yet, Frey and Palmer recognize that "social justice issues are long-term, large-scale systemic problems." Solutions to these problems thus require practitioners to think long-term and large-scale.

As CAP continues to develop, we believe one direction for future research should be the long-term impacts of this pedagogy with/on stakeholders. We offer a rationale and propose guiding principles for future research on long-term impacts. Impact can be summarized for students as academic, social, and civic growth; for faculty as the motivation to do similar work in the future and personal and professional development; and for communities as capacity building and social and personal growth (James & Logan, 2016).

The need for long-term research

Researching the "effects" of critical pedagogies on student–teacher dynamics and the influence with/on multiple stakeholders continues to be a challenge because standard course assessment tools are often inadequate (Frey & Palmer, 2014). Envisioning longer-term studies begins to open new, participatory possibilities for understanding the learning that occurs in critically engaged classrooms and allows for more tailored, responsive investigations.

Challenging systemic injustices is no easy task, and creating sustainable activism in classrooms can be elusive. Experiments in democratic education, challenging the status quo, may be relatively short-lived. For example, Apple and Beane (2007) found that after 10 years, over half of the schools in their study were no longer effectively promoting democratic, critical pedagogical practices. Long-term studies on CAP offer an opportunity to learn what makes particular strategies not just impactful but also enduring. The findings of such studies could help further justify the integration of CAP into departmental curricula.

Guiding principles

If scholars are to investigate the long-term impacts of CAP, then certain principles should guide us as we embark on this research, including flexibility, openness to multiple methodologies, and collaboration. These principles are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Instead, we propose them as the beginning of a conversation about what should guide longitudinal studies of CAP.

First, one challenging and exciting aspect of CAP is that it invites spontaneous moments in and out of class that can affect the direction of an entire course (e.g., Jovanovic, Congdon, Miller, & Richardson, 2015). These opportunities occur because activism is inherently fluid and dynamic, which means that practitioners of CAP may plan outcomes for class but must be willing to adjust and respond to situations/events as they arise.

Just as responsiveness and dynamism are incorporated into the classroom, so should this flexibility be included in long-term assessments of CAP's impacts. Conditions to conduct research can be semistructured, but once an investigator enters the exploration, different responses and strategies may be required, and scholars should be prepared to adapt to these new exigencies.

A second guiding principle is openness to multiple methodologies. Although critical pedagogies lend themselves to qualitative research methods, CAP can be explored both quantitatively and qualitatively (Frey & Palmer, 2014). When investigating the long-term impacts of CAP, this same receptiveness to multiple methodologies should be embraced. An example of a qualitative study could include phenomenological inquiries into student experiences and/or community partners' years after the class is completed, while a quantitative study could include analyses of how the views of/on CAP change over time.

Third, scholars should strive to be collaborative and pursue participatory research methods whenever possible. However, collaboration is not always easy. Hendrix, Jackson, and Warren (2003) discuss how "educators cannot effectively teach students if we fail to consciously reflect upon how, why, and for whom we design our overall departmental curriculum and the corresponding individual course content" (p. 180). By failing to critically reflect on our praxis, we risk reducing stakeholders to objects who are acted upon rather than coparticipants who have important experiences and perspectives. And even when critical communication scholars adopt alternative assessment or research strategies, they may still fall short of fully unearthing students' experiences. Yet, long-term relationships with community members are a hallmark of strong campus-community partnerships (James & Logan, 2016), and we should strive to hold ourselves accountable to the community by understanding our impact together. Participatory research methods thus allow longitudinal studies to be created together—with students, scholars, and community stakeholders. Therefore, we must continuously contest how certain decisions affect community members and then collectively and collaboratively act.

Conclusion

As CAP continues to develop, attention should be paid to the long-term and multicontext impacts of this approach to education. If CAP hopes to inspire certain democratic habits for a more socially just world, then it is important to understand how those habits are enacted and performed long after the conclusion of a class. Traditional course assessments are often insufficient for critical pedagogical practices, and scholars have an obligation to be responsive to the long-term impacts of our work with/in communities. Therefore, one direction for future research in CAP is to understand the longitudinal impacts of these practices. Certain principles should guide these studies, including flexibility, openness to multiple methodologies, and collaboration. Attending to these concerns will help ensure that our work remains meaningful for years to come.

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Check for updates

Expanding CAP's interventionist model and developing proper learning rubrics

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For Frey and Palmer (2014), communication activism pedagogy (CAP) "teaches students how to use their communication knowledge and resources (e.g., theories, research methods, pedagogies, and other practices) to work with community members to intervene into and reconstruct unjust discourses in more just ways" (p. 8). I fully support this endeavor. But I worry that this interventionist model—as currently presented—is too narrow. Does every CAP-related activity or course necessitate *direct intervention*?

For instance, my sophomore-level public advocacy course teaches students how to think strategically about social change, focusing on the relationship between rhetoric and the accomplishment of social justice. For their final assignment, students develop well-crafted plans of action for how they *might* intervene into unjust situations. They outline the problem, a potential solution, a mid- to long-term strategy, and a series of tactics (steps/actions) to help them accomplish the strategy. At no point do students *actually* intervene. But I argue that this is very much a CAP course. In fact, such a course can help students become better activists. To draw a loose analogy between activism and football: each is a contact sport, and I believe that most students appreciate getting some instructional "coaching" before heading onto the field for live action. They're going to take some hits either way, and some students will love it, while others hate it. But I believe that sharing my knowledge and expertise enables them to become more effective activists. At some point, they have to actually go out and do it; that's the only way to truly "get" activism and to achieve justice. But to draw out the analogy to football, students can

improve their activism through scouting, film study, practicing proper technique, knowing the playbook, and studying the opposition's tendencies.

This friendly critique of what I perceive to be a narrow interventionism can be jettisoned by developing CAP's learning rubrics. I believe that we can start with four such rubrics; others can obviously be added. These rubrics are not mutually exclusive but, rather, intertwined and recursive.

The *theoretical/conceptual* teaches students how to cognitively process sociopolitical problems and solutions: how to notice, reflect upon, analyze, research, and understand widespread systems of injustice as well as the efforts of those activists, organizers, advocates, campaigns, and movements that attempt to address those injustices. What models of understanding can students learn and/or develop for assessing economic inequality, racism, heteronormativity, animal exploitation, environmental degradation, mass incarceration, and the like? How do different theoretical models—such as Marxism, feminism, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, or Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan—help fund action? How might they be applied in different contexts? On a different note, how might students develop—*with community members*—unique concepts for dealing with a community's problems?

The *strategic/tactical* teaches students how to think strategically about social change: how to differentiate between strategies and tactics, outline timelines and achievable goals, understand leverage and pressure points when negotiating with powerbrokers, and map out courses of action that can achieve one's desired changes. To clarify, strategies are mid- to long-term plans of action that help you accomplish solutions, while tactics are series of actions that help you execute the strategy (for more, see Del Gandio, 2017). Learning to think along these lines can help students become more effective interventionists. Perhaps a student wants to address the inhumane treatment of inmates at the local county jail. The proposed solution is to force jail officials to adopt international standards of humane treatment. The strategy is to assemble a coalition of lawyers, politicians, activists, and community members to expose the issue and pressure jail officials. The tactics include well-publicized rallies outside the jail; narratives written by current and/or former inmates; the drafting of mock legislation; placing spokespersons in the media; and threatening jail officials with criminal prosecution and/or loss of employment and funding.

The *practical/performative* teaches students how to physically enact social justice and participate in social change efforts: how to organize and mobilize communities into political forces; how to choose effective means of activism; how to bring about concrete social change. Obviously, each of the other rubrics informs the practical/performative. But here, the focus is on the actual doing. How does one organize a rally or direct action? How does one lobby elected officials? How does one facilitate an open meeting in which participants begin addressing common concerns? How does one use social media for the expressed purpose of social change? This rubric asks students to actually perform/enact—rather than simply conceptualize—the activism.

The *communicative/rhetorical* teaches students how to discuss and debate their own or others' activist efforts: how to describe, analyze, defend, justify, and/or critique activist activities; how to frame actions for both supporters and opposition; how to recruit members/supporters; how to sway lawyers, judges, politicians, administrators, executive officers, and other powerbrokers. Given the nature of our discipline, this rubric could be applied in almost infinite ways, which would also help expand our understanding of

how CAP-specific content could be integrated into numerous courses and subfields of study—everything from public speaking and persuasion to interpersonal, small group, organizational, new media, visual rhetoric, public relations, performance studies, etc.

To maintain the integrity of communication *activism* pedagogy, each of these rubrics should, I believe, work within the interventionist model espoused by Frey and Palmer. In other words, activist interventionism is the general framework within which these rubrics operate. Different courses and assignments can then emphasize any combination of rubrics depending on the wants and needs of individual instructors and students. But, in each case, the end goal is to help students learn how to "intervene into and reconstruct unjust discourses in more just ways."

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Check for updates

Critical pedagogy meets transformation: creating the being of communication activists

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Critical communication scholarship and pedagogy are vitally important for creating awareness, unpacking social, ideological, and environment forces, and engaging beyond theory (Freire, 1972). The contributors of this forum have taken a valuable step in establishing a way to engage in social justice activism, research, and pedagogy.

Communication activism pedagogy (CAP) is rooted in many of the same ideals as participatory action research (e.g., attending to issues of social inequality and oppression with the goal of enacting social change). Not only does participatory action serve an important role in taking research outside of the ivory tower, but also it notably gives members—both students and the communities with which they are enacting social justice activism—the agency to own and solve problems in such a way that they are empowered to transform their own situations (Freire, 1973). Frey and Palmer advocate for action in the form of practical application, where students *learn about* theories of social justice and then *apply* that knowledge to a specific case. We concur that this type of practical application is one way to "real"-ize social justice knowledge. Certainly, such efforts are preferable over more typical types of pedagogical assessments like theoretical papers and exams.

That said, we wish to push CAP one step further. How might we do pedagogy so that students may *become,* in their mundane being and action, a stand for social justice in the world? How might our instructional practices create the *being* of communication activists?

If we heed the call to create students (citizens) who create social justice activism beyond the classroom, an integral step is to create students who are self-reflexive about their own experiences, attitudes, and (in)actions regarding social justice. When students develop the ability to examine their own assumptions and consider their own roles in (re)producing justice/injustice, they will develop the access necessary to consider how their realities can silence and impact others (Cunliffe, 2004). We suggest they do so not only through hypothetical or actual case studies—"out there"—but also by closely examining and practicing specific ways of being in terms of social (in)justice as it emerges in students' everyday social media discussions, interactions with the homeless, and confrontations with rule makers. Communication, in this sense, serves not as an artifact of analysis, but instead a source of agency.

Moving from epistemological (knowledge) or applied frameworks to those that focus on experiences in life as-lived, and creating space for self-reflexivity, may provide students with access to transform their ways of being in the world (Tracy & Donovan, in press). Such an approach moves the role of the educator from knowledge-provider to conduit for student self-discovery and transformation. Some might suggest that self-transformation is not enough for activism. Or that even such a focus is navel-gazing. However, we believe that if someone is not aware of their own limitations, biases, and beliefs, they will very unlikely be able to engage a larger community in creating transformation and, in this case, justice (Souba, 2014).

As-lived experience is also key for creating practical wisdom, or phronesis—and is instrumental for moving people from merely "knowing what *can* be done in a situation, to the act of doing what *should* be done" (Tracy & Donovan, in press). Phronesis is created through repeatedly engaging in contextual situations and acting. To get transformed practice, one needs to "engage a context, complete with the shock and messiness that accompanies the happenstance of concrete social situations" (Tracy, 2007, p. 107). Such an approach moves individuals from *applying* to *being a stand for* social justice.

As CAP proceeds in its future trajectory, we believe one place for potential growth is in focusing on how students might gain access to phronetic social justice activism. A few emerging approaches that focus on aspects of pedagogy that pull from transformative practices (Brook, 2010; Tracy, 2017; Tracy & Donovan, in press; Tracy, Franks, Brooks, & Hoffman, 2015) aim to move research and teaching toward action-in-context. Similar to much phenomenological research, these transformational pedagogical efforts thus far have been largely value-free, nonnormative, and nonprescriptive. However, CAP calls us to question whether transformation can ever be apolitical. Frey and Palmer's openly political and partisan work moves us to ask, "social justice and transformation for whom?"

With its roots in critical pedagogy and practice beyond theory, CAP deserves attention and engagement from scholars across the field. By enhancing CAP principles with contextual experience, phronesis critical reflexivity, and everyday practice, we believe it will grow not only in its academic influence, but in creating the being of communication activism in mundane life as lived.

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REJOINDER

Check for updates

Turning communication activism pedagogy teaching into communication activism pedagogy research

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We appreciate the responses by these esteemed colleagues to our stimulus essay, and we are grateful for their support of communication activism pedagogy (CAP) and the valuable suggestions offered to improve it. The forum editors asked us (and respondents) to focus on CAP research rather than on CAP teaching practices, which explains why our essay did not elaborate on those practices. In contrast, all respondents, with the exception of Russell and Congdon, focused, primarily if not exclusively, on CAP teaching, and, hence, they left the research agenda implied by their comments rather than articulated explicitly.

Our other work has addressed many of the respondents' points about CAP teaching (e.g., Frey & Palmer, 2014; Palmer & Frey, 2015). We have, for instance, emphasized, as McConnell noted, the need for and benefits of making school, and students' social justice activism there, a site for CAP, as well as for communication activism research (CAR), more generally (see, e.g., Carragee & Frey, 2012). We also have discussed virtually every suggestion that Badger offered about CAP (e.g., need for "ongoing dialogue with

oppressed community members and activist groups," and setting reasonable CAP goals for semesters/quarters). Moreover, we have identified foundational pre- and post-CAP instructional "coaching" (Del Gandio) about self (Donovan & Tracy), power, history, methods (Artz), and many other things (e.g., theory) that students need before, during, and after engaging in social justice communication interventions. Although we agree with Del Gandio that CAP-related activity is important (indeed, crucial) to CAP under the big tent of "social justice communication education," we see important differences between teaching students *about* social justice interventions (e.g., having activists explain their practices to students) and providing students *with* experiential social justice intervention opportunities. Although talking about practices (e.g., writing, exercising, or activism) is tremendously helpful for engaging in them, that talk does not constitute those practices per se. We, thus, use *CAP* to describe educational opportunities where students actually intervene rather than learn about it devoid of that experiential learning.

Although we appreciate discussions of CAP teaching, and respondents reinforcing and nuancing points that we have explicated about it, and we would love to continue those conversations, as the topics mentioned deserve in-depth treatment, the fact that respondents focused on CAP teaching and not on CAP research raises a concern: Progressive forms of communication pedagogy, including CAP, are not being studied sufficiently. Our stimulus essay reported the low number of *Communication Education* (*CE*) publications that have focused (at least in article titles) on critical pedagogy, civic education, service-learning, and community education, and we argued that *CE* and other journals must be receptive to that work, but we also must stress the importance of conducting such research. The low number of publications about those progressive pedagogies, thus, might well reflect the lack of empirical (as opposed to conceptual) scholarship. Indeed, unfortunately, scholarship about how those progressive pedagogies affect students (and communities experiencing social injustices) seems merely to assert claims, with little empirical evidence offered to support them.

CAP probably has a distinct advantage over other progressive pedagogies when it comes to conducting empirical research, because CAP (a) provides students with experiential opportunities to intervene and (b) seeks to affect, in both the short and long term, social justice problems (e.g., stopping people on death row from being executed and preventing human trafficking) that have an exigency demanding that something be done, in comparison with, for instance, critical pedagogy's focus on making students aware of power, hegemony, and related concepts. Both of these CAP characteristics lend themselves endemically to documentation of CAP practices, processes, and effects. We, certainly, agree with Russell and Congdon that future research needs to assess "long-term impacts of this pedagogy with/on stakeholders … [to] learn what makes particular strategies not just impactful but also enduring," and, most important, to "further justify the integration of CAP into departmental curricula." Indeed, we have written about methodological principles, practices, and problems characterizing CAP research (e.g., Russell and Congdon's criteria of "flexibility, openness to multiple methodologies, and collaboration," and Donovan and Tracy's promotion of participatory action research), many of which resulted from lessons learned from conducting CAR studies.

In closing, we urge educators to engage in CAP, working out the important teaching issues that respondents raised. We also urge researchers to conduct studies documenting CAP's strengths and limitations for affecting students and communities experiencing

injustice. Indeed, the programmatic research envisioned is the forum through which teaching and research questions about CAP will be answered. Most important, creating a critical mass of CAP research will enable students to become, as Donovan and Tracy promote, "activist beings" and lead—similar to Illinois abolishing the death penalty, in large measure, because of longitudinal research revealing its faults conducted by a journalism professor and students—to Artz's excellent point that the goal of CAP's transitional strategies to confronting injustice, ultimately, is societal transformation.

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CONCLUDING RESPONSE

Check for updates

Four typologies of communication activism pedagogy

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Communication Education editor Jonathan Hess has done the discipline a service by making space in this journal for a conversation about the ways teachers of communication can incorporate a sense of social justice—and ideally activities meant to enable students to participate in civic engagement projects—into our classrooms and curricula. The turn toward civic engagement and social justice is indeed an exciting trend within the discipline, albeit one fraught with complications political, philosophical, ethical, and institutional. To help sort out these complications, I attempt below to map out the main arguments offered in this forum, which I see as falling into four broad categories: (1) post-Marxist imaginings of social change, (2) existentialist concerns with being in the world, (3) ethical caveats about the needs of our students and communities, and (4) institutional questions about the sustainability of our efforts.

1. As an example of the first camp, Kathleen McConnell suggests teachers of communication could stop looking off-campus for civic engagement projects, instead directing our energies toward campus-based crises in sexual violence, collapsing state funding for higher education, and the tenuous labor situations of precarious faculty. In McConnell's piece,

the question about implementing communication activism pedagogy is one of *crisis prioritization*: to what crisis do we direct our energies as teachers, scholars, and service providers? Lee Artz argues that teachers of communication should be focusing efforts on both the "transformational potential" of our classrooms and their capacity for serving as "transitional" sites, wherein we usher students into a new future. In Artz's piece, the key question is about *revolutionary sequencing*: what are the steps of social justice indoctrination, and in what order should we arrange them to achieve maximum impact? For McConnell and Artz, then, communication activism pedagogy stands as a bright hope, even an anticipatory imagining, wherein teachers of communication, marching arm in arm with students, serve as the vanguard of social change.

2. The second broad school of thought offered herein proposes less of a movement- and crisis-based sense of change and more of a traditional notion of education as the pursuit of wisdom. In Matthew Donovan and Sarah Tracy's contribution, for example, we find appeals to prioritizing "experience in life-as-lived," whereby communication education enables students to process and perhaps "transform their ways of being in the world." The goal here is not revolution but "creating practical wisdom, or phronesis." Thus, if McConnell and Artz offer arguments that sound familiar to post-Marxist writing in general, then Donovan and Tracy forward arguments that would have once been called existentialist. Juxtaposing these traditions in this way indicates how the debates about communication activism pedagogy are grappling with some of the long-standing and complex issues that animate those who envision grand, epochal, historical change (the Marxists and now post-Marxists) and those who focus instead on the intricate mysteries of daily life (the inheritors of existentialism).

3. The third school of thought offered herein is more properly pedagogical and ethical, in the sense of focusing on the intricacies of teaching and civic engagement. Jason Del Gandio's contribution, for example, offers the important reminder that most undergraduate students are ill equipped for engaging in civic engagement projects, meaning that any notion of communication activism pedagogy should begin with an extensive set of trainings focusing on issues that are "theoretical/conceptual," "strategic/tactical," "practical/performative," and "communicative/rhetorical." In contrast to the post-Marxists and existentialists, Del Gandio begins from the humble assumption that our students are not inherently skilled social advocates and that our job as teachers is to provide them with the building blocks of successful civic action. In that same vein, L. N. Badger's contribution—based on her remarkable work with prisoners in Indiana—reminds readers that communication activism pedagogy is more likely to be successful when rooted in "ongoing dialogue with oppressed community members and activist groups." In short, Badger argues that communication activism pedagogy is done not *to* or *for* others, but *with* them, in a process of community-building. In these ethical and pedagogical versions of communication activism pedagogy, special emphasis falls on the need for preparing our students to do good work in careful collaboration with communities in need.

4. Yet a fourth school of thought is embodied in Vincent Russell and Mark Congdon Jr.'s contribution, wherein they ask important questions about the institutional sustainability of communication activism pedagogy. Echoing arguments made throughout this forum, Russell and Congdon note that social justice issues do not fit neatly into the semester format of campus life, meaning teachers of communication committed to civic engagement need to think carefully about institutionalizing their work in long-term

structures. This implies thinking not only about pedagogical issues in the classroom but also about embedding social justice issues and actions within the curriculum as a whole. In the same way that our campuses have moved from the dream that one semester of Composition 101 can teach students how to write to the more holistic notion of "writing across the curriculum," so I would argue that civic engagement needs to be embedded in curriculum maps, graduation requirements, evaluative criteria, and so on. We need "social justice across the curriculum." To be able to demonstrate the efficacy of such institutional work, Russell and Congdon call for "long-term research" into the "longitudinal impacts of these practices."

It should be obvious that no single camp noted here can succeed on its own; departments and colleges will want to think creatively about how to interweave these principles into flexible practices. I would add as well that while the contributors to this forum do not mention it, communication activism pedagogy might also be deployed in travel study classes abroad, on our international campuses, and in our exchange programs—that is, aspects of communication activism pedagogy can serve well for those of us committed to international teaching, scholarship, and service in the age of globalization. As we pursue such work and scholarship, this forum reminds us that there are post-Marxist, existentialist, ethical, and institutional issues to consider, traditions to draw upon, and legacies to enliven.