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# University Education in a Postmodern Era: Building a Narrative Ethic of Civil Communication in the Classroom

Jill Dishart Leontiadis

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UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA: BUILDING A NARRATIVE  
ETHIC OF CIVIL COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jill Dishart Leontiadis

May 2015

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Jill Dishart Leontiadis

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Approved October 17, 2014

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## ABSTRACT

### UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA: BUILDING A NARRATIVE ETHIC OF CIVIL COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

By

Jill Dishart Leontiadis

May 2015

Dissertation supervised by Pat Arneson, Ph.D.

This project responds to the question: How can educators quell communicative classroom incivilities (CI) that are currently harming teaching and learning? Sources of CI in a postmodern United States university classroom involve: student entitlement, lack of institutional support for a growing *contingent* faculty, and incongruent values about appropriate classroom communication. Unlike preceding historical time periods that maintained a shared communicative ethic stemming from antiquity to modernity, postmodernity presents an unprecedented challenge to teaching and learning where there can be no assumed shared ethic of appropriate communicative classroom communication. Postmodernity as an age of coexisting and contentious narratives, this project argues for professors to proactively and appropriately establish an ethic of communicative civility within their classroom.

Paolo Freire and Martin Buber's central works are relevant to communicative civility. Buber's I-Thou construct permits new ways for professors to realize that postmodernity presents an unprecedented opportunity to employ their skills of invention, and is theirs for the giving. Freire's ethics provide hope to professors who find themselves oppressed by incivilities. Freire and Buber's commitment to teach despite experiencing their own incivilities liberates educators to respond to the communicative incivilities in their classroom without relinquishing the quality of their teaching. Educators must continue to educate in creative and engaging ways that meet the pedagogical needs of their students if pedagogy is to survive. Professors have a complicated responsibility to uphold communicative civility in an increasingly diverse population in their classrooms where no shared classroom narrative can be assumed among the students. Despite the complexities of communicative incivility (CI) that the lack of classroom narrative creates, the dissertation argues that CI is symptomatic of a greater malady, which is the groundless classroom. Perceived this way, the lack of narrative consensus in a postmodern age presents a great opportunity for professors to create a classroom narrative grounded by a communicative ethic that uphold civility.

By grounding the ethics that guide appropriate classroom communication, establishing a narrative ethic of civility in the classroom can create a learning environment that not only honors the classroom participants, but more importantly, honors the gift of teaching and learning.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with love and in honor of my family, especially my late great grandmother, Mrs. Maude Wilson Quattlander. Through a lifetime wrought with incivilities, your gumption, blessed resilience and loving heart lives on in me, in my children, and in my students. Also, I dedicate this work to my husband who sees the best version of me, even when I cannot see it myself. Finally, I want to thank my father, Paul W. Dishart, MD for taking to me to museums and libraries as a small child. Thank you for introducing me to your patients who adore you, and whose hands you held without seeing the color of their skin. Thank you, dad, for never making a racist or sexist remark in my lifetime and for loving all people. Thank you for being the best father a girl could have, (with one exception), You are my first love and teacher and you always will be.

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## CHAPTER 1

### LEARNING ACROSS HISTORICAL PERIODS

Teaching and learning has historically been a fundamental concept of society. Time, technology, wars, and the coming together of cultures have shaped the ways in which teaching and learning has and continues to transpire. Understanding the prevailing philosophies of the historical context highlights the values of a particular time and people. Furthermore, a historical survey of teaching and learning allows for an understanding about the goals of education, the people involved, and most importantly for this dissertation, the communicative relationship between educator and learner.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, education has been a crucial component to society. Understanding the ways in which education survived shows how the practice of teaching and learning responded its own historical context. For example, during the “Dark Ages,” a monologic structure of teaching and learning was appropriate for the historical moment. Had students of the Dark Ages invoked the inquisitive and curious zest for learning, like their future Humanist Renaissance counterparts, rather than maintaining a nature of docility, education would look different. What was considered communicative classroom incivility in the Renaissance departs quite drastically from what would have been classroom incivility in the Dark Ages. The changing communicative roles of professor and student are crucial to understanding this disparity. In order to reinforce the indispensable relationship between professor and student, it is necessary to consider the history of the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship. A historical survey beginning with antiquity

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<sup>1</sup> The titles of educator, teacher and professor will be used interchangeably in this dissertation. For reasons of linguistic efficiency, the use of “classroom,” despite its inevitable anachronism given the vast trajectory of time periods, is to be understood as any locus of learning.

and continuing through the postmodern era highlights communicative roles between the professor and student.

### Education Across Historical Periods

A myriad of educational rituals and societal expectations on teaching and learning have shaped prevailing philosophies of society. Change is the common denominator of teaching and learning through antiquity, medieval, modern and postmodern historical periods. Responding to the needs of the historical moment and adapting to change were necessary components to pedagogical survival. This chapter considers four distinct periods: antiquity, medieval, modernity and postmodernity. Highlighting communicative relationships between educator and student shows how the overarching philosophies change and continue to shape the communicative scope of teaching and learning. This exploration considers the importance of the communicative relationship between professor and student. This chapter also strives to provide context through an understanding of prevailing philosophies of the historical moment of the selected time periods. For instance, antiquity established early models for communication between teacher and learner that has taken various forms over time.

#### Antiquity

Beginning in antiquity, a communicative relationship between professor and student was germane to education. According to Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, “rhetoric in its various incarnations has been a powerful force in public affairs and in education for most of its existence since the fifth century B.C., when it developed in Greek probate courts and flourished under Greek democracy” (1). Despite the theoretical debate over rhetoric between Sophists, such as Isocrates, and philosophical rhetoricians,

such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, there remains little debate that rhetoric in classical education involved dialogue between professor and student.

According to George Kennedy, “all communication involves rhetoric . . . almost every communication is rhetorical in that it uses some device to try to affect the thought, actions, or emotions of an audience, but the degree of rhetoric varies enormously” (4). Given this relationship between communication and rhetoric in ancient Greece, the prevailing philosophies guiding education revealed the ambivalence toward rhetoric between adherents to the Sophistic Movement, such as Isocrates, and to those of Plato’s Academy. Bizzell and Herzberg argue that, “in Aristotle’s day, the position that all knowledge is contingent was defended most ardently by the Sophists, who saw themselves as both philosophers and rhetoricians” (4). Isocrates, for example, felt that education should be reserved for practical and political reasons, ideally for “men who are capable of serving the state” (68). Kennedy points out that “Isocrates made rhetoric the permanent basis of the educational system of the Greek and Roman world and thus of many later centuries as well, and he made oratory a literary form” (31). Also, like his Sophistic predecessors, Isocrates charged high fees for his training. James A. Herrick buttresses this by maintaining that, “Sophists claimed that their courses of instruction would, provided enough money changed hands, teach the student to gain mastery over other people through speech” (38). In contrast to Sophistic rhetoric, philosophical rhetoric of antiquity was more concerned with students’ moral development than with their intellectual development, as it aimed to find absolute truth.

Philosophical rhetoric is defined by Kennedy as “the view of rhetoric expounded by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle” (41), and is elucidated in his description of Socrates:

Socrates is distinguished from the sophists by a preference for the question-and-answer method of *dialectic* rather than lectures or speeches to expound his views; by a rejection of the claims of *nomos*, or convention, as the basis of thought and action; by the fact that he did not accept fees from his followers; and most of all perhaps by his rejection of the rhetorical and assertive role of a sophist (41).

Plato's goal was to help students attain "absolute truth" (Bizzell and Herzberg 68), and his Academy did not produce politicians. Plato's Academy "produced philosophers, most notably Aristotle," whose task was to serve as a "midwife who aids the other mind to bring forth those true ideas hidden in the mind's secret places before its own birth" (Bizzell and Herzberg 80-81). In considering the communicative roles between mentor and student, the Sophists were significantly different than their philosophical contemporaries. The transactional and monologic approach to pedagogy of the Sophists contrasted sharply to the dialogic and dialectical communicative relationship between educator and student.

When exploring communicative roles between professor and student in ancient Athens circa 500 B.C. one is immediately aware that the ancient Greek philosophical rhetoricians were concerned with engaging their students. G. M. A. Grube takes this point further in *Plato's Thought*, noting that "the speaker must learn the parts of the soul, their number and the nature of each . . . he must then clarify the different kinds of argument, when each is appropriate and why, thus relating his technique to psychology" (214-215). This statement reflects the attention given to the context and the student on behalf of the professor.

The use of *enthymeme* was common in the classroom of ancient Greece. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, an *enthymeme* is defined as “an incomplete stated syllogism, with one premise, or even the conclusion, omitted . . . . We are expected to supply the missing premise or draw the conclusion if it is not stated” (Audi 267). An enthymeme necessarily “requires that an auditor [the student in this case] supply a missing premise” (Horner and Leff 22). Therefore, employing the use of enthymeme as a didactic tool requires a dialogic relationship between professor and student. The value of dialogic education in antiquity cannot be overemphasized. According to Ronald C. Arnett, “an Athenian environment keeps strong and secure the assumption that discussion and knowledge of various opinions are at the heart of a life of learning” (*Dialogic Education* 161). If dialogue between professor and student served as the artery of teaching and learning, then civility must be considered as *a priori*.

Dialectic was used as a heuristic tool in ancient Greece. Therefore, it is important to understand how dialectic sheds light on the communicative relationship between professor and student. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, *dialectic* is defined as “an argumentative exchange involving contradiction or a technique or a method connected with such exchanges” (Audi 232). For Aristotle, dialectic meant to “argue for a conclusion” (232). For Plato, “dialectic is primarily an art of refutation” (233). Plato emphasized the centrality of dialectic over rhetoric, where Aristotle’s concern for a conclusion necessitated rhetoric as a component of dialectic.

Despite the divergence in philosophy and approach to pedagogy between Plato and Aristotle, the concern and care with the student's morality is very present in antiquity. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle asserted that, “rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic” (1354).

Although Aristotle shared Plato's early disdain for Sophistic rhetoric vis-à-vis its separation from virtue, Aristotle's horizontal stance of virtue departs from Plato's transcendental stance. For example, Aristotle asserted that dialectic leads one to virtue, especially for those who are ignorant of virtue. For Aristotle, truth and justice emerge and prevail naturally after careful and thoughtful discourse within a dialectical framework. Therefore, only after both sides of an argument have been considered and debated will truth, hence, virtue, materialize. Aristotle's horizontal understanding of virtue juxtaposes Plato's *a priori* stance of virtue. Plato's stance assumes that virtue is a teleological pre-existing characteristic of man or woman. This dissertation argues that Aristotle was more audience-centered than Plato. For instance, Aristotle believed that the effectiveness of a speech is contingent upon the knowledge of the audience, especially their types of souls. This approach to rhetoric points to a concern with the *topoi* of the audience. This attention to the audience, specifically students, infers an interest in how the teaching will be effective for learning. Once the students' frame of mind was established, the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric was maintained in the classroom. Classroom incivility would have been counterproductive to the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric.

Aristotle's approach to rhetoric is elucidated by the proofs of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. These are considered to be modes of persuasion that a speaker uses to appeal to his or her audience. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, *logos*, is defined as "reason, reasoning, the rational faculty, abstract theory (as opposed to experience), and discursive reasoning (as opposed to intuition)" (Audi 518). *Pathos* is the emotional aspect of the message that places the audience in the right frame of mind. Jeffrey Walker defines

*pathos* as “an appeal to the audience's emotion” (127). *Ethos* is the proof that speaks to the character of the speaker. *Ethos* refers to the

trustworthiness or credibility of the writer or speaker. *Ethos* is often conveyed through tone and style of the message and through the way the writer or speaker refers to differing views. It can also be affected by the writer's reputation, as it exists independently from the message—his or her expertise in the field, his or her previous record or integrity, and so forth. The impact of *ethos* is often called the argument's 'ethical appeal' or the 'appeal' from credibility (Ramage and Bean 1).

Both Plato and Aristotle are concerned with the moral virtue of the student. This concern re-directs attention to the students' willingness to learn. Also, the concern with moral virtue, or *aretē*, assumes an educator and students' ability and volition to engage in meaningful discussion through communication.

The most profound shift between Plato and Aristotle appears to rest upon the attention each pays to the audience. According to Aristotle, “the most important thing is not to know what it [moral virtue] is but how it arises, we do not wish to know what courage is, we wish to know how to be courageous” (1216b). Courage as moral virtue drives theory into practice. The proof of a man's morality rests in his actions. In this way, Aristotle clearly breaks from Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*, where erroneous actions are a result of a man's intellectual character, rather than his moral weakness. For Aristotle, “no one errs willingly” (352 c2-7). This focus of attention on the student's wellbeing of mind and character involves a dialogic approach to teaching and learning.

Education in antiquity supports a dialogic pedagogy. In conjunction with this view, Cicero's transparent and unapologetic revisionist claims *vis-à-vis* refuting his own work in *De Inventione* liberates his students (either deliberately or not) to refute and to revise their own work as well. As an academic skeptic, Cicero felt free to change his mind about something when a better position presented itself, thus maintaining an enthymematic aspect to his writing. This makes it even more difficult to bring his writing together into a coherent whole. To change one's mind, as it appears through Cicero or even stemming back to Plato's *Dialogues*, drastically diverges from the position of having absolute knowledge. The position of having certain versus relative knowledge embodies the communicative dynamic between professor and student in subsequent time periods.

The selected pedagogical approaches involving communication in the classroom of antiquity clearly prepared students for an active life in society. According to Walker, “in Greek and Roman antiquity, intensive and prolonged study of rhetoric was the key preparation for active civic life” (1). In antiquity, classroom communication emphasized students’ participatory life in society. This type of communication considered the students’ moral character and participation in the polis and matters of public concern. Being political required participation in public life, In considering one’s political life, Hannah Arendt pointed to *vita activa*: “The term itself, in Medieval philosophy the standard translation of the Aristotelian *bios politikos*, already occurs in Augustine, whereas *vita negotiosa* or *actuosa*, it still reflects its original meaning: a life devoted to public-political matters” (12). Augustine’s contributions to medieval philosophy reconciled classical rhetoric with the Christian resolute claim on knowledge.

Augustine embodies this historical transition between the two time periods of antiquity and the medieval period as he “recognized that classical learning was an invaluable resource for Christianity, and he attempted to reconcile the two” (Bizzell and Herzberg 433). Although the Medieval time period shifts the locus of Arendt’s *vita activa* from matters of the polis to those of the pulpit, communication remains central to learning in the classroom. Despite the monologic and subordinate nature of teaching and learning in the Medieval period, rhetoric had to first survive before it could thrive again, as it did in Classical times. The goal or *telos* of education justified using rhetoric as a persuasive means of preaching and conversion to Christianity.

### Medieval Period

In the scope of what is popularly called Western civilization, education in the medieval period is considered from a Christian cultural perspective. Unlike their classical predecessors, teaching and learning transpired in academic departments of Theology, rather than Philosophy. According to Peter Kreeft, “the objective of medieval education was an overtly religious one, primarily concerned with uncovering transcendental truths that would lead a person back to God through a life of moral and religious choice” (15). This prevailing religious approach to pedagogy inevitably affected the schools, where, for a time “classical learning hung by a frayed thread” (Murphy 80). As the structure of civic life eventually declined, this had an impact on education, particularly around the seventh century. James A. Murphy maintains that at this time “education seems to have been available only within monasteries or from scattered private tutors” (80). There was no longer a polis in the larger Athenian understanding bringing people together from different circles. Rather, people existed in smaller isolated circles giving rise to the

emergence of a common local narrative. These local circles were comprised of smaller like-minded groups of individuals as opposed to the much larger and public polis of antiquity. The effect of this transition from a larger to a much smaller polis naturally prevented the participation of multiple voices. The overriding narrative of medieval Europe was Christianity. This section briefly considers educational concepts that emerged during the time period from the Middle Ages until the Renaissance. There were many different pedagogical approaches that highlight the communicative role between professor and student. These pedagogical approaches emerged due to the variety of different philosophies prevalent in the middle ages.

Scholasticism was the prevailing intellectual movement of the medieval period in Europe. Herrick explains that “scholasticism was a closed and an authoritarian approach to education centered on disputation over a fixed body of premises derived largely from the teachings of Aristotle” (124). This method of pedagogy provided an advantage to students because it “probed each issue in an orderly and rational way, collecting the various possible opinions and making a determination of what seemed to be the correct opinion” (124). However, this approach was not without fallacy. Scholasticism treated the Bible and other texts of classical antiquity with such authority that “individual sentences from a respected source, even when taken out of context, could be employed to secure a point in debate” (124). These isolated sentences from ancient sources were referred to as *sententiae*. “Unfortunately for students trained by the use of *sententiae*, however, the actual meaning of a statement in its original context often was lost by the practice of separating sentences from the texts in which they originally appeared” (Herrick 124). Charles Nauert supports this statement as he notes that scholasticism

“simplified and distorted the opinions of authorities by reducing each author’s opinion to a single statement, totally divorced from its original context” (18). Although removing the original context from a statement was part of the prevailing intellectual movement of this time, the heuristic use of rhetoric still found a place in the communication of professors and preachers.

Augustine of Hippo and Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, commonly called Boethius, are two key figures that contributed to educational practices in late classical to medieval times. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Augustine is identified as a “Christian philosopher and church father, one of the chief sources of Christian thought in the West” (Audi 60). Herrick explains that, “Augustine taught the Church how to employ pagan writers without paganizing Christianity. He thus provided a model for teachers and preachers” (129). Augustine gave rhetoric a Christian home. James M. Farrell points out that Augustine’s *Confessions* was meant to “influence his readers, and by means of language and form to direct their attitudes and conduct, to teach them, to delight them, to move them” (25). Although he interpreted and valued philosophy solely through a Christian lens, he preserved rhetoric in his time through his writing. Herrick maintains that, “rhetoric, in spite of its pagan origins and frequent misuse, could assist the Christian teacher in fulfilling each of these obligations. But the classical theory of rhetoric had to be adapted to a new Christian understanding of truth” (127). For example, Augustine used rhetoric that was appropriate for the historical moment. He sought to inform virtue, much like Plato; engaged the audience in a meaningful way, much like Aristotle; and moved the audience to action, much like Cicero. The lesson for students in terms of Augustine's thought, which informs us on the

communicative role between professor and student, is the importance of preservation. Augustine advocated taking what is useful from previous time periods and applying it to a contemporary setting.

Another key figure of the medieval period is Boethius. Martha May Tevis-Kinard maintains that Boethius' writings "had a widespread influence during Middle Ages on scholars and schoolmen throughout Europe" (59). Of great importance was Boethius' ability to preserve classical philosophy while appealing to the prevailing Christian context. For this "he sought to improve education through harmonizing Greek learning and Christian theology, and he felt deeply enough about the disharmony within the Church to write scholarly treatises on those problems. He wrote original treatises on logic and on philosophy which later aided in healing the breach between Greek and Christian thought" (Tevis-Kinard 59). Boethius paid the ultimate price, and was executed for trying to bridge the gap between his Hellenic predecessors and the call of the historical moment.

Like his predecessors Aristotle and Cicero, Boethius kept his audience in mind, and "understood the medieval mind and wrote especially for it" (Tevis-Kinard 2). Like Augustine, Boethius felt it necessary to preserve the function of rhetoric because he "combined Ancient thought with Medieval, and stood between the old world and the new" (Tevis-Kinard 2). Boethius' views offer insights into not only the development of his ideas, but also his effect on Medieval education. While reconciling classical learning with Christianity, the Middle Ages may have provided rhetoric the opportunity to test its strength. "One aspect of Boethius' influence is indeed that he made available the ideas and arguments deriving from Plato . . . [and] Aristotle" (Marenbon sec. 8). The prevailing philosophies of Augustine and Boethius that affected education revealed a desire to

preserve the ideas and arguments from ancient Greece. As discussed previously, ideas and argumentation from antiquity emphasized students' communicative participatory life in society. Although unpopular within the skeptical Christian medieval context, such strain to utilize rhetoric in the Dark Ages may have led to its resurgence in the Renaissance period.

### Renaissance

The communicative and pedagogical themes during the Renaissance witnessed many intellectual concepts that Herrick notes, “radically challenged the Christian worldview and the Catholic Church.” For example, the emergence of the printing press, considered to be a kind of ‘Medieval Internet,’ had an unprecedented ability to disseminate information, “thus making possible the wide dissemination of printed material in Europe” (Herrick 147). In fact, the printing press served as a turning point in Western civilization. Nauert maintains that, “one reason why the fifteenth-century classical revival became a more permanent and more central part of Western culture than any medieval classical revival is that the gains made by fifteenth-century classical textual scholars were firmly anchored and widely diffused in the text of thousands of printed books” (53). Mass printing allowed for the broad outreach of humanistic scholarship. “The major interest of early humanist editors was in literary, rhetorical, and ethical texts—that is, texts related to the academic subjects defined as humanities” (Nauert 54). Such breadth of scholarship that spanned across time and culture affected teaching and learning in ways that enlarged the students' world of knowledge beyond one's own culture and historical moment.

A revival of the rhetoric of antiquity influenced communication in pedagogical approaches during this time, flourishing as the primary area of instruction in “European education and social life” (Herrick 147). The use of rhetoric employed for education in the Renaissance did not carry the same skepticism as medieval times. The Renaissance gives rise to the intellectual movement known as humanism, which directly affected educational practices during this time. Herrick points out that, “humanism in the Renaissance did not imply rejection of Christian principles” (147). However, for Lorenzo Valla, one of the leading humanist scholars during the Renaissance, humanism “did mean the rejection of the monastic idea of contemplative piety” (Herrick 152). Moreover, humanism implies a social position as it describes the philosophical underpinnings of human the sciences, or what is currently referred to as the humanities in academia.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, the inspiration for the humanities in what the 15<sup>th</sup> century referred to as *studia humanitatis*, standing for “grammar, rhetoric, history, literature and moral philosophy, came from the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Latin texts” (397). The latter inspiration explains how education in the Renaissance through humanism affected attitudes about civility. “Among Renaissance scholars, there was less demand to pay homage to the supernatural. Rather, humanity, with all its distinct capabilities, talents, worries, problems, possibilities—was the center of interest” (Audi 397). The shift in educational focus to humanism did not infer a rejection or an abandonment of Christianity. Rather, humanism sought to embrace that historical moment and garnered a renewed interest in classical texts in an effort to focus more on the early Church fathers rather than scholastic commentaries on Christianity.

Unlike its medieval scholastic predecessor, humanism rejected the *sententiae*. “The Humanists sought to place the text in its historical context, in order to establish the correct value of words and phrases” (Herrick 158). Desiderius Erasmus, for example, emphasized to his fellow Renaissance theologians to “focus their study more on the early Church Fathers than on Scholastic commentaries” (Bizzell and Herzberg 581). The latter shift in focus posed a clear contrast to scholasticism: “renaissance intellectuals struggled to develop new ways to understand the past historically—an effort that had profound epistemological implications for them—and how their work should reflect its influence” (Bizzell and Herzberg 558). A prevalent interest in the context of the words and phrases was coupled with the “humanist position . . . [that] reflects a suspicion of the contemplative life of solitary reflection” (Herrick 163), and points to an appreciation for the historicity of the text. The polyglossic elements of a word emerge as they depart from a myopic and translation-transaction method of understanding to a deeper and conceptual understanding. The humanistic way of understanding in the Renaissance involves engaging words and phrases as part of a constructive hermeneutic. Refuting the other is subordinate to dialogic understanding.

This attentiveness to dialogue extended to a revived interest in classical philosophers. For example, Nauert maintains that the classical authors “re-emerged as real human beings, living at a particular moment in history and addressing their remarks to specific issues” (18). Based on such an interest in understanding a text through dialogue with a particularly intense interest in the context that the text intended reveals an overarching civility for informed scholarship. This civility was based on curiosity, quest for truth, and freedom from oppressive authoritarians.

Like all eras, the beginning of the Renaissance reveals the values of its people expressed through art, prose, philosophy, and dialogue. However, by the end of the renaissance, the dominance of Western European powers and its acquisition of land, slaves, and power, extended to an occupation of knowledge. With the search for new knowledge, men like Francis Bacon and René Dèscartes emerged. Nauert asserts that, “both for rationalists like Dèscartes and for empiricists like Bacon and [Isaac] Newton, the sceptics’ assault on traditional learning provided a starting-point beyond which they could advance only by carefully and consciously narrowing the scope of their inquiries to a limited and carefully defined set of problems” (213). This emergence of science displaced all non-scientific knowledge. Nauert continues that, “all other knowledge, including many subjects that had been at the heart of classical, medieval, and Renaissance civilization, had been relegated to the category of mere opinion” (214). The Enlightenment, referenced here as modernity, began a new era of scientific discovery holding empiricism as the barometer of truth. The epistemic and philosophical divergence from the humanist revival of classical education to the anticipation of discoveries that lie ahead in the empirical subsequent time period, replaced the quest for what was, with the quest for what can be.

### Modernity

The Enlightenment led to the modern period. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, the Enlightenment is responsible for laying “the intellectual foundations for both the generally scientific worldview, and the liberal democratic society, which continue to function today” (Audi 266). The Enlightenment, considered in the regional and historical context of Western Europe, was a time of discovery. For

example, Western Europeans saw unprecedented voyages to unknown lands, disseminated philosophies and various opinions through printed materials, and held empiricism as the barometer of truth, thus refuting Christian predecessors. Herrick maintains

If Modernity involves questioning the received truths of Christian tradition, elevating rationality over other sources of truth, such as authority, seeking solutions to social problems by means of scientific method, and viewing the universe as governed by inviolable physical laws, then perhaps the intellectual developments in Europe in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries do mark a major transition in Western thought (174).

The shift from humanism during the Renaissance to scientific empiricism in the Enlightenment altered approaches to seeking knowledge, thus limiting educational experiences to applied methodologies and experiments. Any knowledge that could not be deconstructed or measured was seen as subordinate to what was empirically measurable

The emphasis on empiricism had an impact on rhetoric and ultimately education as we see a shift from its function of “discovery and communication of knowledge of previous eras, to a focus on the latter function of . . . a ‘managerial’ emphasis on rhetorical studies . . . Barbara Warnick identifies a corresponding shift from rhetoric as guiding the production of discourse, to rhetoric as enhancing the consumption of discourse” (Herrick 129). This shift to a consumer-oriented rhetoric affected the way people claimed to acquire knowledge.

The extensive social, political, and linguistic changes that took place during modernity held that knowledge can and should be achieved through scientific inquiry. These changes also extended to non-traditional scientific fields, such as philosophy and communication, where philosophy was reduced to psychology and rhetoric was utilized as a technique. Herrick points out that, “in the faculty psychology view, the mind consisted of understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the will” (187). As modernity obliged teaching and learning through an empirical lens, any deviation beyond the scope of measurement was considered secondary to the popular empirical approach to pedagogy prevalent at the time.

Eighteenth century rhetorical theorist George Campbell’s *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* reflects the scientific shift of rhetoric as he wrote that, “all the ends of speaking are reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will” (1). Campbell’s writing is indicative of the existing relationship between philosophy and psychology. Bizzell and Herzberg explain “philosophers reconsidered the source and status of knowledge, paying particular attention to the psychological processes of perception, reflection, and communication in an attempt to determine how it was possible to discover the truths within the physical world that were so important to science’s progress” (791).

In addition to the redistribution of various non-scientifically-based fields of study, the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* points to three major philosophical principles that affected pedagogy during the medieval time period.

- (a) Human beings are free to the extent that their actions are carried out for a reason. Actions prompted by traditional authority, whether religious or

political, are therefore not free; liberation requires weakening if not also overthrow of authority. (b) Human rationality is universal, requiring only education for its development. In virtue of their common rationality, all human beings have certain rights, among them the right to choose and shape their individual destinies. (c) A final aspect of the belief in human rationality was that the true forms of all things could be discovered, whether of the universe, of the mind, of good government (Audi 266).

These principles reinforced that the strongest universal and human ability to find truth is through the use of reason. The dichotomy and quest for the acquisition of knowledge prevailed in the classroom as it did in the society during the Enlightenment. Anything taught that was non-scientific was seen as non-essential, such as engaging pedagogy through dialogical education. This widely held empirical belief affected communication in the classroom between professor and student by creating a myopic dichotomy of correct and incorrect, instead of finding out a truth through deliberation, particularly between professor and student. The focus on rationality affected perceptions about certain knowledge, asserting that truth can be acquired through the scientific method.

This shift in rhetoric may be the earliest indicator of what gave rise to the consumer mentality of students today. Murphy points to a more “direct consequence of the belletristic emphasis on the individual, realized in the late nineteenth-century composition pedagogy: a strong shift to more ‘personal’ topics for assigned writing [that] focused more sharply on the students’ personal experience and feelings than had the writing assignments of earlier times” (225). The focus on the individual based on the rise and prevalence of psychology of the Enlightenment provides an understanding of the

changing communicative relationship between professor and student, with the focus being more subjective and psychological than content-based. For example, Warnick argues that, “in several important instances rhetoric’s role shifts from producing public discourse to enhancing its consumption, from discovering knowledge to managing the discoveries of other disciplines, and from an external focus on public problems to an internal focus on the mind and imagination” (67). The rhetorical shift from a focus of public discourse to an internal and private individualism, indubitably affected communication between professors and students. In particular, the study of communication was a “way of thinking about language and rhetoric as a means or a ‘technology’ for sharing experiences in a social setting” (Bizzell and Herzberg 1184). Practical goals of communication as a discipline still hearken currently as students’ expectations often drive the educational curriculum in postmodernity.

### Postmodernity

In “Paulo Freire’s Revolutionary Pedagogy” Arnett explains that postmodernity is an age “in which contention over virtue and power disparity are commonplace” (492-3). Arnett suggests that postmodernity suspends public consensus regarding any authority as the purveyor of knowledge. Therefore, science as the gauge of knowledge from the preceding era of modernity is no longer feasible to the diverse sensitivities of a postmodern society. Rather, the multiplicity of voices that are often at odds with each other lead to an emergence of individualism as a hallmark of the United States society’s current understanding of the world.

The competing narratives that define the postmodern era suggest that there is no consensus on a universal understanding of a world-view. In postmodernity, “the

pluralization of voices makes sense only if they can be heard in harmony—that is, if they represent consensus or can be brought into concerted cooperation” (Anderson, Cissna and Arnett 179). In the United States, the diverse and often divergent narratives of students and professors in the undergraduate classroom reflects the confusion among professors and students surrounding authority, as well as perceived rules of communication. Therefore, it is essential to teaching and learning to establish consensus about classroom communication between faculty and students.

Derek Bok considers the historical moment in understanding today's university student, stating that “without some knowledge of the past one cannot fully appreciate which aspects of the undergraduate program are amenable to change and which seem to stubbornly resist reform” (11). In fact, what began before the American Civil War as institutions that resembled “religious bodies and finishing school more closely than institutions of advanced education . . . [where] student behavior was closely regulated both inside and outside the classroom” have become universities that “boast huge enrollments . . . [and] legions of faculty members and other instructors that fill their campuses today” (Bok 12). This shift is significant to the communicative relationship between professor and student as tuition-driven universities are increasingly attentive to their enrollments in the United States, especially given the recent drop in student enrollment. Universities’ competition for students places students in the role of consumer. Many believe that this communicative relationship creates a conflict of interest that impedes teaching and learning.

At present, the communication in the classroom between professor and students is varied. Some professors make complete use of technology in their classrooms, while

others maintain a dialogic style in a very rudimentary tradition. Jeff Stickney asserts that, “in higher education today there is no reigning theoretical orthodoxy that exerts its primacy over or hegemony over all other theoretical frameworks” (328). Technology, the different styles of learning between professor and student (each incorporating rhetoric differently), as well as an increasingly diverse population of learners in a postmodern society elucidates the differences that exist and why they may pose challenges to learning in the classroom. Understanding the differences brought on by technology in the 21st century help to situate the ways in which students obtain their information.

From a generational standpoint, technology makes current students’ learning experiences unique to previous generations. Given the opportunities extended to international students due to these technological advancements, competition for highly competitive higher education, as well as the grants supporting that education, is now transpiring on a global scale more than ever before. Bok maintains that

No longer are bright Americans who went to the right schools protected from overseas competitors in forging careers in the world's most prosperous economy . . . ambitious young men and women all over the world are eager to take their place and are empowered by technology to do so . . . in this environment, the quality of education in American colleges has assumed greater importance than ever before (5).

With the shift in technology and a multitude of teaching and learning alternatives, context serves as a guide for finding appropriate ways to reach diverse experiences of students as one responds to the call of teaching in postmodernity. Specifically, this research

considers issues that can potentially improve the communicative relationship between professor and student.

Currently, the historical moment of the university in the United States reflects “an era of entitlement, not gratitude” (Arnett and Arneson 100). Keith W. Campbell, Angelica M. Bonacci, Jeremy Shelton, Julie J. Exline, and Brad J. Bushman define entitlement as “a pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others” (31). Ellen Greenberger, Jared Lessard, Chuansheng Chen, and Susan P. Farruggia maintain that student entitlement is “associated with a wide array of maladaptive and socially-problematic traits, including greed, aggression, and lack of forgiveness, Machiavellianism, and the perception by others that one is hostile and deceitful” (1194). Academic entitlement (AE) is present, for example, when a student demands a higher grade than the student has earned. Greenberger, Lessard, Chen and Farruggia continue that, “if students learn that they can get a high grade with minimal effort, or that trivial excuses often result in special favors (e.g., permission to postpone an exam), we should not be surprised if they develop entitled attitudes” (1203). Exploring ways in which faculty might be contributing to students’ expectations of high grades in exchange for minimal effort would warrant exploring alternative approaches to communicate with students at the university level. Greenberger, Lessard, Chen and Farruggia point out that, “a better understanding of the sources of AE should be useful to those of us who interact with college students and might help us to deal with entitlement when we encounter it, or unwittingly encourage it, in our school and university settings” (1203). Given that AE is among the most prevalent culprits of classroom incivility, an earnest examination of the sources contributing to AE is justifiable.

Oddly, what began as education as serious scholarly pursuits in the early United States has become a pursuit of fun for many students. A report drafted in 1828 from Yale College held that “the principle aim of college instruction was not to supply all of the important information that students might some day use but to instill mental discipline” (Bok 13). Recent research points to a shift in what many students desire in higher education today. Jackson Toby asserts that “some freshman arrive at college thinking that having fun is the main reason they are at college and that the pursuit of knowledge should be available for when they have nothing better to do” (42). Many professors agree with Toby's stance in that “most students themselves go to college not out of love of learning but to qualify for well-paid and interesting careers” (Bok 47). Many professors maintain that this shift in student attitude from love of learning to a consumer-based mentality is the reason for the incivility in the classroom. Authors like Thomas Benton and Kristin A. Frey point out that the students’ draw upon perceptions of themselves as consumers to pressure faculty into acquiescing to student consumerist demands, awarding students high grades in return for mediocre work (Benton 1; Frey 9). These incongruous expectations between professors and students create an atmosphere of incivility that often emerges through communicative exchanges creating communicative classroom incivility. Before the postmodern era, civility between professor and student was assumed. In the postmodern era we are faced with the co-existence of competing narratives where no common ground can be assumed. Classroom incivility poses an unprecedented threat to teaching and learning, as the ensuing research examines.

## Summary

This work examines and strives to address the problem that communicative classroom incivility currently poses to teaching and learning in a university classroom. In postmodern society, the presence of communicative classroom incivility poses an unprecedented difficulty to teaching and learning. Historically, the style of classroom communication between professor and student reflected expectations of comportment based on a shared understanding and acceptance of a prevailing understanding of the importance of education within the philosophy of a particular time period. This mutual understanding of where one stands *in relationship* to their historical narrative served as guide for praxis vis-à-vis how teaching and learning would transpire.

The prevailing philosophy of contributing to public life in the ancient Athenian *agora* is reflected through heuristic tools used in the Academy and Lyceum. The rhetorical classical use of syllogism and enthymeme in the classroom required a dialogue between mentor and student. For example, an enthymeme omits either an obvious premise or conclusion, serving to infer the truth based on an incomplete syllogism. This inference requires shared agreement among students and professors of what is both obvious and omitted. In *Dialogic Civility*, Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson point out that, “in an enthymeme, the audience provides the final completion of the statement, putting into action behavior that is sensitive to the unique context” (139). Based on the syllogism as a formal argument that follows two statements and a deductive conclusion, participants of this kind of argument require the use of critical thinking of its participants. Critical thinking helps students to develop their mental faculties. Without the deductive

logic of syllogism as the counterpart to enthymeme, the dialogic nature enthymematic inference ceases to exist.

During the medieval time period, philosophical and pedagogical inquiry was studied through a Christian lens. The dogmatism of the medieval period did not permit debating the Divine, hence shifting from classical forms of dialogue between professor and student to medieval lectures where professors served as purveyor of knowledge and students as recipient. Although Christianity prevailed throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods, the Renaissance revived classical texts with the emergence of humanism, which, despite Christian censure, buttressed human potential for learning, affirming communicative freedom for scholarly pursuits through dialogue and collaboration between and among professors and students. This collaboration of educators and learners created a culture that valued inquiry, dialogue, and engagement where civility in the classroom stemmed from a profound collective appreciation of learning. The revival of classical texts supported the intellectual movement of the Renaissance and instilled classical ways of learning through rhetoric as a way of generating knowledge. The teachers' use of classical texts suggests a restoration of a dialogic classroom between professors and students.

Echoing a parallel dogmatism of its medieval predecessor, modernists regarded education through an empirical lens. As science continued to weigh heavily in the educational curriculum, the communication of the classroom was more involved with technique and deliberation than with dialogue. The prevailing scientific philosophy influenced an educational system where the quest for knowledge required a psychological and deconstructive understanding of the source of knowledge through empirical means.

Modern ways of teaching and learning led to what Alasdair MacIntyre warned of emotivism, “the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (*After Virtue* 11-12). For the classroom, this meant that modernity’s emphasis on the psychology of the individual prevailed over the course content. Therefore, professors’ perceptions of students’ contentment displaced faculty members’ focus on what they were teaching.

The trajectory of modernity is negatively affecting the United States’ university classroom in the current postmodern time period. Problems arising in classrooms are manifest in uncivil communication driven in part by feelings of entitlement. Furthermore, in postmodernity, classroom expectations for communicative protocol are confounded by the coexistence of competing narratives. The changing context of United States universities reflects a shift from a purely academic to a more consumer-oriented institution. In a postmodern society, a consumer-based mentality serves as the prevailing philosophy, coupled with an emerging sense of academic entitlement among students. This philosophy affects the communication in the classroom, thereby impeding teaching and learning. Postmodernity poses an unprecedented challenge, as well as an opportunity in the United States university classroom. Technology, diverse teaching styles, and students from increasingly disparate backgrounds confound the boundaries of appropriate classroom communication between professors and students.

This dissertation does not focus on the problem of entitlement as much as it sheds light on how faculty may potentially be contributing to students’ academic entitlement in their communication with students. This project is not exhaustive in finding the culprit

that impedes teaching and learning, nor does it assume that professors, students, universities or cultures are solely to blame. Rather, this work considers aspects of communication in the classroom, and ways in which faculty can bolster the bridge of civility through their communication with students.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMMUNICATIVE INCIVILITY IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

“First, as instructors, we are ethically bound to do the best possible job of helping our students learn. The learning environment can be maximized only through courteous social interaction of all concerned. Failure to address incivility degrades the learning environment in our classes and in schools as a whole. The result of this degradation is that students learn less. Eventually, the reputation of the school will be tarnished if no action is taken against classroom incivility” (Feldmann 138).

Chapter two examines incivility in the classroom from a communicative perspective, and confirms that classroom incivilities (CI) are an impediment to teaching and learning. The literature reviewed in this chapter establishes the increasing presence of what Heike C. Alberts, Helen D. Hazen, and Rebecca Theobald refer to as “the pervasiveness of classroom incivilities” (440). Contemporary perceptions of CI differ between professors and students. This dichotomy is problematic in assessing the source of CI. CI appears consistently throughout the literature, revealing significant and varied consequences that ultimately implicate teaching and learning.

First, this section examines the terms *incivility* as well as *civility*. The literature related to communicative incivility and civility in the workplace serves to buttress these definitions of incivility and civility. The similar natures of the classroom and the workplace are relevant to the salience of understanding incivility and civility. In a similar parallelism to the workplace, Alberts, Hazen and Theobald point to a positive correlation between communicative civility and the classroom. This link between civility and learning is significant as it supports the relationship between communicative civility and effective teaching and learning. In addition, nonverbal influences affecting classroom

communication illustrate the differences in perceptions stemming from technological advances, diversity, and generational narrative disparities between professors and students. Second, understanding the sources of CI are imperative to finding a solution. The literature considers ways in which communicative incivilities appear in the classroom, and provide insight into identifying uncivil communication. By understanding the sources of CI, direction emerges for appropriate action. In addition to professors and students as the primary sources of CI, researchers also conclude that cultural and institutional forces aid in fueling the insolence of incivility. Third, the salience of research on CI exposes how CI threatens the United States as a culture. As per the literature, the negative impact that CI has on teaching and learning, coupled with the positive correlation of civil communication to the classroom, points to an urgency to understand and ultimately *transform* incivility through instructor communication. Fourth, in light of the fact that CI has dire consequences to teaching and learning, this chapter concludes with an informed hope that the subsequent chapters offer ways to address the problems of CI. Stemming from the position that the communicative relationship between professor and student is the first and most vital step in quelling CI, this chapter concludes reaffirming the salience of this dissertation, which aims to protect the vital communicative relationship between educator and student.

#### Defining Communicative Incivility and Civility

As CI is on the rise it is important to consider characteristics of incivility and how it appears in a communicative context within the United States undergraduate classroom. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson's definition of civility embodies the communicative exemplar for this dissertation. In *Dialogic Civility*, the authors define civility as "bringing

respect for person, topic, and historical moment to the public domain” (6). This triadic model of civility requires mindfulness to three aspects of a communicative action—the audience, content and context. This dissertation suggests that incivility emerges amidst an imbalance that lacks appropriate attention to one or more of these communicative aspects. Specifically, the type of incivility to which Feldmann refers, Bruce A. Berger maintains that incivility refers to any “speech or action that is disrespectful or rude” (446). Highlighting the effect of incivility on people involved, as well as on the environment, Cynthia M. Clark explains that incivility suggests “disregard and insolence for others, causing an atmosphere of disrespect, conflict, and stress” (E38). Although much of the literature surrounding incivility is considered in the classroom setting, communicative incivility is not limited to the university as students eventually enter the workplace. Therefore, the problems that emerge in the classroom due to communicative incivility also emerge in the workplace.

In an attempt to broaden and enrich the understanding of communicative civility, this section draws connections between relevant workplace communication and that of the classroom. Fritz maintains that, “multiple areas of communicative study are relevant to the domain of professional civility” (13). The contexts of workplace and classroom allow for a larger conversation about the cost of communicative incivility to an organization involving communication among its members. The analogy of classroom and workplace communication is relevant as the classroom serves as a precursor to workplace. Communicative incivility in both classroom and workplace is detrimental to collaboration and time. Fritz asserts that, “incivility is costly to organizations, exacting a toll on people and productivity. If left unchecked, incivility harms workplace

relationships, costing managerial time and effort spent in damage control” (12). Furthermore, there exists an opportunity cost of *repairing* in place of working. Fritz continues that, “incivility takes attention from work, compromising trust needed for successful cooperative activity” (12). The workplace is similar to the classroom, as it requires communication among its participants. If communication among students or colleagues breaks down due to incivility, then there exists a threat to the collaboration and participation of its members. As collaboration is germane to the academic and workplace settings, any potential to damage that teamwork also damages the potential for a positive educational or workplace experience. Managing communicative incivility in the classroom prepares both professors and students for positive future encounters. Indeed, there remains little doubt that students, who can work through communication quandaries with their professors, as well as with other students, can learn and prepare for appropriate and skillful communicative practices within a given organization in the marketplace.

The substantial literature surrounding workplace incivility supports civility’s positive effect on the work environment. To juxtapose the negative effect of incivility on the people and environment, Janie Harden Fritz purports that communicative civility, especially in the context of the workplace, posits a very positive force within a professional environment. Fritz defines civility as

sometimes understood rather narrowly as a way of communicating formally with people we don’t know well or as a means of masking dislike behind ‘nice’ words . . . treating those we know well with civility may smack of aloofness if we work from the assumption that we should always

say exactly what we think at all times with raw directness . . . civility is a much richer concept than this common understanding implies, gracing the workplace with an atmosphere that permits tasks to be accomplished in the context of functional—and even pleasant—interaction with others. (12)

Authentic communicative actions that reflect civility are value-laden with cooperation, concern for others, as well as the institution.

Similar communicative problems in the classroom posed by technology, increasing diversity, and generational gaps between mentor and student also affect employees in the workplace. Andersson and Pearson maintain that, “incivility in the workplace seems to be spreading as the complexities of competition, technology, and globalization intermingle” (468). Increased use of technology and increasing diversity in both the classroom and workplace create new ways for communicative incivility to transpire. Margaret H. Vickers points out that, “workplace incivility can take on a wide variety of nuanced behavior, and can provide much discomfort and anxiety for those targeted” (74), just as lack of mutual communicative expectations between professors and students in the classroom creates an atmosphere of anxiety due to uncertainty.

Within the context of the classroom, incivility affects both professors and students. Rebecca Newman-Gonchar points out that, “incivility on campus occurs readily in classroom environments, where professors become upset with students or students treat professors inappropriately” (62). Most of the literature points out that professors and students find that CI is attributed to the other party, namely, uncivil professors or uncivil students. This is problematic because the literature shows that the mutual dissention between professors and students threatens to unravel communication, which is necessary

for teaching and learning to occur. Feldmann supports this statement as he defines incivility to be “any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom” (137). Hence, it is essential to understand and validate both professors’ and students’ positions considering the sources of CI. Feldmann asserts that, “failure to address these actions appears to condone them, sending a message to students that it is okay for that type of incivility to be repeated” (138). To support and further Feldman’s salience of addressing the problem, this chapter supports finding a solution that not only admits, but also explores sources of CI. Failure to engage in a civil communicative discourse surrounding uncivil classroom communication does not diminish the current problems of CI, but may in fact fuel CI’s presence.

New channels for communication also provide new ways for CI to emerge, such as reading text messages or engaging in social media during class times. Fang-Yi Flora Wei and Y. Ken Wang point out that “in recent years, new technologies such as text messaging, social networking sites, and Skype have made the challenge of incivility even more acute as students use them even in the middle of class lecture” (479). The intersection of technology and communication contributes to communicative incivility not only in the classroom but will carry over into the workplace if left unchecked.

The intersection of CI with technology, diversity, and technology also harbors new ways of expressing pedagogical animosity due to the increasingly varied levels of technological familiarity by both students and educators. The myriad ways in which technology is experienced and used in the classroom is just as varied as the individual users of said technology. For example, Dennis Van Roeckel points out that, “educators in urban and rural schools are much less likely than suburban educators to feel adequately

trained” (1). Based on Roeckel’s observation, students entering college will not all share the same level of technological expertise. This lack of mutual technological proficiency among students amplifies the confusion for proper use of technology in the classroom. The diversity also applies to the type of technology that students use. For students, the use of technology is not only extraordinarily vast and unprecedented to previous generations, students’ relationship with technology are unprecedented as well. Unlike previous generations whose relationship with technology has been utility-based, students now maintain an emotional relationship through social media. Also, the availability and variety of educational software tools such as Blackboard, and online scholarly research database makes it impossible for educators to assume the technological familiarity among their students. Educators alone are not dissimilar to their students’ experience with technology, but students are varied among themselves. This is especially true with students from underserved communities and developing countries.

Many professors are at a generational disadvantage in terms of familiarity with technology when compared to their students’ knowledge. For example, students’ use of smart phones and other technological devices in class arouses suspicion and confusion, as most professors’ generations are not as innately entrenched in technology. This familiarity gap creates incivility because there is no common ground between professor and student serving as a guide for appropriate communicative action in the classroom. The confusion surrounding technology furthers the perception of incivility in the classroom if professors’ and students’ expectations of suitable communication exchanges are unclear. This lack of commonality removes any guide for appropriate classroom communication, let alone the appropriate use of technology.

To summarize, incivility and civility appear differently to professors and students. This divergence of perception between professors and students is only further confounded with the emergence and widespread use of technological devices. The literature shows that professors perceive academic entitlement as the source of communicative incivility among their students. Professors complain about students' behavior because there is a perception that students are intentionally disruptive and should be sensitive to the level of respect to which the professors feel entitled. Civility, at least for the millennial generation of current traditional age students, involves an understanding of technology or at the very least a willingness that students' use of technology may not be seen as threatening learning. The generational differences related to acquiring knowledge through technology augments incivility. Rapidly expanding technologies requires a conversation between professors and students about how such technologies can aid learning. In the classroom, there exist distinct nonverbal influences affecting classroom communication, which illustrate how perceptions confound communication. These nonverbal influences involve technological advances, diversity, and generational narratives. The latter three nonverbal factors emerge repeatedly and interdependently in the literature. Lynn M. Andersson and Christine Pearson, as well as Fang-Yi Flora Wei and Y. Ken Wang address the intersection of classroom communication and the increasing use of technology among students.

The breadth and rapidity of students' interaction with technology affects relationships. There exists a strong perceived need to communicate through technological channels. Lynn M. Andersson and Christine M. Pearson point out that "we face the growing challenge of relationships mediated by high-tech asynchronous, global

interaction . . . [where] with history as counsel, one might assume a need for increased civility in forging and reconciling increasingly complex interactions” (452). In addition to technology, the multitude and breadth of diverse narratives indicative of our current postmodern society, confounds the boundaries of appropriate communicative interactions within a given context. This narrative ambiguity has problematic implications for communication. For example, if one does not know where one stands on a matter, it is even more difficult to determine where one wants stands on a matter. In order to have a communicative goal, one must first have a direction. One’s confusion of their own narrative leads to indecisiveness and often inaction. Generation gaps between professor and students add to the confusion for appropriate communicative comportment.

After defining ways in which CI appears in the classroom and the workplace, it is essential to consider the literature surrounding the sources of CI. According to the research, students and professors are the primary causes of CI. Although other sources that are institutional and cultural in nature provide insight into CI, the communication behavior between professor and student are paramount to this chapter. Understanding the source of the problem (CI) serves as a marker for appropriate communicative action. Appropriate and civil communication between professor and student is germane to quelling incivilities in the classroom, which are currently impeding teaching and learning.

#### Sources of Communicative Classroom Incivility

The literature considers three sources of CI, which involve students as sources of CI, professors as sources of CI, as well as insights into cultural and institutional forces that lead to CI. Each of these perspectives provides insight into the causes of CI. Professors maintain that students’ behaviors and attitudes are the primary cause of CI.

For many professors, students' uncivil behavior emerges out of a sense of academic entitlement. Students' perspectives assert that professors' communicative style and attitudes toward the students hinder their learning. Students point to a lack of instructor fairness and clarity with assignments. This section also considers the cultural and institutional forces contributing to CI. The scholarship examines the context of students through a cultural lens in an age of increasing diversity, technology and informality. Institutional forces, such as the rising cost of tuition contribute to the consumer mentality of students. Also, the importance of students' instructor evaluations can instill fear on a growing number of adjunct professors, which also distracts from teaching, thus potentially contributing to faculty members' CI.

#### Students as Sources of Incivility

In an uncivil classroom environment, professors grapple with students' behaviors, attitudes, expectations, and low performance. For example, professors complain that students are disrespectful, underachieving, and demand high grades based on a consumer-based mentality. Most of the authors point to characteristics of student incivility.

Kristen A. Frey describes uncivil student characteristics. The first characteristic pertains to a lack of student participation where students fail to “participate or express interest in the course” (5). The second uncivil characteristic relates to students' lack of consideration for assignment by “coming to class unprepared” (5). Third, professors maintain that students make “demands and unreasonable requests toward the instructor (e.g., extended deadlines, make-up exams)” (5). Fourth, professors are often dismayed by student behaviors that preclude the flow of their teaching by “disrupting class by arriving

late or leaving early” (5). These complaints are among a myriad of comments about student incivility in the classroom held by many professors.

Professors see CI as intentional, passive, overly aggressive, or as cultural manifestations, representing the generation of their students. Patrick J. Morrisette, for example, describes incivility as an intentional action. For him, incivility is “the intentional behavior of students to disrupt and interfere with the teaching and learning process of others . . . [which is] a blatant violation of student rights” (2). Student incivility is not always verbal. Bob Boice points out that, “classroom incivility means missing classes, cheating, refusing to participate, coming unprepared, and distracting other students” (458). In accordance with nonverbal incivilities, Jeffrey T. Child describes two types of incivility, “passive and active,” which appear in the classroom.

Passive incivility includes inattentiveness during class activities, arriving late to class, completing just enough work to get by, and disrupting the class with such things as text messaging or listening to I-pods. Active incivility includes open challenges to the instructor’s authority or credibility, use of discriminatory or insulting language, and physical aggressiveness. (Child 27)

Based on this literature, professors interpret student incivility to be intentional and ultimately disruptive to the learning environment.

Many professors believe that CI is more prevalent because of the growing sense of academic entitlement among students. Academic entitlement (AE) not only affects teaching and learning, it also distracts other students. W. Keith Campbell, Angelica M. Bonacci, Jeremy Shelton, Julie J. Exline, and Brad J. Bushman define entitlement as “a

pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others” (31). This is troubling to professors because it affects other students who are willing to learn. The fact that AE is increasing frustrates educators further. Ellen Greenberger, Jared Lessard, Chaunsheng Chen, and Susan Farruggia describe how AE appears in the classroom.

Anecdotal evidence suggests a substantial rise over recent decades in the number of students who beleaguer their professors for higher grades, forecast dire personal outcomes if they do not get the grades they feel they deserve (or want), and expect professors and teaching assistants to go to exceptional lengths to accommodate their needs and preference. (1193)

Aloof, rude, and inconsiderate behaviors on behalf of the students appear to be symptomatic of attitude of entitlement. Cara Williams asserts that professors commonly describe students as “withdrawn, apathetic, disengaged, aggressive, ill-mannered, inattentive, demanding” (1). These descriptions appear increasingly in recent years, confirming that professors’ frustrations are not unfounded.

Professors also are worried that their students are not just performing at a substandard level, but are expecting a high grade in return for minimal efforts. Andrea Hershatter and Molly Epstein note that, “most disturbing is the students' lack of concern for the accuracy and the validity of their research sources; their inclination to trust peer opinion and public consensus; and their lack of original thought” (213). Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, and Farruggia maintain that academic entitlement reflects a coping mechanism. This offers additional insight into the context of students who commit uncivil actions in class, particularly for students who struggle with the demands of university courses. They assert that “academic entitlement constitutes a coping strategy

for students who experience a decline in grades, as may happen when they confront the more stringent demands of college and university course work” (1194). A sense of entitlement among students paves the way for uncivil communication in the classroom as it displaces the authority of the professor.

Leveling the authority status of the professor has devastating communication implications to the classroom atmosphere; incivility emerges when there are no boundaries or guidelines for appropriate behavior. According to Arnett, “tyranny lives by an egalitarian context exploited by the bully” (*Communication Ethics in Dark Times* 53). Academic entitlement leads to a myriad of communicative problems that affect not just teaching and learning, but also have a negative effect on the wellbeing of both students and professors. For example, in addition to professors’ disillusionment with the students’ low efforts and entitled attitudes, there also exists fear among educators that students’ evaluations can threaten their livelihood. This fear points to an institutional problem. Thomas Benton confirms the reality of this fear as he maintains that, “an entire generation of professors has been weakened by the transformation of higher education into a part-time, no-benefit operation . . . the use of student evaluations as a faculty-culling device are turning college teachers into spineless crowd pleasers” (C1). Fear affects teaching and learning as professors may be motivated by trepidation rather than what they believe as scholars to be the most beneficial to students’ learning. Morrissette confirms the thwarting of professors’ time and energy spent on classroom survival when facing CI (2). Fear coupled with students’ AE alters professors’ perceptions of their students as consumers. This dynamic affects professors’ teaching and grading as Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, and Farruggia point out that fear-based grading, “can lead to

grade inflation” (1202). The authors maintain that non- or pre-tenure professors, are concerned about their course evaluations and admit to easy grading, avoiding contentious interactions such as discipline or assigning substantial amounts of work, which might decrease their scores (1202). This method of teaching may inflate evaluations, but in the long run, it may lead to further CI. CI creates an opportunity cost to teaching and learning, accommodating fear rather than education. Professors are preoccupied with students as consumers rather than learners, underachievers rather than future leaders and, essentially, spoiled rather than self-determining individuals. In addition to articulating the professors’ concerns, the next section considers literature on students’ perspectives about their professors’ contributions to classroom incivilities.

#### Professors as Sources of Incivility

Students maintain that the behaviors that accompany professors’ attitudes toward them are the cause of students’ discontent leading to incivility in the classroom. Students assert that these attitudes reveal a lack of instructor fairness, as well as lack of clarity with assignments. To support this claim, Kristin A. Frey points out that according to students, instructors often engage in uncivil behavior.

Students are bothered by faculty who engage in the following behaviors:

- 1) presenting lectures at a fast pace with little to no involvement or interaction,
- 2) acting in an aloof, distant manner towards students, or conveying to students that they are a burden to faculty,
- 3) surprising students with unannounced assessments or unanticipated exam questions,
- 4) arriving late to class or cancelling class without prior notice, and
- 5) permitting students to belittle or ridicule students. (34)

These behaviors point to students' frustrations with professors who obstruct their ability to learn due to ambiguous instruction, arrogant styles of communication, as well as double standards for their own misbehaviors. According to Sarah Labelle, Matthew Martin and Keith Weber, "students' perceptions of instructor clarity led students to feel more efficacious in the course, and subsequently dissent for the purpose of correcting the issue with the instructor directly" (185). If professors are not clear, students are more likely to dissent and contribute to CI.

Students' perceptions of an effective professor are linked to the way in which their professor communicates. According to Robert W. Norton and Jon F. Nussbaum, "in the classroom, communicator style is the way in which an instructor presents the course content, which has been shown to influence students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness" (565). Boice confirms this statement as he maintains that, "the most experienced researchers of CI assume that students and teachers are partners in generating and exacerbating it" (458). These claims not only serve to point out to the ways in which faculty members contribute to CI, but also to point *toward* a direction for understanding and renewal of civility in the classroom.

In *Faculty Incivility*, Darla Twale buttresses students' perceptions of faculty incivility with the following:

Incivility in the classroom has risen, but they [the professors] do not attribute total blame to student brashness or general increases in campus or societal violence. They contended that the classroom behavior of faculty toward students may be problematic and precipitous. For example, they regarded chronic tardiness and absenteeism, off-color humor, demeaning

comments, public humiliation, and gross profanity in the classroom as incivility. Their premise was that if students were uncivil to faculty, perhaps it was linked to unprofessional faculty behavior. (11)

Twale's research documents that student perceptions of faculty contributions to CI are valid and not unfounded. The goal is not to horrify professors by pointing out potential flaws through these conclusions. Rather, an understanding of how students perceive the behaviors of their professors might encourage educators to be more mindful that their own verbal and nonverbal communication often sets the behavior barometer of their students. Recalling professors as role models, if faculty hold themselves to high standards of teaching, it will inform students' standards of learning.

Thomas Benton points to a lack of standards on behalf of the faculty: "my argument is that a student culture of self-indulgence is enabled by the failure of professors to maintain expectations in the classroom" and awarding high grades to students, thus cultivating "unmerited pride for mediocre work" (1). Such unprincipled pedagogy resembles academic entitlement and is reminiscent of professors' qualms with students' consumerist mentality. Benton's claim suggests that professors' path of least resistance serves as a source for encouraging students' academic entitlement. Although this suggests that professors contribute directly to academic entitlement, the incongruous power status of both adjunct professors and consumerist students reinforces professors' uncertainty for appropriate classroom communication with their students. Benton suggests that the number of adjunct professors is rising.

[S]tudents think they are customers because the majority of college teachers know they are 'employees' who will be fired for displeasing those

customers. The 2005- 6 version of the American Association of University Professor's 'Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession' shows that in the last generation or so the proportion of faculty members teaching part time has doubled. For example, it was 23 percent in 1971, and 46 percent in 2003. It's probably more than 50 percent now. (Benton 2)

The increase in universities' hiring of adjunct (popularly referred to now as *contingent*) professors contributes to the perception that they are dispensable. If education can be reduced to a 'good' in a consumer-oriented society, then the classical deduction that ensues 'therefore, professors can also be seen as a *good*' is far-fetched. Vickers points out that, "workplace incivility is facilitated by weaker connections with workers and perceptions of weaker responsibilities for casual and subcontracted staff" (75). Adjunct professors often perceive themselves to be subcontractors, and, therefore, feel disconnected from their full-time colleagues, as well as their institution. Unfortunately, this disconnect among adjunct professors appears in the classroom with students as well. Because of the tenuous nature of an adjunct professor's professional status, fear may carry over into the classrooms. Adjunct professors may be more likely to inflate grades due to institutional pressure based on the outcome of student evaluations. This fear may lead to an attitude of AE among students (75). AE is symbolic of the larger consumer mentality that students inherit from their environment including society at large, the institution, and from professors perpetuating this practice.

Another contribution to students' consumerist mentality involves the increasing cost of a university education. Frey maintains that, "as perceived consumers, students

may pressure faculty to satisfy their demands and requests, and may blame the professor for a failing grade” (9). With the growing number of adjunct professors and the rising cost of university tuition across the United States, professors’ perceptions about their students as consumers are increasing as well.

Students who witness CI may be distracted by classroom incivilities, impeding their learning and engagement with the course. Amy S. Hirschy and John M. Braxton maintain that “it follows that being distracted from class discussions . . . may affect students’ satisfaction of their academic and intellectual development” (72). Students who are distracted by other students in class assign the blame to the professor for not keeping the environment safe for learning.

Research identifies these factors are the main contributors to CI. Whether professors are inattentive, unprepared, unclear with assignments or unwilling to understand and respond to the needs of their students, it is clear that CI is not just a faculty perception. Although students and professors are the primary participants and the major actors involved in this dissertation, other forces that play a part in CI.

#### Other Sources of Communicative Classroom Incivility

Institutions have also been identified as a source of CI. Professors may not have enough teaching skills to feel confident as educators. According to Steven M. Richardson, “most faculty are not prepared to promote effective alliances within the classroom, primarily because their academic training gave them little opportunity to develop expertise in this area” (70). Professors often have to rely upon remembering and reinventing “the ideal learning environments that they remember from their own past, or, the professional workplace to the traditional classroom” (Richardson 70). In addition to

the lack of clear opportunities and paths for faculty to learn how to teach, there is also less of an institutional focus on teaching rather than on publishing.

Nathaniel J. Bray and Marietta Del Favero point out that, “on the faculty side, pressure to publish and the perceived weight of publishing in tenure decisions may cause faculty to retreat from their teaching responsibilities and focus more on their effort to research” (13). The institutional pressure to teach without clear guidelines, as well as to publish significantly may push professors toward scholarly pursuits more out of fear of institutional reprisal than out of a genuine desire to contribute to their field of expertise.

Continuing the conversation about the contribution of institutional pressure to CI, a social dynamic with the university affects classroom incivilities. Socially and culturally, United States’ college students are distressed about social activities as much as they are about their academics. For example, Nathaniel Bray and Marietta Del Favero maintain that, “college is often a period of exploration and self-discovery for students as they seek to fit in with their peer groups on campus” (13). This cultural insight reveals college students’ pressure to integrate socially and the social pressures compete with the intellectual pressures of the classroom.

In addition to social pressures felt by students, the generational differences between professors and students contribute to CI. Cynthia R. Nordstrom, Lynn K. Bartels, and Jayne Bucy point out that “students today are more socially isolated than twenty years ago because their parents work longer hours . . . as a result, current students are often forced to develop their worldviews and behavioral expectations in conjunction with their peers rather than with adults” (74). Where previous generations modeled adults, current traditional aged students are more likely to be persuaded by the

comportment of their peers. Social media enables current students, especially isolated youth, to embrace young and heroic peer figures such as Malala Yousaf, as well as causes that empower youth to engage and be a part of communal causes that are increasingly creative and popular while forging bonds which may be incomprehensible and even reproachable to professors of older generations who are closed to inevitable changes. Indeed, with such disparate narrative experiences, clearly there are grounds for confusion about what constitutes appropriate classroom behavior.

Today's students play many roles in their lives. Frey points out that college students are often juggling multiple roles, "most with full- or part-time jobs, in addition to taking a full course load" (9). Professors from a different generation may not have had as many simultaneous activities competing for their time and concentration when they were a student.

Other factors such as cultural diversity and the lack of consensus of what is deemed acceptable classroom behavior also inform and understanding of CI. As Bray and Del Favero point out, "normlessness, or *anomie*, often arises in a society growing increasingly complex, as there are fewer and fewer commonalities binding people by its rules" (13). This cultural complexity reflects the essence of a postmodern society, where multiple narratives coexist and compete with each other.

Although uncivil behaviors are not unique to the United States, Heike C. Alberts, Helen Hazen, and Rebecca Theobald maintain that several distinguishing "structural factors" make the cultural context of the United States classroom a breeding ground for uncivil communication (440). These factors often involve the informal academic nature of classrooms in the United States. Ellen Sarkasian asserts that, "many believe that the

particularly informal academic atmosphere that has evolved in the US has an influence on student behavior, resulting in students who show insufficient respect for their classmates or the instructor” (4). This lack of consensus on appropriate classroom informality reflects mixed opinion amidst the literature review. This confusion of formality poses a problem for many professors who often assert their authority through formal engagement in the classroom. Pier Massimo Forni ascertains that, “even in [the] radically informal times in which we live, I cannot believe that positive pedagogical results require a modicum of formality” (16). With the increasing diversity in students, the rules of communication are just as varied. Linda B. Nilson argues that “college campuses have become increasingly diverse, and that diversity brings a broad array of student attitudes and expectations about learning and the academic environment (4). An increasingly diverse student body (and faculty) also increases the opportunities for communicative misunderstandings. Paul Trout describes that professors frequently identify cultural influences as sources of student incivilities, including

poor parenting and guidance; a youth culture that is profoundly contemptuous of authority and adult values (and that is embraced by a popular culture that glorifies in-your-face rudeness and coarseness); a marketplace ethos that fosters a demanding, consumerist attitude; and huge classes that are often dehumanizing and insulting to students. (A40)

A professor’s lack of understanding of students’ cultural narratives may also lead to CI. Appropriate communication requires an understanding of the context of the role of students, professors, the institution at they fit in to the educational goals of the larger culture. These considerations do not reflect nor consider intentional harm on behalf of the

professors, students or external sources. Rather, in a constructive turn, this chapter aims to offer unique ideas that are helpful to strengthening the communicative relationship between professor and student. After reviewing the causes of CI, the next section considers the rationale and salience of understanding and, ultimately, assuaging CI.

### Salience of Communicative Classroom Incivility

CI is growing and appears in many ways. The ways that CI appears through communication negatively impacts the classroom environment, which impedes teaching and learning. Feldmann observes that, “there is a great deal to lose if we do not have a sense of urgency and take appropriate action against uncivil acts” (138). If teaching and learning are at the core of education, then understanding the consequences of CI cannot be overstated. This section first explores the importance of education. Second, the value of examining the threat of CI to teaching and learning is considered. This chapter reaffirms that education is an essential national value; consequently, anything that would negatively affect education harms part of the quintessential fabric of the United States.

### Importance of Education in the United States

According to Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, “today educational institutions—universities and high schools, and a bewildering variety of other schools for all ages and almost all purposes—are central institutions of our society” (146). Education is a hallmark of American society, and upholds higher education as an essential element of its cultural identity.

As a major part of the cultural identity of the United States, it is important to identify what education means. Andrea M. Hyde describes the intrinsic significance of education:

Educational experiences are intrinsically valuable for their potential for personal development. That is, while intellectual development and academic achievement are educational *goods*, schools, teachers and instructional programs should not be evaluated by their demonstrated ability to raise test scores but in their ability to educate—to identify and expand individual instances and possibilities for cognitive and emotional growth and overall wellbeing. (183)

Hyde's stance suggests that while universities and other loci of teaching and learning are held in high regard in the United States, institutions are often seen as little more than the sum of their students' test scores. The commitment to education, then, is one that safeguards teaching and learning.

In *Dialogic Education*, Arnett maintains that, “we need to be sold on the idea that a college is a place where ideas are to be exchanged” (92). If the exchanges of information at college are at risk due to CI, then teaching and learning are at peril. If students are in a university or college environment that values learning and establishes a positive atmosphere that upholds the salience of education, then students will be more likely to engage in acts of civil discourse. Arnett continues that, “students need to witness a scholarly environment that sows the seeds of scholarly impulse, takes pride in the discussion of ideas, and recognizes the values of clashing viewpoints” (92). The value of education through communicative action instills in students a respect for the dialogic encounter by way of example. Arnett's stance on “valuing clashing viewpoints,” supports a civility without giving up one's own position (92).

Civil classroom communication begins with the professor. If students are to model professor's behavior, educators need to perceive of themselves as role model for their students. Embracing and modeling the behavior we wish to see in our students bridges the disparity between narrative confusion and appropriate action. In order to teach students how to be civil through example, it is first necessary to establish where one stands in relationship to the ethic he or she wants to uphold in class. Establishing that ethic requires courage because it may not be accepted by students. The generation of current traditional age undergraduate students have inherited a fearful communication anchored by a previous generation steeped in political correctness. Students require a communicative courage they will have to create for themselves. Ideally, educators will be a part of this creation. In a postmodern society, it is essential for educators to be a model of communicative courage in establishing a communicative classroom ethic that invites difference, without acquiescing one's own moral ground. If professors engage in or turn a blind eye to CI, they not only implicate teaching and learning, but also hurt the academic environment and the "capability of our institutions" (Feldmann 137). Professors who are committed to education must be committed to quelling CI, which is currently threatening teaching and learning.

CI distracts from teaching and learning and creates a toxic environment. The impediment to teaching and learning poses a risk not only to students' lack of learning, but also professionally jeopardizes the careers of professors. Over time, CI perpetuates and fortifies deterrents to teaching and learning. Bob Boice points out that

with persistent CI [classroom incivility], students grew more and more uninvolved, oppositional, and combative. Their teachers found their own

seemingly innocent remarks and gestures escalating into adversarial interactions with students. Even when the CI [classroom incivility] was largely limited to a single disruptive individual (what faculty and students often call a classroom terrorist), teachers were surprised to discover the increased difficulty of teaching . . . and that the other students held them responsible for not squelching the terror. (480)

If ignored, CI can have long-term effects and set a negative tone for the duration of the class. Incidents of CI lead to distraction from the content of the class, cynicism of the intrinsic value of teaching and learning, as well as disrespect among and between students and professors.

Incivility leads to distraction, and removes the focus from the content of the class to its participants. Fritz maintains that, “communication marked by incivility—rudeness, impoliteness, failure to treat others with minimal respect—distracts us from tasks, increases stress, and infects the organizational climate” (11). CI not only distracts from teaching and learning in the classroom, incivility also removes passion for teaching and learning as well. Passion, for many professors and students, is an essential part of the educational process.

Fritz asserts that communicative incivility contributes to “creating a toxic matrix of distrust and cynicism that transform enthusiasm into reluctant resignation and daily routines into drudgery” (11). Because a significant amount of a teacher’s time is spent in the classroom, eventually, uncivil communication can have more extreme consequences on one’s ability to think and feel. Vickers asserts that, “words and deeds conveying disrespect can cause psychological harm . . . with perceptions of unfairness and injustice

escalating alongside hurt feelings which can result in both cognitive and affective impairment, with the impacts of uncivil incidents lingering” (79). These harms can lead to further isolation and contentious engagements in the classroom. For Vickers, “incivility can serve to reinforce feelings of isolation and alienation in organizations, while reducing cooperation and mutual understanding” (79). Such alienation has negative implications for both students and professors. According to Ann Neville Miller, James A. Katt, Tim Brown, and Stephen A. Silvo, “from typical actions such as arriving late and leaving early, to less frequent infractions like public disrespect, to truly frightening episodes, such as verbal abuse and death threats, CI has serious consequences for the learning environment” (1-2). In addition to the negative implications of CI, which affect teaching and learning, the literature suggests that CI also has inhumane implications for professors and students.

CI can destroy professional careers. For example, Bob Boice recognizes that, “promising newcomers overwhelmed by CI (classroom incivility), especially women, too often decide to abandon professorial careers (or worse yet, resign themselves to a lifetimes of marginal performance and rewards for the sake of job security)” (481). This fear of job security among professors redirects the focus of their pedagogical efforts to a survival mentality. Patrick Morrissette asserts that, “faculty who realize that they will likely face inappropriate behavior during lectures may begin devoting time and energy to planning coping (survival) strategies rather than focusing on lecture material” (2). When professors’ efforts to survive prevail over their efforts to thrive, many educators become discouraged, and the teaching deteriorates. Morrissette continues that, “faculty who dread going to a particular class and having to deal with particular students can become

demoralized and disillusioned with the overall teaching process” (2). CI impairs faculty who seek but fail to find support within their institution. For example, “faculty who do not feel supported by colleagues and administrators may be inclined to ignore troubling classroom situations to avoid student agitation and potential rebellion” (2). The choice to disclose one’s frustration with the classroom environment is also a contentious one. Faculty may be fearful of not being able to manage their classrooms if they share the challenges they are facing with colleagues or directors. Morrissette notes that, “colleagues have revealed that disclosing problematic student conduct may result in questions regarding their teaching ability and suitability for the university/college classroom” (2, 4). Hence, many professors not only face the challenges of CI, they may face the challenges of CI in isolation. In addition to the challenges that CI poses to teaching, there exist other implications.

The literature shows that CI deters students from engaging the content of the class as it creates an environment where incivility transpires by way of disrespectful communication and even bullying. Such a toxic environment even affects students’ future loyalty to their school. J.M. Braxton and A.E. Bayer purport that, “student classroom incivilities may also negatively affect the academic and intellectual development of students and reduce their commitment to their college or university” (6). CI is a communication problem that currently adversely affects students, professors, as well as the institution at large. There is little debate that CI impedes teaching and learning, hence the call for remedy. The ensuing research asserts that there is a link between communicative civility and positive engagement. Fritz maintains that, “civility promotes a healthy workplace environment . . . [and also] builds energy and fosters goodwill

among and between coworkers” (12). Although the research has much more to say about the effects of CI, the limited but growing scholarship regarding successful classroom encounters must be considered.

Research on CI confirms a link between communicative civility and positive classroom encounters. Therefore, it is imperative to consider civility vis-à-vis its relationship to teaching and learning. Fritz’s description of civility is relevant to the classroom, especially in terms of such widespread communicative incivilities such as gossiping and bullying. Fritz points out that, “professional civility avoids workplace misbehavior, such as bullying, social undermining . . . and spreading rumors about coworkers” (14). Just as CI leads to an atmosphere of disrespect, classroom civility can foster respect. In praxis, civility considers others’ points of view, in a spirit of goodwill and curiosity. Fritz maintains that, “practicing professional civility includes invitation and hospitality to fellow employees” (14). Fritz suggests that “practicing professional civility” implies a choice to be civil (14). Amidst the atmosphere of incivility both faculty members and students must choose to be civil in order to bring about positive change in their current environment.

Research supports that CI is an impediment to teaching and learning, to teaching professions, as well as to the loyalty of future alumni. According to Sara Labelle, Matthew M. Martin, and Keith Weber, a large body of research supports instructors’ communicative behaviors, both positive and negative, which affect students’ learning outcomes and satisfaction” (181). This research confirms that there exists a relationship between the way in which professors and students communicate with each other, and it does affect teaching and learning. The salience of this research is undeniable and urgent

not only to teaching and learning, but to an integral part of culture within the United States. If professors do not make the first step in quelling CI within their classrooms, students will still find ways to learn through technology. If professors are truly dialogic, we must engage or at least appreciate the technological component that is such a fundamental part of our students' lives. Otherwise, students' demand for learning could ultimately be just as anti-dialogic, and replace the need for professors. Given the growing trend of *contingent* educators, this is not an unlikely scenario.

### Summary

The literature confirms that CI is a communicational issue that occurs between professors and students. The communication challenges that CI poses can serve to “co-create a classroom culture and atmosphere either where hostility for one another occurs or where civility and respects abounds” (Child 27). There is little debate among authors such as Boice, Feldmann, and Trout, who confirm that classroom incivilities are obstructive to teaching and learning. Others including Sara Labelle, Matthew M. Martin, and Keith Weber confirm that positive teacher communication such as “clarity, nonverbal immediacy, and affirming style are consistently related to positive student outcomes” (175). This literature review confirms that communicative civility eliminates the dichotomous paradigm of being either challenging and strict, or approachable and flexible. Civility, per Fritz' description, is rhetorical; civility exudes a mindfulness of the context as well as others' wellbeing.

[C]ivility creates both the distance necessary for respect, permitting others to maintain dignity in everyday workplace interactions, and the connection necessary for solidarity. Such behavior allows all to engage in jointly

constructed activities . . . civility requires both communicative restraint and purposeful forward discursive movement. (Fritz 13)

Civility lends pause to events, allowing for thoughtful engagement between actors, responding appropriately to needs of the historical moment based on the context. This sensitivity to the rhetorical notion of *kairos* implies that civil communication responds appropriately in a given context and to a given audience, thus potentially quelling CI through civil communication.

Cultural and institutional factors contributing to CI are salient to understanding the context of CI. On a cultural level, the cost of a university education in the United States affects students' behavior. As a result of the high cost of education, Newman-Gonchar notes, "learning for learning's sake has been replaced by the notion that students pay the university to educate them and thus have little responsibility for their own education" (63). This notion points to a cultural perception of students as consumers, rather than as learners, creating an entitlement-attitude among students. The research on AE by Greenberger, Lessard, Chen and Farruggia reveal how AE in the classroom negatively affects toward professors as well as other students, hence undermining the educational goals of all classroom participants.

In terms of the salience and rationale for this research, there is much evidence to support that the communicative relationship between professor and student can and does impact the process of teaching and learning. If as Boice points out, "the most experienced researchers on CI assume that students and teachers are partners in generating and exacerbating it," (458) then it will behoove one to examine the literature supporting effective communicative relationships between professor and student in the classroom. In

light of the fact that CI is a growing problem with devastating consequences to teaching and learning, this study explores how faculty can engage in civil communication. This work also offers ways to address problems through appropriate communicative means. Civility creates an atmosphere of cooperation. Fritz maintains that, “the civil utterance creates a protective space that both separates and joins” (13). Professors must seize this space in an effort to protect teaching and learning in spite of student incivility, as well as cultural and institutional forces beyond one’s control.

Educators, like Paolo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, remind other educators to teach despite harsh conditions. The bedrock values that Freire suggests, including courage, humility and love, create a firm ground for a communicative classroom ethic in a rapidly changing and often discouraging classroom environment. The next chapter of this dissertation explores pedagogical and philosophical ideas from Paolo Freire. Freire’s own narrative posits a teaching ethic that empowers professors whose teaching is currently challenged due to CI.

## CHAPTER 3

### PAOLO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

I suppose Paulo Freire is the closest thing education has to a celebrity. Known and loved (or not) throughout the world, Paulo commands a presence unequal by anyone who calls himself an educator. (Kincheloe, *Mentoring the Mentor* vii)

The literature in chapter two confirms that classroom incivility is not only increasing, incivility also impedes teaching and learning. Most of the literature surrounding classroom incivility (CI) considers faculty and students' perspectives through a communicative lens. Adherents to the belief that civility creates an atmosphere of cooperation and "considers the others' communicative goals" (Fritz 13) support the need for dialogue between professor and student. Communication serves as the medium through which civility can be established. This chapter addresses the narrative and pedagogical philosophies of Paulo Freire, whose pedagogical contributions are paramount to educators.

This chapter first examines Freire's personal and historic narrative. Second, Freire's insights into the dialogic interdependence between professor and students are addressed. Third, the ethical values Freire refers to as "indispensable qualities of progressive teachers" that anchor his dialogical pedagogy are examined. These qualities include: courage, humility, lovingness, tolerance and decisiveness (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* 71). The goal of this chapter is not only to highlight Freire's pedagogical contributions as they pertain to a civility in the classroom, but also to elucidate the importance of Freire's commitment to education despite and because of his oppressive

circumstances. This chapter concludes by illustrating the plausibility and appropriateness of Freire's teachings in a postmodern society.

#### Freire's Historical Context: Positivism and Anti-Positivism in Brazil

The narrative context in which Freire worked elucidates the inspiration for his educational practices. For example, without the understanding of a given speaker's narrative, the meanings or intentions of the speaker can quite easily be misconstrued. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson maintain that, "a narrative points to a reason prior to engaging in communication together, making narrative indispensable to the successful comprehension of a meaning behind an action" (58). Freire's personal and historical narrative situates his pedagogical actions as a response to an oppressive government. Arnett and Arneson continue, "the historical moment, not abstract theory, drives Freire's instruction . . . Freire does what is needed and what is called for in a given historical situation" (171). The historical context of Brazil significantly shaped Freire's work as an educator. The ideological, philosophical, and socio-political atmosphere of Brazil at the turn of the century created political situations that staunchly affected social conditions and influenced popular sentiment among the oppressed people. Freire's personal narrative was rural and poor, and his response to social oppression, particularly in the classroom, reflects a profound sensitivity and care toward the oppressed, which appear in all of his major works.

Because Freire's work is tied to his nation and to the people of his nation, it is imperative to understand Brazil's modernist attitudes toward education at the turn and earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, a much larger global anti-positivist intellectual movement was taking place "in response to the dominance of closed positivistic systems

of historical development in the climate of intellectual opinion” (Routledge 304). After the military and political figures claimed the republic of Brazil from the Portuguese Monarchy in 1889, those in power were “strongly imbued with positivist ideology” (Oliven 56). From the point of view of Brazil’s elites, among others in positions of power, Ruben George Oliven states that, “positivism was an ideology which foreshadowed modernity and justified the authoritarian means of attaining it” (56). Reflecting Brazil’s attachment to positivism, its national flag’s motto “Order and Progress,” demonstrates the centrality of August Comte’s positivism in the country.

Positivist ideology had profound effects on the indigenous people, who were among the most marginalized and oppressed of Brazilian society. “Positivism was not just a way for Brazil to modernize itself in relation to Europe, but for Indians [indigenous Brazilian people] to ‘civilize’ themselves in relation to Brazil” (Oliven 56). A positivistic emphasis on progress set positivism as the barometer of what it meant to be progressive and civilized. This anti-dialogic ideology did not have the support of all of Brazil, however, leading to emergence of anti-positivist philosophy in Latin America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anti-positivism had a profound impact on education and is strongly reflected in Freire’s pedagogy.

Freire’s approach to education reflects the Latin American anti-positivism position, particularly as it corresponds to freedom. According to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Latin American anti-positivism is founded in a comprehensive interpretation of experience that embraces phenomena such as creative freedom, tentative and experimental thinking, imaginative coordination and charitable love” (305). The rise of anti-positivism as a response to positivism had pedagogical

implications. “Latin American positivism is determined by a sense of intellectual suffocation from positivistic systems” (*Routledge* 305). The positivist approach to education is one of domination. Latin American anti-positivists “explored and advanced dimensions of human existence that had been neglected or silenced by positivism” (305). Freire highlights the oppressive banking concept of education which harkens back to an epoch in Brazil where the students are “docile listeners” and “education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 80, 81).

Working within an era of competing positivist and anti-positivist ideologies, Freire’s response to his authoritarian government influenced his pedagogy, especially the dichotomy of banking (positivist) versus problem-posing (dialogical and communicative) education. In his most notable work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he views education “as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world really exists as a reality apart from people” (81). The connection between education and communication is crucial for Freire:

Yet only through communication can life hold meaning. The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students’ thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. (77)

For Freire, collaborative and dialogic communication between professor and student is essential to teaching and learning. Hence, any communicative dynamic that is anti-dialogic oppresses not only the students, but also the possibility for a collaborative understanding of reality. Despite the rise of anti-positivism in Brazil, classroom collaboration was not popular during Freire's time due to the overarching positivist authoritarian ways. The political climate of positivism shaped Freire's own personal narrative context, inevitably making his approaches to pedagogy particularly sensitive to suppression, as they clearly reflect anti-positivist influences.

Positivism's detrimental effect on education is akin to the impediment that incivility poses to teaching and learning. For example, oppression and dominance are adjectives used to describe positivism. Oppression and dominance lack concern for others' views. As previously stated, the literature review on CI reveals a lack of concern for others' views. Therefore, there exists a commonality between positivism and CI, as both are anti-dialogic in nature. Ironically, the same positivist attitudes about education from a Freirian perspective that lead to oppression of students are similar to the monologic nature of classroom incivilities that currently exist between professors and students.

#### Freire's Lived Experiences: Hunger and Solidarity

Before exploring Freire's work as a response to the effects of positivism in education, Freire's personal narrative is considered. The importance of understanding Freire's personal narrative for this dissertation is to show the reader that despite Freire's challenges, he found inspiration from his life to continue his work.

Born in 1921 in Recife, one of Brazil's poorest regions, Freire's mother taught him to read by writing letters and drawing pictures in the mud yard of his home. His father was a low ranking military officer and his family struggled against poverty to maintain a middle class status. Donaldo Macedo points out in the introduction of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "the experience of hunger as a child of a middle class family that had lost its economic base enabled Freire to identify and develop solidarity with the children from poor outskirts of town" (13). Due to economic conditions, the Freire family relocated from Recife to Jabotão, where "survival seemed less difficult" (Gadotti 3). Still, when Freire's father died Paulo was 13, and the Freire family remained poor and hungry. Freire embraced this part of his childhood as it enabled him to relate to the sufferable experiences of his future students. Freire maintained, "I had the possibility to experience hunger. And I say I had the possibility because I think that experience was very useful to me" (qtd. in Bell, Gaventa and Peters xix). Freire recalled that interacting with the youth from poor rural families helped him enter into a different way of thinking and communicating his feelings than what he experienced in Recife, where life was marginally easier. Although Freire experienced harsher living conditions in poor and rural Jabotão, Freire learned the grammar and vernacular of the local community, which enabled him to become an educator of the people whom he later taught.

In addition to his family's existing poverty, the death of Freire's father affected Freire's studies, delaying his entrance to high school until the age of 16, while his peers were just entering their teenage years (Gadotti 3). As a result of his age discrepancy among his peers, Freire "was afraid of asking questions in class because, as he was older than his classmates, he felt obliged to ask questions that were more intelligent and

pertinent than the rest of the class” (3). Freire’s own humbling experience as an advanced-age learner provided the valuable lesson of humility, predisposing his character to listen to his students. If listening is not given as much importance as speaking, the communication exchange resembles more of a monologue than a dialogue. Freire asked, “how can I listen to the other, how can I hold a dialogue, if I can only see myself, if nothing no one other than myself can touch me or move me” (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* 40)? The deep structures of Freire’s upbringing and historical context influenced his understanding of humility. Another structure of Freire’s culture that influenced his work deeply was his religion.

In addition to Freire’s socio-economic position and personal struggles with poverty and hunger, his devout Catholic upbringing substantiated his later college involvement in the growing Catholic Action movement, which also affected his work. The Catholic Action Movement, which later became the Liberation Theology Movement, “focused on the concepts of society and social change and was acutely aware of the conditions of poverty and hunger in the Northeast of Brazil” (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters xx). Gadotti asserts that, “religion was an important influence both on his pedagogical theories and on his practice” (4). In fact, Freire never denied his Catholic upbringing, and considered Christianity to be progressive. However, Freire did criticize what he called “the prophetic church, the church of the oppressed,” which offers a hope to its parishioners that only exists in the future (Gadotti 5). Gadotti continues that this future is one that “only the oppressed classes have, as the future of the dominant classes is pure repetition of their present state of being oppressors” (5).

The church of the oppressed departs from the grassroots Catholic Action Movement, which moved hope into action by way of active community participation. This active hope of the movement allowed Freire to join his allegiance to his faith while holding the institution of the Church accountable based on the treatment of its most marginalized parishioners. According to Biblical scripture, it is written that, “he that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (*The Holy Bible*, Prov. 14:31). This passage conveys that one may find God in the most oppressed and seemingly least among society. Freire’s lifelong commitment to the pedagogical advancements for the poor and the oppressed upholds an active faith in the Catholic tradition.

The ethics that anchor Freire’s concept of dialogue, specifically faith, hope, and love (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 91), correspond to Scripture in Freire’s native Brazilian Portuguese; “*Sendo assim, permanecem até o momento estes três: a fé, a esperança e o amor. Contudo, o maior deles é o amor!* [Thus, yet remain these three: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love! ]” (*The Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians 13:13). Freire’s religious narrative emerged through his work. This chapter later highlights how love, humility, and faith provide narrative ground from which dialogue can transpire. Thus dialogue for Freire requires “mutual trust” that only the *a priori* qualities of love, humility, courage, and hope can establish.

Freire’s professional experiences reflect a relationship between his various roles as an educator and leader of literacy movements, which deeply affected his work. These literacy movements led him to a place in the faculty of law at Recife, which he later abandoned in 1946 to serve as Educational Director of *Serviço Social da Indústria* (SESI)

(Social Service of Industry) serving the rural poor in the areas around his homeland (Gadotti). Freire's service sparked his interest in the problems of adult literacy and popular education. After Freire resigned from the social service agency in 1954, he began teaching history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife. In 1959, while working toward his doctorate, Freire participated in the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (Movement for Popular Culture), where he carried out the initiatives of grassroots education, adult literacy, and development of critical consciousness of the masses. Throughout this time, while Freire worked on his thesis, his ideas were developed within university and state-sponsored programs that focused on movements for democratic education in northeast Brazil (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters xvii-xxiii). His educational goal was to educate five million illiterate people throughout the country. Freire's Ph.D. thesis *Present-day Education in Brazil*, completed in 1959, informs readers of Freire's sensitivity to his shared narrative of poverty in addition to his commitment to the education of those who experienced similar struggles.

The traditional social structure of Brazil was changing by the end of the 1950s. Economic, political, and social changes throughout the country (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters) affected the oppressed population in detrimental proportions. The emergence of a populist reformist government in Freire's hometown of Pernambuco, Recife, was the first of its kind, showing signs of care the new demands for participation by the people in their own development. Peter Roberts points out that, "the sponsorship by Miguel Arreas in 1962 of an adult literacy program in Recife provided Freire with the platform to launch his culture circles" (75). Freire's "culture circles" illustrate his emphasis on critical reflection as paramount to extending the invitation to learners to participate in and

improve their own social conditions. Freire distanced himself from the traditional and positivist lecture style of teaching, favoring an anti-positivist and dialogic approach. In *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, Freire renamed teacher with “coordinator” and “pupils” as “group participants” (42). Freire’s success in his literacy movement was short-lived: a military coup in 1964 overthrew the existing Goulart government, resulting in the cessation of the national literacy campaign.

The new laws under João Goulart deprived the rights of approximately 100 influential members of the previous government for decades, led to Freire’s imprisonment for 75 days, and required his exile from Brazil along with hundreds of other activists and leaders in the government (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters xvii-xxiii). This exile did not discourage, nor prevent, Freire from pursuing educational programs that helped his people to achieve literacy, hence leading them to subsequently help themselves to achieve agrarian reforms. After his exile, Freire lectured at Harvard University, where his ideas about pedagogy attracted international attention, especially following the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in English in 1975. The pedagogical concepts and sentiments expressed in Freire’s work, especially the banking concept of teaching, informs professors to consider teaching in such a way that avoids oppressing their students’ voices entirely, as the positivist Brazilian government did to their indigenous people. The historical context of Brazil influenced Freire’s work as a response to the ethical and social dilemmas facing the pedagogy of oppressed peoples.

Freire’s own social condition as a child involving poverty and hunger prevented him access to education, which allowed him to relate to and empathize with oppressed people. In Gadotti’s *Reading Paulo Freire*, Freire asserts that, “I didn’t understand

anything because of my hunger. I wasn't dumb. It wasn't lack of interest. My social condition didn't allow me to have an education. Experience showed me again the relationship between social class and knowledge" (5). Freire's personal struggles and experiences allowed him to connect with his students through his role as an educator, which he considered to be a fortunate commonality and formidable connection to the students he served. Despite the political and social climate of Freire's formative years, his focus on the wellbeing of people later served to bolster his ability to transcend the subsequent challenges imposed on him as an educator. Although Freire is heralded foremost as an educator, his action behind his work for the people that he educated must be considered to fully embrace his pedagogical ideas.

Freire's work guides and enables educators to consider and embrace concepts for a liberating pedagogy. The resilience that Freire showed in the face of poverty and hunger provides a valuable lesson for educators when responding to the needs of their own students. For example, despite the present day challenges of CI in higher education, educators still have a role to assume, which is to educate. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers* Freire asserts that educators must not lose hope nor give in to despair. Instead they should ask

What can I do? Whether they call me teacher or coddling mother, I am still underpaid, disregarded, and uncared for. Well, so be it. In reality, this is the most convenient position, but it is also the position of someone who quits the struggle, who quits history. It is the position of those who renounce conflict, the lack of which undermines the dignity of life or human existence without struggle and conflict. Conflict shares in our

conscience. Denying conflict, we ignore even the most mundane aspects of our vital and social experience. Trying to escape conflict, we preserve the status quo (45).

This quote calls upon educators to rise above their current circumstances while remaining committed to a hopeful outcome. Hope is ingrained in Freire's narrative. His struggle and hunger enabled a formidable capacity for understanding, listening to, and engaging oppressed people to whom he dedicated his life.

Freire mentioned throughout his works that he would not have embraced his circumstances without his relationships with people who were germane to his development and growth. For example, in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire fully supported that "to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world" (3). Freire acknowledged his parents for valuing education, and his late wife, Elza, for furthering and developing his education and pedagogical concepts. These personal relationships held by Freire helped to shape his identity as an educator, especially his dialogical relationships with his students, which are intimately linked to his philosophical and pedagogical views. Although an exhaustive account of Freire's pedagogical ethics lie beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to examine some of the concepts that anchor dialogue for Freire.

#### Freire's Ethics

Freire's ethics undergird his communicative approach to education. Specifically, the following ethics: critical consciousness, humility, love, and hope are indispensable if genuine dialogue is to exist. Freire's ethics served as a springboard from which he acted. The experiences of his close-knit family, unapologetic yet ambivalent relationship with

the Catholic Church, as well as his love for teaching and his students' wellbeing lead to an iron clad dedication to teaching. Despite the enormous pressures of a positivist government that sought to undermine Freire's pedagogy, as well as incarcerate Freire physically, Freire's indomitable tie to his ethics exposes an unwavering identity and sense of purpose as an educator.

### Critical Thinking

First, the ethic of critical thinking as Freire maintains in his work *Education for Critical Consciousness*, involves a keen mindfulness about what is being said in order to respond in a way to create change. Freire maintained that "if men are unable to perceive critically of the themes in their time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, they are carried along in the wake of change" (6). Freire's position held that if a people cannot articulate their thoughts and feelings into words, then inevitably become oppressed. Freire's intense focus on genuine dialogue as an educator is what he believed to liberate students. To elucidate the importance of dialogue, Freire pointed out that "to teach is not to transfer knowledge, but to create possibilities for the production and construction of knowledge" (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 30). The creation of knowledge cannot exist without dialogue and critical thinking. According to Freire, "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 92). He claimed that from the beginning of the dialogic process, the teacher is "being formed or reformed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms himself or herself in the process" (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 31). Here, Freire pointed out that the teacher does not assume an authoritative position as an individual who is solely responsible for the teaching-learning process, but rather is also being taught in dialogue with students.

Freire emphasized that the dialogic character of education takes shape when the teacher and/or the student asks themselves “what he or she will dialogue with the latter about” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 93). Through a dialogic model, the teacher presents material to the students for their consideration. After learning the material, students, in turn, make critiques and express their thoughts and views on the topic. As the students present their views, the teacher reconsiders his or her earlier comments, and is able to create new knowledge collaboratively with the students. For Freire, this collaboration involves dialogue, where “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 80). Freire’s use of the word “with” denotes a repositioning of the educator to work alongside and not for, nor on behalf of their student. The words “for” and “on behalf of” denote a sense of what Freire refers to as “cultural invasion” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 95). Freire’s philosophical contributions serve as a model for professors.

Indeed, it is imperative for educators to understand and believe their own important contributions to a culture in their role as professor. Only then is it possible for educators to consider how their communication helps students to understand their (students’) importance in terms of their potential contribution to a culture. This way of teaching invites students and teachers to learn together while responding to the concerns of their social and historical context through critical mindfulness, which Freire refers to as *conscientização* [critical consciousness] (*Education for Critical Consciousness* vii). For Freire, this kind of pedagogy cannot be reduced to a method nor to an approach, but rather to an overarching philosophy that transcends a “donor” and “recipient” mentality

of teaching and learning (*Education for Critical Consciousness* xi). This transcendence requires a civil collaboration between educator and learner that is dialogic and participatory in nature.

### Humility

Humility, which Freire maintained in *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, “by no means carries the connotation of a lack of self-respect, resignation, or of cowardice” (39). In fact, Freire pointed out that humility requires courage, self-confidence, self-respect, and respect for others. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire maintained that

Without humility, one can hardly listen with respect to those one judges to be too far below one’s own level of competence. But the humility that enables one to listen even to those considered less competent should not be an act of condescension or resemble the behavior of those fulfilling a vow. . . . Listening to all that comes to us, regardless of their intellectual level, is a human duty and reveals an identification with democracy and not with elitism. (39)

Without a humble disposition, listening to the other is impossible.

### Love

For Freire, humility is inextricably linked to love. Freire’s “lovingness” refers not only toward the student, but also toward the very process of teaching. Teaching devoid of Freire’s third ethic of love diminishes its salience. Freire supports this as he maintains that, “to the humility with which teachers perform and relate to their students another quality needs to be added: lovingness, without which their work would lose its meaning” (*Cultural Workers* 21). The latter type of love that Freire described allows the educator to

transcend the challenges of classroom incivilities and liberates a vision to empower professors. Further, this love serves as an enabling force, drawing out potential within a student. This is very close to Viktor Frankel's notion of love in *Man's Search for Meaning*, as he asserted that "by his love, he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized" (111). In this quote, Frankel points to a love that is vocational. Freire's position of professorial love for students requires critical reasoning, and does not "coddle" students in what Alasdair MacIntyre refers to as "emotivism" (1). Rather, the love that Freire suggests to educators is one that is situated in dialogue. The relevance of this ethic for professors who are faced with the challenges of incivility that impede their teaching prepare themselves with an "armed love, the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce . . . it is this form of love that is indispensable to the progressive educator and that we all must learn" (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* 41). Lovingness for Freire implies hope that the commitment of love for teaching will improve not only the lives of students but also contribute to society. This love requires a hopeful disposition.

### Hope

Freire's fourth ethic is hopefulness. Hopefulness is praxis-oriented, meaning that the only way to have hope is to be hopeful. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire ascertained that, "hope as an ontological need demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs to practice in order to become historical concreteness" (9). To elucidate this notion, hope is meaningless unless it is accompanied by action. The values considered in this chapter that situate Freire's dialogue are interdependent and cannot act in isolation.

For example, humility requires courage; courage requires faith; and faith involves a belief in something better than the status quo. Because one loves the world and the people in it, this love cements a commitment to change and improve the status quo. For Freire, these values are very praxis-oriented.

This praxis points to an Aristotelian model. For example, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle asserted that, “virtue is informed by habituation,” namely that moral virtue referred to as *hexis*, transpires in action. (Book II chapter 4). Aristotle’s notion directly applies to Freire’s concept of hope. Hope is ontological and is progressively expanded in practice. In *Pedagogy of Hope* Freire maintains that, “in a world where the right things are not always done . . . one can always hope to do his or her best to make things right” (237).

For Freire, dialogue is grounded in the concepts of love, humility, and faith, which and are essential to classroom communication ethics. These qualities exemplify communication ethics that serve as a model for educators. Freire would support that life is not about the *I*, but about the collective narrative of which we are a part as co-creators in this world. For Freire humility, critical thinking, love and hope embody the values that help to shape the culture of the classroom. These ethics anchor dialogue for Freire, who considers dialogue as an encounter between persons as an act of cooperative creation grounded in love and courage “for the world and for people” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 89). Freire’s ethics of critical mindfulness, humility, lovingness, and hope point to action. As an educator, the ethics that grounded Freire’s pedagogy shaped his dialogical approach with his students. Freire’s dialogue is dynamic and robust and it serves as the central pedagogical approach for which Freire is known and lauded among educators.

## Dialogue

A Freirian dialogical view of education leaves no room for communicative incivility to transpire between professor and student. This section examines Freire's dialogue as an antidote to the banking approach to pedagogy. For Freire, dialogue involves action, in that dialogue requires active listening as well as speaking. For example, Freire's dialogue requires professors and students to work together to improve their world. This dialogue exemplifies a responsible inclusivity that does not simply reflect the wishes for change in the world of the participants, but moreover illustrates a collaboration that is grounded in love for the world.

Peter Roberts points out that “no one, from a Freirian point of view, has the right to insist that their understanding of reality is the only acceptable, legitimate, or defensible one” (61). The inclusive nature of Freire's pedagogy throughout his works, especially in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, embraces a dialogic civility that upholds a plurality of voices among students despite (and because of) their diversity. Freire asserted that “without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 92-93). In fact, Freire does not separate education from being human.

Freire asserts that, “to exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it. . . . Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (need book title 88). Freire understood the relationship between being human and having the capability to use words. Freire emphasized the urgency for students' literacy in order for them to think critically and actively participate in the world. This participation requires dialogue. Dialogue for Freire represents a love for life. As a response to the anti-dialogic

banking concept of education, which Freire refers to as “necrophilic,” is nurtured by “love of death and not life” (77).

To further this notion, Freire maintains that in order to dominate, the oppressor “tries to deter the drive to search . . . the creative power which characterize life, it kills life” (60). For Freire, the teacher using a banking approach “fill[s] the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 71). Freire’s additive approach to education rejects ideologies that impart their own narrow and inflexible pedagogical practices of what Freire referred to as a “sectarian” education that is “non-reciprocal between experts and helpes” (*Education for Critical Consciousness* xi). This elitist way of imparting knowledge neither assumes nor expresses interest in the narrative of the student, instead favoring pre-existing positivist knowledge. The worst part of this tragedy for Freire is that often the student is a willing participant in removing oneself from dialogic learning and thus remain a “spectator” of the world, avoiding participation in its transformation (*Education for Critical Consciousness* 6). Freire continued that, “without even realizing the loss, he [the student] relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit or decisions” (6).

Not unlike students in a postmodern society who, as Neil Postman maintains in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, “love their oppression . . . [and] adore their technologies that undo their capacity to think” (xix), the literature shows that students are resistant to developing their critical thinking skills, due to an anti-dialogic over reliance on technology. Although Freire does not reject technology, as he referred to it as “one of the greatest expressions of their [men and women’s] creative power,” he strongly felt that

“men begin thinking and acting according to the prescriptions they receive daily from the communications media rather than in response to their dialectical relationship with the world” (*The Politics of Education* 88). This unreflective relinquishing of choice has pedagogical consequences, where this “transference of knowledge . . . assumes that consciousness is and should be merely an empty receptacle to be filled” (114). The banking method of education does not just pose a danger to students; it also poses a danger to Freire’s vision of education as a “liberating and humanistic task” (114) where the culture of education no longer appreciates what it does not know. Freire’s dialogic approach to education appreciates the capacity for human invention as he asserts

In a humanistic form of education, once we verify our inquisitive nature as researchers and investigators of reflexive (and not merely reflective) consciousness, and once we make that knowledge accessible, we automatically ascertain our capacity to recognize or to remake existing knowledge. (*The Politics of Education* 114)

This creation of knowledge is the only way that true knowledge can exist for Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire asserts that, “knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention” (72). Therefore, knowledge is contingent on dialogue.

For Freire dialogue does not just involve a reflective verbal exchange, it also requires action. Freire connects the use of words and action. Freire purports that,

When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienating and alienated ‘blah’ . . . It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is

impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is not transformation without action. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 87)

Dialogue requires the transformation of the teacher and learner engaged in dialogue. The dialogue must transcend incivility to sustain the focus on teaching and learning. Ronald C. Arnett, Janie Harden Fritz, and Leanne M. Bell point out that, “Freire reminds us of the liberating importance of dialogue for learning, employing face saving in order to keep the focus on learning, not upon fear and embarrassment” (82). Freire’s approach to dialogue does not just protect the students, but moreover, protects their learning. Validating students’ prior knowledge through dialogue and adding to it through knowledge emphasizes what there is yet to learn rather than what is not yet known through the banking method of pedagogy.

The banking method of education eludes the transformation of its participants from an avoidance of dialogue. In turn students become passive recipients of knowledge, rather than necessary partners of a collaborative reality created in the classroom. Freire asserts that, “the banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixated forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take the people’s historicity as their starting point” (84). The banking concept of education reduces learning to the adding of thoughts conveyed as truth into another’s head and consuming the teacher’s knowledge. In his philosophical writings, Freire suggests true teaching must engage students in dialogue.

For Freire, dialogue is a process where individuals mutually collaborate in order to transform the world (88). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, this democratic participation cannot be “reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another, nor can it

become a simple exchange of ideas to be ‘consumed’ by the discussants” (89). This consumer mentality among students is currently oppressing teaching and learning through the banking concept of education. Ronald C. Arnett points out that, “confusing education with a customer mentality is another way of doing the banking concept. Instead of the oppressor putting ideas in one’s head, one does the same to oneself by consuming information without reflecting on the political significance of joining education and a story of consumption” (“Paulo Freire” 507). Learning as acquisition rather than as engagement is anti-dialogic, and therefore removes the potential for collaboration between professor and students. If dialogue is an act of creation whereby individuals seek to collectively “transform the world” as Freire suggests in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, then this act of creation is rendered useless (89). Considering CI as a product of a consumerist society that fosters the banking concept of education liberates the focus from dwelling on the causes of CI (e.g., the students and faculty) to creating pedagogical solutions through dialogue that leave no room for oppressive voices.

### Summary

Freire’s personal narrative and ethics informed his actions. Despite hunger, poverty, and great adversity to his educational initiatives, his indomitable spirit did not weaken. The relationships that he attributed to his development and survival, coupled with his ethics of critical reflection, humility, love and hope, served as the springboard for his pedagogical praxis. Freire’s own experiences with oppression elucidated his understanding that the needs of the illiterate poor in his country would remain oppressed as long as they remained illiterate. In response to oppression and the banking methods of

education, Freire proposed dialogue as a way for educators and students to collaborate and improve their world.

Freire's pedagogical concepts share a philosophical vision with Martin Buber. In the next chapter Martin Buber's philosophical contributions add to the conversation surrounding CI. Like Freire, Buber's narrative informed his philosophical ideas that contribute to pedagogy. Buber's ideas are explored as they help to understand and ameliorate teaching and learning despite the current educational challenges that educators and students face due to CI.

## CHAPTER 4

### MARTIN BUBER'S PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

The real struggle is not between East and West, or capitalism and communism, but between education and propaganda. (Hodes *Encounter with Martin Buber* 135)

A lack of communicative civility in the undergraduate classroom in the United States is impeding teaching and learning. Much like Paolo Freire's additive approach to pedagogy, which is anchored by his ethics, Martin Buber's worldview is grounded in his religious ethics. Buber's firm ethical framework grounds and informs his writing. Buber's narrative stems from a Hasidic religious tradition.

First, this chapter considers Buber's historical and religious narrative as it provides insight into his philosophy. Buber's response to the needs of his own historical moment of incivility serves as a model for contending with the overwhelming threats that CI poses to teaching and learning. Second, Buber's understanding of the between is dialogical as it exists only through interaction between participants. Buber's philosophy of the between as it relates to communication exists exclusively in the meeting place between interlocutors. Ronald C. Arnett maintains that, "the meaning of this dialogue is found in neither one nor the other of the partners, nor in both added together, but in their interchange" ("Phenomenological Dialogue" 203). Third, Buber identifies three forms of communication (monologue, technical dialogue, and genuine dialogue) that provide an overarching structure of communication for professors to actively consider when engaging students. Although monologue and technical dialogue are important to consider, this chapter calls attention to Buber's genuine dialogue, which involves each person's

position and strives for mutuality. Fourth, Buber's major ideas of I-Thou and I-It elucidate the different ways of encountering the other. This chapter argues that both encounters, I-Thou and I-It, are necessary to educate students.

#### Buber's Historical Context: Judaism and Zionism

Martin Buber (1878-1965) was a German Jewish philosopher, theologian, and political leader whose early influences included Hasidism and neo-Kantianism. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Buber "broke off with the latter and became known as a leading religious existentialist" (104). In *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, Maurice Friedman points out that, "every important step forward in the development of Buber's philosophy is reflected in his philosophy of Judaism" (33).

Buber's literary influence is evident in his work as a renowned multilingual scholar in the field of Jewish tradition and literature. According to the *Online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "the household spoke Yiddish and German, he picked up Hebrew and French in his childhood, and Polish at secondary school" ("Martin Buber"). In addition to his literary and religious influences, Buber's civil yet highly contentious dialogues surrounding his understanding and adherence to cultural Zionism are central in shaping his narrative. Buber's own cultural and religious Zionist narrative led him to respond to the incivility of his own historical moment, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the introduction of *Land of Two Peoples*, Paul R. Mendes-Flohr maintains that, Buber firmly believed Zionism will find a path—a path not at all apparent to so-called political realists—that will lead to genuine peace and justice with the Arabs of Palestine. One may call this position a 'believing' realism. Buber would say his trust in the efficaciousness of dialogue is

based on simple faith in God—He who has appointed humankind to be His co-workers in the process of redemption will graciously assist us in our work in the here and now. Philosophically, this faith is akin to the ethical idealism of Neo-Kantians, to whom dimensions of Buber’s thought may be traced: the *a priori* conception of the universal good, of the socially desirable, is to be regarded as a categorical imperative regulating our political decisions and actions. (Mendes-Flohr 24)

Zionism for Buber represents “a unique connection of a people and a country” (*A Land of Two Peoples* 181).

Buber initially distinguished traditional Zionism from its modern political form. At the time that *A Land of Two Peoples* was written Buber maintained that “the quest to be a nation like all other nations, is tantamount to national assimilation . . . and betrays the true vision of Zionism” (220). Zionism for Buber was apolitical and driven solely by what Han Kohn describes as “spiritual necessity,” where Zion “was to be the place where we [Jews] would be able to realize our humanitarian aspirations” (Mendes-Flohr 220). Although Buber joined the Zionist movement in 1898, participating in congresses and organizational work, he approached Zionism from his own personal viewpoint.

Buber’s Zionism conflicted with that of his Austrian Zionist contemporary, Theodor Herzl. They disagreed about the political and cultural direction of Zionism. Herzl envisioned the goal of Zionism in a nation-state, but did not consider Jewish culture or religion necessary. In contrast, Buber believed the potential of Zionism was for social and spiritual enrichment. Mendes-Flohr points out, “Buber and his comrades urged the movement (of greater democratization of Zionist institutions) to give far greater

attention to cultural activities than Herzl was willing to allow; they also challenged Herzl's emphasis on Realpolitik and his general conception of Zionist priorities" (25). Buber's between stance is evident when he stated that, "Palestine is not just an Arab land like any other Arab land, or just a Jewish land" (Magnes and Buber 13). Herzl and Buber would continue, in mutual respect and disagreement, to work towards their respective goals for the rest of their lives. Although contentious, this dialogue upheld a civility that served to keep the conversation moving. Upholding civility in a controversial dialogue illustrates the importance of its presence to Buber.

In 1901, Buber joined the staff of the weekly *Die Welt* [*The World*], the central organ of the Zionist movement. A year later Buber became involved with the Jewish Hasidism movement. "The gathering strength of the sciences at the turn of the century sparked a reaction among some Western European intellectuals: a renewed interest in mysticism" (*Hasidism* vii). In *The Way of Man and Ten Rungs*, Buber defines Hasidism as a "mystical-religious movement," that acknowledges the transcendental nature of God while contending with man's "conditioned imminence" (3). There are strong traces of Hasidism in Buber's work, especially when he grapples with the dichotomy between the "divine spark" that lives in everything, while that spark resides in an enclosed and "isolating shell" (4). The force within the shell posits the responsibility each man has to himself; he himself, based on his choices, can be his only liberator. Buber continued that, "the task of every man, according to Hasidic teaching, is to affirm for God's sake, the world and himself and by this the very means to transform both" (4). This element of transformational teaching reveals elements of Buber's between philosophy.

Buber asserted that man's salvation rests on dynamic and transformative actions, residing in the relationship between his choices and his actions. Freedom is tied to action for Buber, and is not passive. In fact, inaction for Buber is an evil action. For example, if man allows his force divine "to run directionless and seize at everything that offers itself to it; he makes it evil." The latter statement informs the reader of the importance of action as well as ground, which prevents man from the "directionless" of evil (4). Buber's praxial emphasis on action bridges the gap between theory and practice. Buber's informed action is of particular salience in a postmodern society driven by multiple narratives. He stressed a firm ground from which to stand, and also provided a guide for appropriate action in a given situation. Buber admired how the Hasidic communities actualized their religion in daily life and culture. In stark contrast to the activity of the Zionist organizations at the time which were occupied with political concerns, Hasidim focused on the values that Buber had long advocated for Zionism to adopt. Until Buber was brought back into the Jewish community, he felt that "he had been living in the world of confusion . . . the mythical dwelling place of the wandering souls . . . in versatile fullness of spirit, but without Judaism, without humanity, and without the presence of the Divine" (viii).

In 1904, Buber withdrew from much of his Zionist organizational work and devoted himself to study and writing. As Boruch Glatzer maintains in *On Judaism*

At the time, the Jewish student and young intellectual of Western Europe found himself in a world in which Judaism had all but lost its meaning . . . Jewish tradition and Jewish communal institutions were devoid of appeal; the young Zionist movement held out of a promise of a future

solution for the Jewish problem (for whomever Judaism seemed to be a problem) but offered no ‘content’ for the present, beyond an elementary Jewish affirmation. (237)

What Glatzer suggests here is that despite the movement’s appeal to maintain hope for a promising future for the Jewish tradition, the only certain factor remained a very uncertain future. Amidst this uncertainty, Buber did not fuel the problem. Rather, he focused on a solution. In response, Buber published a collection of the tales of the Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, a renowned Hasidic *rebbe* or teacher, as interpreted and retold by Buber.

Two years later, Buber published stories of the Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760), the founder of modern Hasidism. Baal Shem Tov was

as it appears a man both learned and charismatic, a folk healer, one of those who went about curing the sick by invoking the various mystical names of God . . . concerning his life, words, and deeds, we have only legends—in shards of writings, tales, pamphlets, books that purport to recount his actual teachings but are clearly infused with excesses of piety and invention. (*Tales of Hasidim* ix)

Buber’s penchant for writing about mysticism embraced the ambiguity which for him was far more real than has been purported. In fact, Buber ultimately published editions of mystic texts that lead to the establishment of the Jewish National Commission during World War I, which sought to improve the condition of Eastern European Jews. Such work exemplifies Buber’s between construct that is tied to action. Buber’s between construct is not intended to stay in a place of inaction which is discussed later as evil.

The rise of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany halted Buber's professional momentum. Buber's status as an honorary professor at the University of Frankfurt was terminated immediately after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. Despite this demotion, Buber responded by establishing the Central Office for Jewish Adult Education, which became an increasingly important body as the German government forbade Jews to attend public education. Ultimately, the Nazi administration increasingly obstructed Buber's office, and it was terminated. The only solution for Buber to even survive, let alone respond to the injustices of Nazi Germany, was to leave Germany and settle in Palestine.

After Buber's departure from Germany in 1938, he did not remain idle. In fact, Buber became an active part of Zionist affairs devoting special consideration to the Arab Question, which Buber asserted as an "innermost Jewish question" (Mendes-Flohr 3). Specifically, the Zionist conviction maintains that the "the mounting physical and cultural distress of the Jews in the modern world—could only be solved through the ingathering of the exiles" in their ancestral homeland (Mendes-Flohr 9). Buber often found himself at odds with the priorities of his Zionist contemporaries.

For Buber, the "moral and spiritual significance of Zionism did not lie in the creation of a state" (275). Rather, the political aspirations of Zionism overpowered its authentic and religious underpinnings. Mendes Flohr continues that "the difference between Buber and his Zionist contemporaries was the political relevance of the moral aspect of the Arab question," given the fact that the "ancestral home of the Jews, Palestine, was also the home of the indigenous Arab population who had their own national aspirations" (3). As a Professor at Hebrew University, Buber participated in the

discussion and debates surrounding problems in Palestine, while working from a narrative based on his Biblical, philosophical, and Hasidic work. He became a member of the group *Ichud* (Union), which aimed at a bi-national state for Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Such a bi-national confederation was viewed by Buber as a more proper fulfillment of Zionism than a solely Jewish state. For example, in *Arab Jewish Unity*, Magnes and Buber point to the rights of both Arabs and Jews. Magnes and Buber maintain that

We regard the historical rights of the Jews and the natural rights of the Arabs as, under all the circumstances, of equal validity, and it is the task of statesmanship to find ways of adjustment between these contending claims . . . Neither people can get in Palestine all its wants, and both peoples will have to make concessions . . . the way of honorable and reasonable compromise must be sought. (16)

This contentious view is central to Buber's between stance where neither party experiences a zero sum gain or loss. Rather, for Buber, a practical solution involves compromise for both parties.

Although this comment was made several decades ago, Buber's position is very relevant in international affairs today. For example, in an article on the crisis between the Ukraine and Russia, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger maintained that, "far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown: whether Ukraine joins the East or the West. But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side's outpost against the other—it should function as a bridge between them" (Kissinger loc. 2). Buber's own narrative points to a response to the incivility that he encountered in his historical

moment between cultural and political Zionism, as well as subsequent Arab-Israel conflict. Although his dialogue did not cease the fighting, Buber's works are re-emerging in a broad scope of literature involving conflict resolution through dialogue. There is little debate that Buber's works offer dialogue as a pathway to conflict resolution. In 1946 Buber published his work *Paths in Utopia*, which informed his theory of the dialogical community founded upon interpersonal dialogical relationships.

### Philosophical Lineage

There were many central figures who influenced Buber's work that are relevant to dialogue and communication. These philosophers include Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Understanding how these philosophers influenced Buber illustrates how, according to Arnett, "an educational home offers a philosophical support system for the practical task of being open to conversation about ideas and between persons" (*Dialogic Education* 55). Buber understood the importance of having ground even if it meant eventually changing one's stance.

The first figure to contribute to Buber's philosophical ground was Kant.

According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

In Kant he [Buber] found two answers to his concern with the nature of time. If time and space are pure forms of perception, then they pertain to things only as they appear to us (i.e., to *phaenomena*) and not to things-in-themselves (*nooumena*). Thus time primarily concerns the way in which we experience the Other. ("Martin Buber")

Further, Kant's notion of perception informed Buber's understanding of reality as it is genuinely realized through relationship to the Other. This experience is dynamic and

cannot exist in isolation. This ontological component is explicit in Buber's I-Thou construct.

Another figure that influenced Buber was Dilthey. Not only did Buber regard Dilthey as one of his most important teachers, Buber found Dilthey to be very engaging. Grete Scaeder points out that, "Buber studied with Dilthey at the University of Berlin and regarded him as one of his most congenial teachers" (41). Dilthey also had a hermeneutical influence on Buber, which appears in Buber's observations about his own view of Hasidism. For example, Steven D. Kepnes points out "the influence of Dilthey's hermeneutic theory on Buber's interpretation of Hasidism . . . [is reflected] in Buber's remarks about his approach to Hasidism" (198). Steven D. Kepnes provides insight into Dilthey's hermeneutic theory as he pointed to a relationship between author of a text and reader.

An individual has a life-experience (*Elebnis*) which is expressed in a work and then understood by another individual who interprets the work. The goal of the understanding is to arrive at the life-experience behind a life-expression . . . Dilthey spoke of understanding as 'empathy with the mental life of others,' 'the process of recognizing a mental state, the subjective, personal lived-experience of the author, as he or she produced the work . . . Dilthey postulates a shared common ground, an 'identity of mind' which allows the interpreter to empathize with the experiencing author. (Kepnes 196)

Dilthey's understanding required a relationship with another person in order to formulate one's own identity. This relationship between the interpreter and the Other provides a

perspective where the reader can find a potential truth. To connect Dilthey's theory to Buber, it is essential to consider Buber's earliest collection of Hasidic tales in *My Way to Hasidism*, where Buber maintained, "I experienced . . . my unity with the spirit of Rabbi Nehman" (*Hasidism and Modern Man* 62). Also, in writing of Baal-Shem Tov, Buber remarked, "I realized my inborn blinding with Hasidic truth . . . (and) sought to construct the inner process in the life of the master" (62).

Kepnes points out that Buber appears as the romantic hermeneut who "evokes Dilthey's early empathetic method when he tells us he attempted to construct the inner process in the life of the master" (198-199). Modeling Dilthey's hermeneutical theory enabled Buber to revisit and breathe new life into Hasidic tales. Kepnes maintains that,

using Dilthey's hermeneutical principles, Buber took old tales into his imagination and attempted to re-imagine them, to discover new continuities, and to complete them in a new way . . . Buber comes very close to asserting that he achieved the goal of romantic hermeneutics: he understood the Hasidic masters even better than they themselves. (200)

As Buber's professor, Dilthey's hermeneutical influence provided insight into understanding and reviving Buber's understanding of his own religion.

The final philosopher considered in this section is Gadamer. Gadamer's hermeneutical approach for understanding a text also informs Buber's work. For example, Kepnes points out that Gadamer's *Truth and Method* provides an excellent resource for finding the meaning of a text. Specifically, the meaning of a text exists in the relationship between the text and the reader. According to Gadamer, "the relationship between the text and reader is not behind the text in the mind and life of the author"

(206). This relationship implies an encounter between the content of the text and the reader. For example, “like Buber, he [Gadamer] describes the interpreter’s relationship to a work of art as both active and passive” (206). The active component of this relationship implies dialogue. In *Truth and Method* Gadamer maintained that, “a good model for the process which takes place between the interpreter and the text is provided by the dynamics of play” (91). Kepnes maintains that Buber, like Gadamer, “had little faith in the historical-critical illusion of an ‘objective’ presentation of a historical movement of the past . . . rather, he sought a new interpretation of Hasidism which would apply its meaning to the contemporary situation” (212). Interpreting phenomena through a relational and temporal lens implies an *a priori* ground that is predisposed to expecting spontaneous and dynamic interaction. Such comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty points back to Buber’s esoteric Hasidic roots.

Buber’s calling to Hasidism was influenced by his grandfather. Buber asserted in *Tales of Hasidism* that his grandfather, “was an enlightened, renowned scholar and editor of classic rabbinic texts . . . a Jewish communal leader, and a devout Jew, who prayed in a small Hasidic synagogue from a prayer book dense with mystical discourse (vii). According to Buber, *the Hasidic tales* enable man “to explore the nature of humankind in its quest for meaning in the face of emptiness, darkness and loneliness . . . with each tale he makes a fresh attempt at dialogue: He confronts anew a sacred community: a modern man in relation with the premodern world” (Buber *Tales of Hasidim* xv).

The hermeneutical influences of Kant, Dilthey, and Gadamer makes it possible for professors who teach the same course each semester to breathe new life into their teaching, either by: 1) changing the way they relate to the topic of the textbook, 2)

inviting students to participate and contribute their ideas and understanding based on students' own narratives and interests, 3) mutually exploring events in the world outside the classroom that are relevant to the class, or 4) combining the first three notions.

### Central Ideas in Buber's Works

The central ideas in Buber's work helps professors to find comfort with the inevitable ambiguity that accompanies an increasingly diverse student body in a postmodern society. As John R. Scudder asserts, "a Buber model for teaching has much to contribute to education in our confused time" (31).

#### The Between

The first idea of importance to this investigation is Buber's notion of the between. In order to comprehend Buber's between construct, it is helpful to describe how it appears in human communication. Communication that is housed in Buber's between philosophy emerges as an activity between participants that is spontaneous, conscious and genuine. Moreover, the between for Buber does not reside in polarities, nor is it agency-driven. Rather, the communication that resides in Buber's between exists solely through its relational character.

As Buber points out in *Between Man and Man*

In a real conversation (that is not one whose individual parts have been preconcerted, but one which is completely spontaneous, in which each speaks directly to his partner and calls forth his unpredictable reply), a real lesson (that is, neither a routine repetition nor a lesson whose findings the teacher knows before he starts, but one which develops in mutual surprises), a real embrace and not one of mere habit, a real duet and not a

mere game—in all these what is essential does not take place in each of the participants or in a neutral world which includes the two and all other things; but it takes place between them in the most precise sense, as it were in a dimension which is accessible only to them both. (241-242)

Buber's between points to a dialogue where its essence can be grasped only in it "being between" the agents as it "transcends both" (*Between Man and Man* 242). The between is not found within the individual or within a collective whole. Rather, the between for Buber is the "primary category of human reality" (*Between Man and Man* 241). Real life for Buber can only be lived in the between.

Just as life is a continuous dynamic, Buber's between is also dynamic and organic; communication takes place between communicators. For example, Buber's own narrative and communicative response to his historical context exemplifies his between philosophy. In *A Land of Two Peoples*, Buber's own dialogue with Ben Gurion and Theodor Herzl contends with the "historical rights" of the Jewish people and the "natural rights" of the Arab people, both people inhabiting a political state created by external forces (2). Despite their contentious views, the polemics surrounding their dialogue relied on civil communication. Although the locus of incivility is quite disparate in many ways from the topic of Buber's dialogue with Ben Gurion, the polemics involving classroom incivility are not dissimilar. Buber's very dynamic between construct serves as a model for communication in contentious situations, such as those in the current historical moment.

Revisiting Buber's religious foundations that anchor his between ethic, Buber connects between with the relationship one has with God. In *Tales of Hasidism*, Buber

affirmed that the “fundamental fact of human existence is with man and man” (xii). He continues that “Hasidism saw the line connecting man to man and man to God as *relation* and not as subject-object; as *sacred betweenness* and not as user to used” (xii). Buber illustrates this “*sacred betweenness*” in *Ten Rungs*, a book of Hasidic tales that informs the reader that this between has no specific attention—it has dynamism—it is alive and organic—it emerges as a third entity.

In *The Dividing Wall* Buber points to the Scriptures to elucidate the dynamic nature of the between

I stood between the Lord and you. The *I* stands between God and us.

When a man says *I* and presumes to use his Maker’s word, he is shutting himself off from him. But there is no dividing wall before him who sacrifices *I*. For of him it is written: I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me. When my *I* comes to belong to my beloved, then his desire is toward me. (18-19)

What Buber suggests here points to an active listening as well as a willingness to be transformed by the exchange which resides in the between. This quote reveals Buber’s stance on the religious significance of the between. For example, Buber claims that, “the heart of Jewish creativity does not reside in the Law but in the charged visions of the relation between man and God that are found in the Bible and the early decades of Hasidism” (Buber *Tales of the Hasidim* xiii). Buber’s mention of “creativity” suggests a rhetorical turn for the between as a place for invention, hence liberating one from the tyranny of polarity.

Stemming from Buber's between as a religious framework, Laurence J. Silberstein makes a similar connection to the Divine in his 1918 lecture *The Holy Way*. Silberstein maintains that, "the Divine may come to life in individual man, may reveal itself from within individual man, but it attains its earthly fullness only where individual beings open themselves to one another, disclose themselves to one another, help one another" (220). Here, Buber's between is explicit through Silberstein's notion of the Divine. The Divine emerges in a holistic way exclusively through an encounter. Silberstein continues that in the locus of the encounter, "the Eternal rises in the Between, the seemingly empty space; that true place of realization is community, and true community is the relationship in which the Divine comes to its realization between man and man" (220). Encased within this statement are the origins of Buber's philosophy toward community and religion. For Buber, "God is encountered and made manifest in the realm of the between, the ontic sphere that emerges through immediate, open, helping relationships between person and person" (Silberstein 220.) The between for Buber is what is *real*. This statement supports his ethic which applies toward our communication with one another. The between for Buber is not something that stands alone but instead serves as the place where the *real* emerges.

For example, in *Between Man and Man*, Buber asserts that,

between is not an auxiliary construction, but the real place and bearer of what happens between men; it has received no specific attention because, in distinction from the individual soul and its context, it does not exhibit a smooth continuity, but is ever and again re-constituted in accordance with men's meetings with one another; hence what is experienced has been

annexed naturally to the continuous elements, the soul and the world.

(241)

This work argues that the complexity of Buber's between construct has a home in postmodernity, unlike its preceding era of modernity. The polemics and polarizing monologues of individuality that comprise modernity are predisposed to reject Buber's between approach. An empirical lens does not easily allow for transformation without an accompanying sense of failure that one's initial position was in need of an upgrade. In a postmodern age full of narrative confusion, however, Buber's between construct is helpful in navigating the murky waters for appropriate communicative action where there is no guide. However, without ground, there can be no genuine between. Despite this plausible impasse, Buber's work is consistently hopeful. In keeping with Buberian hopefulness, the narrative decline inherent of postmodernity points to its need. Establishing ground is essential to maintaining a starting point for appropriate action. No one can clap with one hand.

#### Attentiveness

The second contribution that Buber's make that is significant for this work is a discussion of attentiveness to evil. While this work argues that ambiguity is a necessary part of our postmodern condition, inaction must not accompany ambiguity. Recalling that inaction is evil (Buber, *Ten Rungs* 13), inaction is therefore an evil part of incivility. Inaction as a conscious "directionless[ness]" while facing incivility is what truly poses a threat to teaching and learning. Inaction is an inappropriate action amidst ambiguity (*Ten Rungs*, 4).

To act in accordance with Buber's between construct requires one to relinquish mastering his or her situation, and instead respond to what happens in the moment that the event is happening (Buber, *Between Man and Man*). This temporal response rests on the act of one who is attentive:

For the attentive man would no longer, as his custom is, *master* his situation the very moment after it stepped up to him: it would be laid upon him to go up to and into it. Moreover, nothing that he believed he possessed as always available would help him, no knowledge and no technique, no system and no programme . . . . This speech has no alphabet, each of its sounds is a new creation and only to be grasped as such.

*(Between Man and Man 16)*

Suspending immediate action in Buber's between space in the face of incivility does not lack responsibility because it does not remain inactive. Rather, the response awaiting in the between is necessarily temporal as "the attentive man faces creation as it happens," whereby "genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding" (*Between Man and Man 16*).

This chapter does not suggest that postmodernity currently makes use of Buber's between construct. Rather, this chapter argues that there is no greater opportunity than this historical moment which can and must engage Buber's work amidst the polemics of our postmodern society.

### Forms of Dialogue

Third, Buber's philosophy of dialogue is a helpful consideration in this project. Dialogue exists only through relationships. As John Durham Peters points out,

“communication is about the constitution of relationships, the revelation of otherness, or the breaking of the shells that encase self, not about sharing of private mental property” (16-17). Without communication, relationships are not possible. For Buber, there are three types of communication: monologue, technical dialogue and genuine dialogue.

The distinction between monologue and dialogue is significant to one’s motives toward the other interlocutor. Amit Pinchevski points to Buber’s understanding of “address” which opens the way to dialogue (210). In *Knowledge of Man*, Buber stated that “language never existed before address; it could only become monologue only after dialogue broke off or broke down” (114). This statement reflects Buber’s understanding of monologue as a distinct departure from genuine dialogue. Pinchevski continues that “a speech interested only its own capacity to speak while denying the possibility of an anterior address (which may very well be silent) is, according to Buber, the modern distortion of speech” (211). The kind of speech Pinchevski suggests is monologue, which for Buber excludes the Other. In addition, Pinchevski’s quote affirms Buber’s affinity for genuine dialogue vis-à-vis the importance of listening, humility, and a mindfulness that beckons one’s own personal responsibility with his or her speech interaction with others. Traces of Buber’s Jewish roots inform this perception. In *Between Man and Man*, Buber contrasts monologue to genuine dialogue (referred hitherto as *dialogue*) as he maintains that, “he who is living the life of the monologue is never aware of the other as something that is absolutely not himself and at the same time something with which he nevertheless communicates” (20).

Unlike monologue that only focuses on the self, there is at times a need for technical dialogue, which Arnett and Arneson define as “focused upon information—

accentuating information delivery, information processing, and information recall in the information age of the twenty-first century” (144). Technical dialogue has a place especially where additional knowledge of a subject must be made known to a student. Therefore, technical dialogue does not necessarily contribute to communicative incivility. However, if technical dialogue is used without any genuine dialogue, then mutual may be harder to establish.

Buber’s religious view of dialogue is imperative to grasping his understanding both genuine dialogue as a segue to I-Thou. Comprehending Buber’s religiosity serves as the foundation for his own understanding. For example, in *On Judaism*, Buber maintained that, “the basic teaching that fills the Hebrew Bible is that our life is a dialogue between the above and the below” (215). However, Buber pointed to the fact that none of the Holy books are “full of a dialogue between heaven and earth. It tells us again and again God addresses man and is addressed by him. God announces to man what plan He has for the world” (*On Judaism* 214). Here, Buber pointed out that genuine dialogue exists between God and man. Buber maintained that God “discloses to him [man] His will and calls upon him to take part in its realization,” (214). Buber suggested that man is pulled by God’s calling, and that man must figure out what is yet to be revealed. Here, the esoteric understanding of a Divine dialogue between man and God establishes the framework that informs the necessarily ambiguous construct of Buber’s between. Man awaits God’s plan in search of Him (God) while understanding that His plan is yet to be known. For Buber, man is free to choose. Buber continued that “man is no blind tool; he was created as a free being—free also vis-à-vis God, free to surrender to Him or to refuse himself to Him . . . if he remains silent, his silence, too, is an answer”

(215). Buber continued that freedom is a necessary component to engage in dialogue, otherwise, without choice the exchange is a monologue.

Buber also points to inaction, which is never neutral, and he wrote much on this subject in his subsequent works. In terms of the authority of God's voice and its intersection with dialogue, Buber asserted that God's voice (and man's voice) is in fact, dialogic, even if those voices appear to be singular and not in dialogue. In fact, the confirmation singular voice from God is what confirms the Other. Buber maintains

Very often we hear God's voice alone, as in much of the books of the prophets, where only in isolated cases . . . does the prophet's reply become articulate, and sometimes these records actually assume a dialogic form. But even in all those passages where God alone speaks, we are made to feel that the person addressed by Him answers with his wordless soul, that is to say, that he stands in the dialogic situation. And again, very often we hear the voice of man alone, as generally in the Psalms, where only in isolated cases the worshipper indicates the divine reply; but here, too, the dialogic situation is apparent: it is apparent to us that man, lamenting, suppliant, thanks-giving, praise-singing man, experiences himself as heard and understood, accepted and confirmed, by Him and to Whom he addresses himself. (*On Judaism* 214-215)

Buber's philosophy is largely informed by faith. The above passage illustrates a dialogue that transpires between: heaven and earth, God and man, God's gift of freedom and man, the holy books and man, legends and man's perceptions, and finally, man's understanding of his own place that makes him a dialogic being unto himself.

Buber's genuine dialogue allows for man to revise himself. If man is dialogic unto himself, he must have a willingness to be transformed through a genuine dialogue with himself. The United States is culturally predisposed to the notion of reinvention. In fact, reinvention is an honorable hallmark of national memory, recalling that through self-determination, the people of the United States are inherently predisposed to welcome the idea that they can change their circumstances. Buber's genuine dialogue confirms this cultural trait, which is why Buber's construct is so urgent in our current historical moment. In an age of narrative decline and frailty in the United States, Buber's genuine dialogue offers and confirms ground. Buber's construct is viable inasmuch as one's ground is present. In *Pointing the Way* Buber maintained that, "in order to arrive somewhere it is not enough to go towards something; one must also proceed from something" (99). A genuine dialogic relationship with our history as a nation is essential lest we forget that the values our forefathers and foremothers established as a nation. This genuine dialogue with our past allows us to declare amidst our narrative confusion that *who we are is who we once were!*

### I-Thou and I-It

The fourth contribution Buber offers is his discussion of I-Thou and I-It. In 1923, Buber wrote his famous essay on existence, *I and Thou*. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, "the crux of Buber's thought is his conception of two primary relationships: I-Thou and I-It. I-Thou is characterized by openness, reciprocity, and a deep sense of personal involvement" (Audi104). In his work Buber affirms two primary ways in which one establishes a relational communicative event. To illustrate these two ways of human relating through I-It and I-Thou, Anderson, Cissna and Arnett maintain

that in an I-It, encounter, one is in a state of “experiencing and using,” whereby both “self and other become objects to one another” (32). I-Thou, on the other hand is, “the mode of real relationship, involving mutuality, presentness, and the opportunity for dialogue” (32).

Buber’s I-Thou points to an acceptance of others, as they exist. Buber worked upon the premise of existence as encounter (*Between Man and Man* 250-251). He explained this philosophy using I-Thou and I-It to categorize the modes of consciousness, interaction, and being through which an individual engages with other individuals, inanimate objects, and all reality in general. Buber’s religious context informs his notion of I-Thou. Stuart Charmé points to Buber’s religious foundations and maintains that “Buber wishes to point the way to a renewed sense of personal relation with God and to truly human interpersonal relations” (161). This approach often appears in the literature as the narrow ridge. In Arnett’s *Communication and Community*, adopting the narrow-ridge attitude “embraces self and other not as a psychological construction, but as an ontological reality” (37). Arnett continues that “Buber felt that it was impossible to live life without such an attitude, unless we excluded an I-Thou encounter in favor of the I-It at all times” (37). In *I and Thou* Buber maintains that “the I-Thou and the I-It . . . are pointers to the human situation, in its intricate interweaving of the personal and the impersonal, of the world to be *used* and the world to be *met*” (18). For Buber, as he argues in *I and Thou*, a person is at all times engaged with the world in one of these modes.

Philosophically, I-Thou and I-It infer ideas about ways of being—specifically how a person exists and actualizes that existence. Buber maintained in *I and Thou*

The world of It is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these. The particular Thou, after the relational event has run its course, is bound to become an It. The particular It, by entering the relational event, may become a Thou . . . And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man. (33-34)

Although both the I-It and the I-Thou are both “connected views of the world” only one, I-Thou is “dialogically relational” (Arnett and Arneson 140).

Kegan points out Buber’s understanding of the Thou through Hasidic tales as they [Hasids] “tell much of these wonderful men . . . who looked from one end of the earth to the other, and saw changes which happened in the world and who were as much aware of them as though they occurred in their own body” (31). Here, Buber points to an awareness of the world and the potential for change in it. Kegan continues that “the men and women of ensuing generations, fallen from grace, human being as we know it, as Buber knows it: moving together and moving apart, facing a person and facing a thing, fighting the mind, battling It, reaching a Thou, dying again (31). Dialogue between I and the eternal Thou describes an encounter, which is not bound to a myopic way of encountering the Other. Rather, encounter through I-Thou transcends time and space.

Buber’s response to the incivility of his own historical moment was informed by the legend of Baal-Shem, who responded to the needs of his own historical moment. Friedman explained that “the Legend of the Baal Shem is not the history of a man but the history of a calling. It does not tell of a destiny but of a vocation” (45). This project

points to the Thou of education as vocation. The vocation of the classroom pulls the educator and students to action, which is teaching and learning.

In *Dialogic Civility*, Arnett and Arneson assert that, “both ‘I-It’ and ‘I-Thou’ are fundamental parts of life. . . . We use life and we meet life; one without the other limits the quality of human existence” (141). I-Thou is not just an encounter between humans. In *Man and Man*, Buber maintained that “I-Thou is a relationship of openness, directness, mutuality, and presence . . . [which] may be between man and man, but it may also take place with a tree, a cat, a fragment of mica, or a work of art” (xiv). For Buber, God’s presence always funnels through his constructs as God is the “eternal Thou” (xiv).

In terms of I-It and its distinction and relationship to I-Thou, Christina Smerick maintains,

the I-thou relationship for Buber is one of radical hospitality and receptivity. It is an openness to the other as Other, as some One whom I do not make like me, I do not manipulate and use as an object. The I-thou is a relation that takes me outside of my enclosed inner world of experience, and places me in the ‘between’, where I, and the other, face each other in truth. (6)

The I-It relationship is typically a subject-object relationship. I-It ultimately becomes monologic without the intersection of I-Thou. Smernick continues “all of our dealings in the world are either relationships of objectification, exploitation, and use (I-It) [. . .] while the I-It relationship is a practical necessity, if it dominates one’s relations, one is being, one could say, less than fully human, closed to God” (6). One knows and uses other persons or things without allowing them to exist for oneself in their uniqueness.

## Summary

Professors can model Buber's philosophies in their communicative classroom encounters. Buber's constructs support educators as they strive to teach and learn amidst the challenges that CI creates. Buber's constructs of between, I-Thou and I-It, and genuine dialogue serve as his ethical framework. Buber's philosophies serve as ground that have the potential to improve education as well as to communities at large. Buber answers incivility with civility through genuine dialogue. Civility, and a willingness to be transformed through a dialogic encounter creates an opportunity to reinvent ourselves as educators, continuing to learn, as educators do.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FROM CHAOS TO CIVILITY: BUILDING A CLASSROOM NARRATIVE

Postmodernity poses a unique challenge to professors compared to preceding time periods. This is especially true in terms of postmodernity's emphasis on individualism. As Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson assert, "postmodernity is a practical environment for the prospering of individualism that may not look for ways to assist the larger good or protect veracity as a general principle for guidance" (199). The United States' university classroom during this time period has been identified as exemplifying a lack of collective care, hence fueling what much of the literature points to as communicative classroom incivility (CI).

Postmodernity, coupled with our diverse cultural narratives that are frequently in contention, provides an unprecedented opportunity for professors in the United States. Diversity in the university classroom creates a complex dynamic whereby competing narratives coexist. The increasingly diverse narratives present in the student body blurs the rules for communicative classroom behaviors that best advance learning.

Postmodern society marked by narrative contention confounds any directional guidance. Classroom incivility (CI) is impeding teaching and learning in the United States undergraduate classroom. This project works from the assumption that the status quo of CI is unacceptable because it poses a threat to teaching and learning. If professors still believe, as Mike McKinne points out, that, "debate, discussion and argumentation should be part of the ongoing teaching and learning paradigm that assist a student's growth and development and an instructor's pedagogical practice" (12), then the problem of incivility between professors and students is a threat to higher education. Education

serves as a fundamental value of the United States, with teaching and learning at its core. Any impediment to teaching and learning, and hence to education at large, threatens an essential part of the cultural identity of the U.S. Therefore, it is imperative to find ways to assuage communicative classroom incivility. Professors must act, and not turn a blind eye to CI, despite the challenge of external forces that are beyond their immediate control, including the growing number of adjunct professors. Some of the external forces that are affecting adjunct or “contingent” faculty (*Trends in Instructional Staff* 7), include confusion about the professor’s role with the surge of online courses, in addition to concern over the decline in student enrollment based on soaring university tuition costs. Although professors’ fears are plausible, the teaching and learning environment is negatively affected by these fears, which fuel CI. The tenuous nature of a contingent status among professors creates a fearful environment for the educator, especially amidst the challenges posed by students, who professors maintain have an attitude of academic entitlement (AE) in the classroom. AE indicates a growing consumerist mentality in students and in society at large. This is creating a destructive cycle whereby professors are becoming cynical not only of students’ behavior, but also of the external forces contributing to CI that are societal, institutional, and above all, beyond the immediate control of professors’ abilities.

A lack of common ground confounds the responsibilities for appropriate communicative action on behalf of both professors and students. However, if there is inaction, the threat to teaching and learning is compounded by both a lack of solid ethic from which to base decisions, and a clear goal of where one wants to be. The possibilities for both professors and students for rhetorical invention within an established ethic,

bounded by mutually agreed upon criteria between professors and students, leaves little opportunity for incivility to survive, much less thrive. Establishing a narrative ethic is not only necessary in a postmodern university classroom, it is also appealing to a millennial generation that seeks its own human contribution in a highly technologically-engaged world.

Despite our historical moment of ambiguity surrounding acceptable communicative behavior, educators have an excellent opportunity to proactively meet CI with imagination. Educators are invited to create a narrative ethic of civility based on philosophers who inspire their work. This is to say that although Paulo Freire and Martin Buber are chosen as philosophers who ground this author's narrative ethic, the works of Sissela Bok or Alasdair MacIntyre for example, may guide other educators. This section suggests to educators to discover what philosophies guide their own learning. From there, educators can establish a narrative ethic in their classroom based on the philosophies that impassion them intellectually.

An intellectual enthusiasm or *kefi*, in Greek, embodies this sentiment of an unexpected source of inspiration that pulls one to action in a teleological fashion. The mystical aspect of Buber's I-Thou work liberates educators to embrace their intellectual passion and envision their class as a miracle. The ethical component of Freire's work grounds educators to hold steadfast to values that safeguard teaching and learning despite external forces of incivility. For this dissertation, Buber and Freire offer the most ideal combination to respond to the incivilities within the university classroom in a postmodern age. Our historical moment provides infinite potential for engaged teaching and learning

provided that the pedagogical focus upholds a narrative ethic of communicative civility that is dynamic, reflective, and resists stagnation.

This chapter first explains the importance of faculty members' activating a narrative ethic in the classroom. Second, Freire and Buber's pedagogical and philosophical contributions provide insight for educators in establishing a classroom narrative ethic that is grounded in civility. Freire and Buber's responses to the communicative incivilities of their historical own moment provide hope as they liberate educators to proceed with educating despite the external forces that currently and fervently fuel CI. Third, educators are challenged to envision their class as a culture. Engaging the classroom as a culture allows the professor to establish common values that anchor the class. These values, based on the philosophies of Freire and Buber, serve as a guide to both the students and to the professor about communication that may enhance possibilities for learning.

### Narrative Ethics

Narrative plays an important role in the context of the classroom, particularly for understanding communicative problems that contribute to CI between professor and student. This section explores narrative ethics in an effort to illustrate its relevance to successful communication within the university classroom between professor and student.

A narrative points to a consensus between people. Walter Fisher perceives narrative, or "narration," as symbolic actions through words or deeds (58). Fisher's definition of narrative places emphasis on the value communicators attach to their actions. Narrative, as a form of discourse, may assume two identified roles—providing

background for an event and providing explanations for certain behaviors in a culture. To illustrate, Arnett points out that “narrative provides a background set of tacit assumptions and knowledge about communication that guide and offer meaning to the foreground event of a given conversation” (“Applying Knowledge and Skills” 58).

Geneva Gay asserts that the function of narrative is to make our actions intelligible to ourselves as well as others (xiii). Knowing a speaker’s background is important because it can provide the listener, or the other party engaged in the discourse, with an understanding of the speaker’s intent. In postmodernity, a time of diversity and narrative contention, understanding a given narrative or culture is indispensable to successful discourse. For example, as Michael Prosser points out, “the very thought-structure, the basic value-systems, the fundamental manner of perceiving reality all differ—and in significant ways—from people to people, from culture to culture” (155). Without the understanding of the speaker’s narrative, the meanings or intentions of the speaker may be misconstrued.

How does one understand the narrative of the speaker? Arnett and Arneson indicate that a narrative of a people can be understood both through studying as well as engaging one’s self within a specific culture (58). However, engaging one’s self within a specific culture or classroom requires the communicator to face the potential for error. “Through receiving rewards for certain behaviors and experiencing consequences from errors, we are socialized to particular narratives” (Arnett and Arneson, 58). Interestingly, the possibility of error and misunderstanding may reveal the extent to which one is interested in or willing to engage in a culture unlike one’s own. A narrative points to a

shared understanding or reason for engaging in communication together, making narrative indispensable to the successful comprehension of a meaning behind an action.

A narrative may best be understood through discourse with people who adhere to a particular narrative. James A. Anderson points to Fisher's concept of discourse as one that "transcends and governs the empirical in our understanding of reality" (210). Fisher asserts that we "engage, transform, and construct our acting reality in the form of stories—narratives developed in the ongoing conversations into which we are all born . . . there are no stand-alone, meaningful acts per se; instead, facts come into our existence as elements of narrative, insinuating that facts are not literal, but situational" (210). Narratives create reality for a person as well as for a given context such as a classroom or a culture. Mutually shared ideas that are defined or disguised as facts are viewed as such because of their evolution from stories, or experiences in our lives, or in our cultures. Therefore, such facts are relative and are in no way universal. In support of this point, Stanley Hauerwas states that the "unity of the self is not gained by attaining a universal point of view, but by living faithful to a narrative that does not betray the diversity of our existence" (297). Hence, the only way of understanding communication made by another person is to understand the speaker's narrative. Gay argues that, "narrative is essential to the purpose of communicating who we are, what we do, how we feel, and why we ought to follow some course of action rather than another" (xiii). She contends that narratives allow us to visualize ideas in storied behaviors, as well as to "reveal and examine the thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and intentions of the agents of the actions" (7). Narrative meanings may mend or bend understandings.

To coalesce ‘narrative’ and ‘ethics,’ within the context of the university classroom in an effective way, ethics is considered as function while narrative, as shaping classroom culture, is depicted as form. Each of the two concepts in the phrase ‘narrative ethics’ creates a variety of implications. At times, the two concepts are perceived to exist as dependent constructs.

Ethical values within a given narrative shape and ultimately guide the actions of people who adhere to that narrative. According to Richard L. Johannesen, “values are the constructs and the orientations by which people decide what is preferred or obligatory for members of their society” (2). Values are the “resultants of societal demands and psychological needs, they are learned and determined by culture, society, society’s institutions, and personal experience” (Johannesen 2). Shared values are fundamental in anchoring a narrative. This is not to say that these values should not change. Rather, an understanding of the rules of a given context as conveyed in a shared narrative elicits trust among its members.

Adam Zachary Newton neatly ties narrative and ethic as he maintains that, “narrative ethics can be construed in two directions at once—on the one hand, as attributing to narrative discourse some kind of ethical status, and on the other, as referring to the way ethical discourse often depends on narrative structures—makes this reciprocity between narrative and ethics appear even more essential” (8). Both narrative and ethics contribute information about appropriate action within a given context.

Using communication to understand and validate what is important to the classroom participants is can only be done through creating a particular classroom narrative. Johannesen maintains that, “criteria of linear logic, empirical observation, and

objective truth are not used to assess communication ethicality in various cultures, religions, and political systems” (229). Only after understanding the narratives that embody values held by members in a classroom can one sensitively commence toward reducing misunderstanding.

Importantly, understanding is not to be confused with acceptance. Bok asks, “does it make sense to envisage a morality shared across cultures” (10)? Sharing morality is not a necessary precursor to understanding another person. What is required for narrative ethics to function in reducing uncertainty between people is mindfulness. In *Bridging Differences*, William Gudykunst points out that we must become “aware of our communication behavior in order to correct our tendency to misinterpret others’ behavior and communicate more effectively (30). Our prejudices are a way of asking why we feel a certain way, and provide an opportunity for learning about others, and ultimately about ourselves through the use of narrative ethics. Approaching communicative civility through narrative ethics, combined with genuine good will, is likely to result in learning. The next section addresses how the works of Freire and Buber contribute to a narrative of civility in the classroom.

#### Contributions of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber to Classroom Civility

This section addresses the works of Freire and Buber. Freire’s major contributions are grounded by his ethics of critical thinking, humility, love, and hope. These ethics anchor Freire’s understanding and teachings on additive pedagogy, which are central to his work on dialogue. This section also considers the work of Buber, whose religious ethics inform what is popularly referred to as his between philosophy, attentiveness, forms of dialogue, and I-Thou and I-It.

## Freire in a Time of Incivility

Freire's adherence to values including critical consciousness, humility, love, and hope, guide his classroom dialogue. The first ethic that guides Freire's pedagogy is critical thinking. Through Freire's additive approach to pedagogy, students must employ their ability for critical thinking. For Freire, critical thinking is what makes us human. Instead of depositing information to students as receptacles of information, Freire suggests a pedagogy that provides ideas that respects and fosters a sense of purpose in the classroom in order to engage students. Freire's additive approach to pedagogy through critical thinking serves as an invitation to learners to "look at themselves as persons living and producing in a given society" (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* xi). Freire's additive pedagogy invites students to employ their critical thinking skills, as well as their imagination, hence making CI undesirable for professor and student alike.

Giving students a rationale to make meaningful classroom contributions can help them understand that they are important and responsible for shaping their culture. Freire challenged students to understand that

they are themselves the makers of culture, leading them to learn the anthropological meaning of culture . . . When men and women realize that they themselves are the makers of culture, they have accomplished, or nearly accomplished, the first step toward feeling the importance, the necessity, and the possibility of owning reading and writing . . . and they become literate. (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* xi)

This study makes the same challenge for professors: encourage students to realize that students are the makers of their culture. When professors acknowledge that their students

possess the ability to create or change their culture, students' sense of potential contributions to the class in turn have value. Students are then empowered, and often inspired as a result to meet the challenges and demands of the class. This way, CI only serves as an impediment to students' ability to tap into their own ability.

The second ethic that Freire deemed necessary for instructors to adopt is humility. In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire explained, "what is really essential in this process is that both the teacher and the student know that open, curious questioning, whether in speaking or listening, is what grounds them mutually—not a simple passive pretense at dialogue" (62). Humility serves as an ethic for teachers to follow when conducting dialogic pedagogical practices. Humility necessarily involves revision of one's own position, especially if through dialogue that person is willing to be transformed. Freire asserted in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that "dialogue, as the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning, and acting is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility" (90). Listening enhances communicative civility in the classroom, which requires humility on behalf of the professor. In addition to humility, Freire pointed to another quality to be added, that of love, without which the teacher's work would lose its meaning.

Freire's third ethic of his pedagogy is love. With the focus of love for the students' learning, love serves to safeguard against agency. Shielding agency also protects professors from taking incivilities personally, without minimizing their severity. This way, professors maintain the professionalism required within the context of their role as educator. While maintaining love, a communicative ethic may drive their teaching. Freire's notion of love and its role in education transcends agency and, as it

relates to the *a priori*, love that educators maintain for the world and for others. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire justified the necessary connection of love to dialogue “because dialogue cannot exist without in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people” (89). For Freire, love is inseparable with courage. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire asserted that, “the task of the teacher, who is also a learner . . . requires that those who commit themselves to teaching develop a certain love not only of others but also the very process implied in teaching . . . it is impossible to teach without the courage to love . . . [and we must dare] to speak of love without fear of being called ridiculous” (3). Love is necessary for the teacher to maintain as it requires commitment, not only to the student, but moreover, it obliges educators to embrace a love for teaching. This love of teaching not only enhances the subject matter, the enthusiasm carries over into the classroom through the medium of communication. A professor’s drive and passion for the subject matter can discover or awaken a student’s interest in the content of the class. This interest requires a civility on the part of the student in an effort to join the dance and find their contribution. This love of teaching and learning not only overpowers incivility, the shadows of incivility are annihilated through the light of loving encouragement.

Freire’s ethic of hope is crucial for many professors who have become resentful of their students as well as external forces fueling CI, which often seem beyond the professor’s control. Freire’s own response to the injustices of his historical moment offer constructive hope to professors despite current and difficult circumstances. For Freire, hope is an interdependent ethic involving faith *in the power of education to shape and improve society*. Freire maintained that educators must not lose hope for their society but

instead provide “a pedagogy of humankind” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 36). The themes of hope and faith run deep throughout Freire’s pedagogical vision. He stated that, “from these pages I hope at least the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and women, and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love” (22). For Freire, hope begets dialogue and is a precursor to engaging in dialogue. Hope and faith in people is necessary for dialogue; the “dialogic man believes in others even before he meets them face to face” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 71-72). Freire’s pedagogical philosophies pose a landmark position for educators who want to actively engage and co-construct effective educational classroom experiences. In order to have hope or expectancy that communicative civility will quell the problems posed by CI, professors must have a bedrock faith that what they are teaching is paramount to the lives of their students.

Freire’s attitudes about pedagogy can liberate educators from this resentment with hopeful attitudes and action in the face of challenging forces, which often appear overwhelming. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire offers hope to educators in the face of challenges that are seemingly beyond their control. He asserts,

whether or not we are willing to overcome slips or inconsistencies, by living humility, lovingness, courage, tolerance, competence, decisiveness, patience-impatience, and verbal parsimony, we contribute to creating a happy, joyful school . . . a school that marches on, that is not afraid to take risks, and that rejects immobility. It is a school that thinks, that participates, that creates, that speaks, that loves, that guesses, that

passionately embraces and says yes to life. It is not a school that quiets down and quits. (45)

Freire's pedagogical contributions anchored in the ethics of critical consciousness, humility, love, and hope, are necessary in a postmodern society.

What drives Freire's work involves a strong sense of ground combined with sensitivity to the appropriateness of communication between professor and student. Postmodernity, as a time of narrative contention, necessitates a guiding ethic that Freire provides. Freire points out in *Pedagogy of Indignation* that,

education has historicity. What was done in ancient Greece is not exactly what was tried in ancient Rome. Similarly, what was undertaken with heroic *aretē* in old Greece could not have been undertaken in medieval Europe. In that vein, new pedagogical proposals become necessary, indispensable, and urgent in a postmodernity touched at every moment by technological advances . . . one of the most significant abilities we men and women have developed throughout our long history, which while created by us, makes and remakes us is the possibility of reinventing the world and not simply repeating or reproducing it. (107)

Freire's suggestion that educators and learners are co-creators of reality within a classroom is especially helpful in a postmodern society. The diverse breadth of competing narratives that define postmodernity makes it possible to create a reality that transforms the world through mutual collaboration. In a postmodern society, the boundaries of appropriate communication are contingent on the appropriateness within a

given context. Freire recognizes that education has prevailed throughout time because of its adaptation to the historical moment.

As new ways of communication through technology and increasing diversity allow for new ways for CI to emerge, just as many opportunities exist for educators and students to learn from each other and create their own communicative classroom ethic. Appreciation of the different narratives, coupled with zeal for collaborative learning, builds upon the diverse values, which mutually create a classroom ethic by which to abide. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire states that, “virtues do not lie in experiencing either without the other, but rather, in living the permanent tension between the two” (44). Freire’s pedagogical emphasis buttresses the relationship between the values of critical consciousness, humility, love and hope, and dissuades a dichotomous classroom structure. These values shape a narrative that leads to civil classroom communication as they anchor the ethics of the class, hence providing a direction for appropriate classroom communication. The values that ground Freire’s philosophy of education are similar to those revealed in the dialogic philosophy of Buber.

#### Buber and Pedagogical Direction in a Wandering Age

Buber’s dialogue construct engenders communication between persons. His writings invite professors to engage students in a way that regards the subject material as an inclusive and inviting collaboration. Aristotle maintained in *Metaphysics* that “the whole is greater than the sum of our parts” (1045a 8-10). Based on Aristotle’s premise, those who are committed to teaching and learning soon realize that they have a lot more to learn together than they do individually. Buber’s religious ties inform his works which contribute greatly to an understanding of a narrative ethic of civility. Buber’s major

works on dialogue, I-Thou/I-It, the between construct, and attentiveness contribute to communicative civility and help professors quell problems that emerge from CI.

In order to preserve teaching and learning, the status quo of the postmodern undergraduate classroom in the United States requires Buber's genuine dialogue. The way in which Buber's between construct informs dialogic classroom communication, also informs civility. Dialogical education aims to "develop certain propensities in the student: it aims particularly to promote a responsible exercise of freedom, and the continuing authentication of all intentions and deeds in the moment of their occurrence' ethically" (Morgan 100, Murphy 146). In addressing CI, which is grounded in the mire of mistrust, Buber suggests that, "there is no salvation save through the renewal of the dialogical relation" (*Pointing the Way* 226).

Through a commitment to dialogue, Buber's stance that teaching and learning must be primary to any other focus fastens a dialogic ethic amidst the chaotic postmodern university classroom. Buber maintains that, "in a genuine dialogue each of the partners, even when he stands in opposition to the other, heeds, affirms, and confirms his opponent as an existing other" (Buber *Pointing the Way* 238). Buber does not suggest that this affirmation puts an end to incivility, but it is a start as those who "speak unreservedly with one another, not overlooking what divides them but determined to bear this division in common" (238). The political correctness that turns a blind eye to differences between professors and students inhibits genuine dialogue as its fearful motivation dissipates curiosity. Students and professors in the United States find it hard to define their roles as their composition spans a breadth of races, religions, languages and generations.

Buber's concept of I-It and I-Thou allows professors to perceive the problem of communicative classroom incivility from varying perspectives. Through I-It, professors approach the classroom in a way where they convey a higher level of knowledge and content to students. I-It speaks to role competency of the professor as sage, and describes the quantitative aspect of teaching, inferring a level of expertise compared to the student, which is monologic. An I-Thou construct, however, allows professors to embrace the classroom with an attitude of 'my role as professor allows me to teach *and* learn,' where meeting the uncertain narratives and potentials of their students provides an opportunity to engage and to learn what is not yet known through the exchange between professor and student. Both I-It and I-Thou are necessary in the professor's pedagogical mission. With I-It, professors fulfill their duties as competent mentors. With I-Thou, professors establish mutual respect with students through dialogue, whereby the content of the class becomes the focus, not the students nor the professors themselves.

Encountering students as an I-Thou is essential for Buber especially on behalf of the preservation of education, which must be dialogical. John W. Morgan maintains that, "this dialogical relation between teacher and student can only arise through the I-Thou relation . . . . An educator can only educate if able to build a relation based on true mutuality, true dialogue with students; and this mutuality, this dialogue can only come to the fore if the student trusts the educator, if the student feels accepted" (98). Just as I-Thou and I-It can quell the problems of CI through dialogic encounters, Buber's between philosophy serves as a model for professors to manage CI.

Buber's between concept is relevant to communicative classroom incivility as it bridges the "chasm between opposing camps by opening up the possibilities of dialogue

between persons . . . Buber spoke of the narrow ridge as an alternative to absolute positions that characterize communication in a polarized community” (31). The maintenance of absolute positions potentially divides a nation, a community, and especially a classroom. For example, a professor who maintains an unwavering stance with students that he or she considers to be communicatively uncivil may find Buber’s between construct to be helpful to teaching. By suspending his or her stance on handling classroom incivility, the professor can spend that energy on information gathering in an effort to effectively understand and subsequently meet both the class’s needs and challenges. Without the encounter between professor and student, the genuine needs and challenges are only hypothetical, and, therefore, do not truly exist. The suspension of decision is not to be confused with a denial of decisiveness. Rather, Buber’s between delays action until further information is available to the professor in an effort to make the most fruitful response according to the appropriate context of the classroom, which cannot be known until the encounter.

Buber’s constructs of dialogue, the between, I-It, and I-Thou do not foster incivility. By removing the fuel of incivility, it is weakened. An ongoing commitment to teaching and learning requires the companion of civility when embarking on a quest to resolve the problem of CI. An I-Thou relationship between professors, students, and the content of the course allows for the latter to emerge as Thou, provided that the content is a collaboration between two potential contentious entities, a disrespectful student and a bothersome professor. What emerges within this dialectic has the potential to be more than just a solution to a problem. Rather, the problem of CI dissolves as alliances between educator and students develop naturally as collateral reparation through a

common goal. For instance, in a given class where CI exists, there exists a choice for the professor (and students, but this work focuses the role of the professor). Based on the choice to engage the classroom as a Thou presents an opportunity for infinite possibilities for learning based on a spirit of curiosity and wonder. The professor allows herself to be inspired and transformed by her students as she posits to them to teach through her guidance what there is yet to be known. In this way, incivility is undesirable to the student who wants a voice and inclusion. This approach does not beleaguer the professor with incivility because she is too focused on actively listening for the potential within her students. Being bound to an ethic of Thou protects her teaching despite environmental forces. Civility expands through mutual collaboration between professors and students. When mutual learning transpires in a civil environment, there emerges a collateral delight through a desire to be kind and considerate of the other. Arnett expounds this point in *Dialogic Education*, as he points out that “talking about ideas together forms relationships as by-products” (122). The conversation removes the focus from a perceived problem of incivility and calls both parties to action.

Despite opposing views about the sources of CI among professors and students, a civil Buberian between approach does not engage the other party with a pre-existing answer. Rather, Buber’s between involves more of a question that seeks to find out what is yet to be known. In making the shift from theory to praxis in the classroom, professors and students can ask each other about their perceptions of incivility. When the dialogue emanates from a place of mutual trust, curiosity and a desire to improve the classroom atmosphere, the haze of incivility that resides in its own between state of fear, cynicism, and resentment dissipates. Although the outcome of the dialogue is still unknown, Buber

would suggest that to do nothing is unethical. Not having the conversation about incivility guarantees its continuation.

Buber's construct of the between protects civility in postmodern times as postmodernity's multiplicitous and ambiguous character lacks common ground among its inhabitants. Buber's between complements this lack of common ground as it suspends action until the appropriate time. Delay of action is no denial of it for Buber as he maintains that specific or "responsible" action awaits "the moment [that] steps up to us" (*Between Man and Man* 16, 17). CI that currently impedes teaching and learning serves as a calling upon educators for appropriate action in our historical moment.

Postmodernity poses both danger and opportunity to education in epic proportions as liberty can too easily be licentious if professors do not make an action appropriate to the needs of the students. This is no easy task given the strength of the external forces beyond the control of professors. However, students' needs should not be confused with wants. The conversation surrounding the lack of support from the university often equates students' whims to their needs. Despite these obstacles, professors must be brave and not remain inactive—for if the good stays inactive it is no longer good, it is dead. For Buber, there is no neutrality; neutral states are indecisive, evil, and rotten. Between must be accompanied by action.

Buber's concept of the between is relevant to communicative classroom incivility through his metaphor of a narrow ridge. Incivility is fueled by communicating based on a superiority premise, which is anchored by convictions that one's perception of truth serves as the barometer for all others. Buber's between construct avoids understanding life based on universal axioms. This does not infer that one's ground is not firm. Rather,

Buber's between construct upholds genuine dialogue amidst the mire of polemics and contentious positions. Arnett points out in *Communication and Community* that "narrow ridge" is Buber's "third alternative" and "requires walking the narrow ridge between extreme positions" (30). The between is a dynamic construct that responds appropriately through dialogue. This ontological sensitivity buttresses an active listening inherent of dialogic civility. In *Between Man and Man*, Buber maintains that, "the dialogical situation can be adequately grasped only in an ontological way" (242). Here it becomes "unmistakably clear that it is not the wand of the individual or of the social, but of a third which draws the circle round the happening . . . on the narrow ridge, where I and Thou meet, there is the realm of the between" (Arnett, *Communication and Community* 30). Of importance to this dissertation is this "third alternative" where Arnett maintains "it is possible to remain sensitive to multiple facets of an issue, as one forms an opinion" (30). Such an attitude in the classroom where communicative incivility exists allows professors especially to shift the focus to the third alternative of the narrow ridge neither as a response to incivility, nor in spite of its existence.

To situate I-Thou in the context of the classroom education, Aubrey Hodes' understanding of Martin Buber provides an interesting perspective on teaching that serves as a precursor to the I-Thou philosophy. Hodes maintains that Buber believed "the real teacher . . . teaches most successfully when he is not consciously trying to teach at all, but when he acts spontaneously out of his own life" (136). Buber suggests a shift of focus apart from the self and to the subject matter. Hodes continues that the teacher can gain the student's trust and can encourage the student that "human truth" does in fact exist, and that there is meaning to our existence (136-137). Once the student has gained trust in

his professor, “his resistance against being educated gives way to a singular happening: he accepts the educator as a person. He feels he may trust this man, that this man is taking part in his life, accepting him before desiring to influence him. And so he learns to *ask*” (136-137). This way of teaching with care for the student is indicative of Buber’s I-Thou construct, and is not considered as method of pedagogy as much as it is an attitude.

Hodes begins a conversation about the basic values that undergird Buber’s pedagogical writings. Buber’s discussions of dialogue, the between, I-Thou, and I-It, guided by Buber’s own religious narrative, provide opportunities to access the richness that education holds. A professor can help shape a narrative ethic of civility to guide classroom discourse.

#### Using Narrative Ethic to Shape a Civil Classroom Culture

A culture assumes shared values and maintains a narrative that serves as its ground. According to M.W. Lustig and J. Koester, culture is “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people” (30). A classroom mirrors a culture when a narrative ethic that upholds common values is established. A professor’s goal of establishing a civil classroom becomes a pursuit similar to the challenges one experiences in intercultural communication. Just as one approaches a different culture with no assumed shared values, the goal of finding a common ground becomes paramount. Similarly, professor’s awareness and acceptance of uncertainty with its host classroom-as-culture becomes a roadmap for powerful action with infinite possibilities to create a narrative ethic.

Establishing a classroom narrative ethic begins with a question that invites students to share their narrative with the class. This sharing, which invites students to

discuss their interests, passions, skills, and influences helps professors to first understand what drives their audience, and second, from that knowledge, communicate and teach in ways that are sensitive and appropriate to the students while holding ground as educator. For example, students of the millennial generation are driven by interaction and collaboration (see Figure 1; “Generational Differences Chart”). When asked what drives their interests, students often respond with an unsurprising answer of music, sports, video games and social media. What is surprising is the way in which students relate to these activities, which reveal fascinating insights that help the professor to engage students begin with an I-Thou relationship. Two examples illustrate how students’ relationship with their interests, inform professors about their students narratives. For example, many students in 2014 are passionate about the very popular book series *A Song of Fire and Ice*, which is written concurrently in production with HBO’s series, *Game of Thrones*. One telling aspect of this series is its unprecedented and surprising element of frequently killing off major characters. This points to a value dimension of culture regarding uncertainty avoidance, where the United States culture ranks very low. Uncertainty avoidance raises questions about the likelihood of students’ engagement through unpredictable situations, hence informing professors about resilience to unfamiliar encounters.

Another interesting activity of millennial students is the way in which they engage video games. Instead of defeating preexisting enemies with premade weaponry, such as *Space Invaders* and *Super Mario World*, of previous generations, students in 2014 are *creating* their heroes and arsenal of weapons, as well as interacting with and altering the protagonist’s environment. The environments vary from the extremely hostile, such as

*Grand Theft Auto* to the very innocuous *Fruit Ninja*, which defeats airborne fruit through ninja warfare. Despite the mention of fun and games, the point of this example is to emphasize that most traditional age students have always had amusement accompanying their schoolwork. Professors who suspend judgment of this action can learn from the deeper relationship students have with their environment. This is not to suggest a deconstructive and psychological analysis, but rather to actively listen and learn what is important to students and how they are spending their time. Caring about what interests our students shows a legitimate sensitivity to their world. However, this understanding does not oblige professors to agree or accept what they know. What professors learn about students' interests improves teaching and learning solely based on a mindfulness of the world in which students live.

Finally, how students engage through the use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram reflects students' desire to be personalized but also continuously revise their identities through the feedback of peers. Students' particular use of social media reflects a desire to engage others and a willingness to reinvent themselves through imagination and an appreciation for the continuous creation of applications on the devices that are very much a part of their world.

Technological devices, such as smart phones, i-Pods and tablets reflect the dynamic nature of students. Technological devices frequently reinvent themselves as they re-emerge with new content and practical efficiencies that literally navigate space and time based on feedback of others. Professors who immediately deride the devices, which are so important to students, are fueling CI and run the risk of missing opportunities to learn about a valuable aspect of the students' the world. This is not to say that professors

do not have a say in the presence of technologies in the classroom. Quite the contrary, professors can constructively make use of students' technological reliance and build robust assignments that combine critical thinking with students' interests.

Given the characteristics that describe generations, many professors currently who fall in the Baby Boomer and Generation X generations can be inspired by millennial students' willingness to be reinvented. The kind of ground that Buber describes which anchors one based on a set of beliefs serving as a springboard for action is markedly relevant for students and professors whose ground is unclear. If professors dismiss the creative spirit of their students, professors are dismissing their own ground as a learner, hence, resulting in incivility to themselves as they miss out on learning from students. Freire's additive approach to teaching necessitates students' critical thinking through assignments that combine students' creative potential with the subject matter. To make the connection to civility, classroom activity embeds civility into the assignments where civility hides in plain sight, as the focus of the assignment does not focus on a prescription for civil communication, rather, students' contribution through civil communication as a necessary component to the success of their contribution makes CI an undesirable obstacle to themselves, especially in a class that presumes their valuable input in a way that is both welcoming yet serious.

With a classroom culture, the professor constructs assignments based on three factors. First, the content the professor wants the students to learn must be primary, lest it run the risk of agency and crowd-pleasing. Second, based on active listening of the classroom-culture, the lesson is then built constructively upon the insights into values of the classroom-culture. Third, students are expected to teach the class what they learned in

a way that engages their audience. Assignments like this involve the students in an interactive way that is both educational and interesting. Furthermore, the assignment is structured in a way that makes use of Freire's critical thinking and Buber's I-Thou. Students must reflect on what it is about the relationship of their interests (*pathos*) to the subject matter (*ethos*), which makes students think critically. Next, neither students nor professors have any idea what they will learn until the *pathos* and *ethos* of the students' work come together in a recognizable form involving logical structures (*logos*), which is then presented to the class.

Establishing a shared narrative of civility in the classroom requires a proactive shift in focus from contending with students' inevitable differences to striving to create a common goal. Given that communicative civility is essential and beneficial to teaching and learning, professors' primary goal must be to create a classroom narrative ethic of civility. This way, the primacy of civility eclipses polemics as both professors and students now have a shared goal. The quest for a common ground is similar to goal competency of intercultural communication. For example, in the *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication* Richard L. Wiseman maintains that, "with this shift of focus, the operationalization of culture is not where members were born or the color of their skin, but on the commonalities in and interpretations of their behaviors" (56). Imagining each class as a culture provides various opportunities for professors to work to establish civil communication in the classroom.

Suggesting to professors to embrace the classroom as if it were a culture creates an opportunity to establish a new narrative. Narrative, in its relationship to culture, can provide insight into other's experiences through one's own background. A lack of

common ground provides an opportunity for professors to establish a narrative ethic and hence, a *culture* by which the students are invited and encouraged to learn the rules.

To clarify power dynamics, professors are primarily and consistently the classroom authority. Yet, through mutual understanding and acceptance between professor and students of the class rules, there leaves little room for collective misunderstanding of acceptable and expected communicative behavior. This collective and mutual understanding of appropriate classroom communication fortifies the link between communication and culture. Gudykunst and Kim assert that, “to understand any communication transaction, one must understand the communicators’ sets of beliefs, values, attitudes and norms” (16). By adopting a class as a culture, communication becomes an intercultural communicative event. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a classroom narrative ethic, where the values and norms of the class are clear. Hence, a shared understanding of the rules of the class is the first step of creating a narrative ethic, hence reducing narrative confusion that currently fuels CI.

As narratives shape a culture and ethics, they can serve as a guide for action for both the professor and the students. Narrative ethics help professors to respond to the needs of the historical moment. The context is the classroom, and the ethics serve as a barometer for appropriate communicative behavior for both professor and student. This way, the professor can approach the classroom much like a culture, but not entirely. For example, the difference between a culture and classroom for this study of narrative ethics is the renewal and establishment of a narrative ethic with every new class. Therefore, the narrative ethic is more temporary and situational than a culture that is developed over time with its own history. The historicity of the class is *a priori* through a culmination of

the class participants' narratives. These narratives shape and give flavor to the class. Once established, the narrative ethic of the class serves as a guideline for appropriate communicative behavior. Professors must balance the rigidity and pliability of the communicative ethics with each new class in order to meet the pedagogical needs of the students, while maintaining sensitivity to the postmodern moment and to the generations of students involved.

Engaging the class as a culture is a construct that assumes a certain level of professors' expertise, a willingness to learn, and a profound sense of ground. Based on these informed assumptions, intercultural communication through Freire's construct of additive pedagogy helps professors to avoid "banking" their own ways of teaching. For example, learning the rules of any culture is not unlike learning the rules of a classroom. This approach in embracing the classroom as a culture liberates the professor to set their own standard for rules of conduct, communication, and goals. Just as Freire's approach to pedagogy does not substitute prior knowledge of the student, this dissertation suggests that professors embrace their teaching with an additive sensitivity built upon their own expertise, narrative, and ethics. This additive consideration of one's own teaching displaces the competitive custom of comparing colleagues' teaching practices as a prescriptive measure and barometer for an expected way of teaching. Rather, the additive consideration of pedagogy strives to improve teaching through supporting colleagues with ideas that engage a constructive conversation that upholds a spirit of goodwill based on sharing of ideas through genuine dialogue and narrative discourse. If these constructs of dialogue and additive pedagogy are ideal for teaching, it is imperative that educators reflect their own models of civility through their learning.

On a temporal note, the decisive action of establishing ground and engaging students in the classroom-as-culture must be determined and implemented on the first day of the class. In order to establish ground, the syllabus serves as the classroom contract between professor and students. The syllabus is paramount as it conveys the values of the classroom that shape the classroom culture. These values serve as the ground that anchors appropriate communicative action. Also, a comprehensive knowledge of the subject is *a priori* to teaching the class. Finally, considering different ways of engaging the material and the students through communication determines the success of the class. Teaching often requires *kairotic* sensibility that determines the appropriate use of narrative and lecture. For example, students benefit from Buber's *I-It* in order to learn about the subject. At other times, a dialogic and additive approach, such as Freire's constructs, are necessary to enrich the conversation through dialogue and mutual collaboration.

In developing a classroom culture, an educator works with students to establish a narrative ethic, preferring an ethic that serves to uphold communicative civility. The educator employs the narrative ethic of the class to develop ways in which communicative civility cannot coexist with CI. The educator's use of classroom narrative ethics enables educators to engage their students, and build upon that knowledge in order to invent ways to make incivility undesirable to all parties. Using narrative ethics this way shapes a civil classroom culture.

Buber and Freire's philosophical scholarship drives the content of the narrative element of narrative ethics. Narrative ethics can provide the first crucial treatment to remedying a miscommunication – the antidote of understanding. Understanding begins by recognizing what is important to each party. The latter can only be done through

understanding ethics along relative terms, or within the particular cultural narrative, and through avoiding rigid reasoning.

Johannesen maintains that, “criteria of linear logic, empirical observation, and objective truth are not used to assess communication ethicality in various cultures, religions, and political systems” (229). This rigid kind of reasoning can lead to what Freire refers to as the banking concept of knowledge. This way of educating regards knowledge as a gift “bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire and Macedo 53). Freire rejects the notion of education as an act of depositing information in which the students are the depositories and the instructor is the depositor. Rather, Freire maintains that, “education needs to focus on critical thinkers who are willing to engage in a dialogic educational structure” (55).

According to Buber, “genuine dialogue” exists when “each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them” (*Between Man and Man* 19). The pedagogical and philosophical contributions of Buber and Freire impart ideas about establishing ground as part of the narrative of the classroom. Buber and Freire provide ideas about the importance of establishing ethics as a set of guidelines for professors to engage and educate their students. Ethics also serve as guide for students to follow as well as a way not only to follow, but also to engage in dialogue with peers, the professor, and the content itself.

Freire and Buber’s philosophical insights breathe new life into ideas to help professors to shape a narrative and provide an opportunity for greater understanding and

engagement between professors and students. Establishing a classroom narrative ethic invites professors to use their creative rhetorical faculties in an effort to establish communicative classroom civility that the literature maintains a positive correlation between civil communicative engagement and positive impact on learning. Once a narrative ethic is established, the culture of a classroom emerges.

### Communicating a Narrative Ethic of Civility

Professors may find that shifting their focus from CI to constructive ways of communicating with students in the context of the classroom will improve teaching and learning, further promoting civility between professor and students, as well as students among themselves. Patrick J. Morrissette maintains that despite the attention on CI in higher education, faculty can promote a civil learning environment in their classrooms (“Reducing Incivility” 5).

R.L. Heinemann illustrates ways that civility appears through communication in the classroom. Heinemann suggests the following; that one “(1) use civil language, (2) maintain inclusive attitudes, (3) teach the language of disagreement, (4) respectfully listen to students, and (5) serve as role models for respect and understanding” (n.p.). Heinemann’s suggestions point to qualities that establish a civil classroom narrative. Although narrative requires mutual trust between professors and students, the professor is responsible for setting the tone of the class through their own communicative civility.

In addition to Heinemann’s suggestions, this work argues that civility also involves professors’ care for their students’ wellbeing and learning. This care is what Clifford Mayes refers to as “ontological care,” and maintains that the care must not just involve feelings. Mayes maintains that, “if caring is to yield good fruit, then it must

involve caring not only *for someone* but also *about something*. . . . Without some sort of orienting purpose regarding what the Other may become or do, care may *feel* good, but one may question whether it will always *do* good” (703). This informed care that anchors civility is part of a greater conversation surrounding the importance and necessity for civility.

Communicative civility promotes teaching and learning in classroom exchanges. The challenge to professors is to determine how to establish, promote and uphold communicative civility. There exists little doubt that establishing an ethic of civility among increasingly diverse students and faculty is an arduous task. Although the postmodern moment can assume little to no pre-existing common ground, there exists the greatest opportunity for creating a narrative ethic. The richness of the concurrent diverse and multiple voices can create a classroom that is a masterpiece or a disaster.

Each classroom takes on its own culture. Because each new semester brings a class with its own varied narratives, the communicative classroom dynamic resembles an intercultural communicative event. Implementing a narrative ethic of civility first begins with the professor’s establishment of ground. In a postmodern society, ground is essential as it serves as a starting point for appropriate action based on the knowledge of where one stands.

The premise of classroom as a culture postulates that communication problems that exist in the classroom are, in fact, intercultural communication problems, such as divergences in uncertainty avoidance, gender communicative roles and lack of agreement about communicative power distance between professor and students. Understanding the problem of CI means recognizing it as a matter of intercultural communication.

### Monitoring Narrative Shifts

For example, civility in the classroom requires that the professor and students respond appropriately and communicatively between people through dialogue.

Mindfulness and an appreciation for students' narratives vis-à-vis their potential contribution to the goals of the class serves as the guide for communicative action.

In order to consider how a central narrative of civility improves teaching and learning, professors can point to questions that relate to fairness, appropriateness, setbacks, achievements, and surprises in their classrooms at the end of each semester. These questions drive the professor to renew their ground and ways to improve their teaching for future classes. This pedagogical renewal requires reflection, revision, and, possibly, reinvention of a new narrative ethic. Such mindfulness places teaching and learning at a greater good than a professor's ego. When considering the goal of teaching and learning, the questions of evaluation are best served from a place of constructive learning. One need only point to Freire's additive pedagogy in order to justify this approach.

Some questions professors may engage in self-reflection on the dialogic quality of the class. Such questions may include: (1) What is my narrative ethic? (2) How did I teach according to my narrative ethic? (3) How did I learn from my students? (4) How clearly and fairly to students was my grading rubric explained? (5) Based on the agreed culture of the classroom, how were students' encounters relevant to the content of the class? (6) How did I handle setbacks or unforeseeable successes? After considering these reflective questions, consideration for revising the previous ground shows pedagogical

renewal. These questions help professors to think about and articulate to themselves, as well as to students, their pedagogical philosophy or mission statement.

A mission statement also clarifies goals that professors have in mind for finding students' potential. A professor's humble spirit to find authentic responses to the aforementioned questions points to and exemplifies professional and personal responsibility to improve teaching and learning. If professors continuously and consistently model to students their expected classroom communicative ethic through their own communicative classroom civility, then the expectations of upholding civility is embedded in the culture of the classroom and does not require frequent reminders. Once the communicative expectations are understood, civility is no longer the goal of the class, as civility becomes as necessary as speaking English as the common language. This civility expectation does not suggest turning a blind eye toward student misbehavior, nor to ever publicly humiliate the student personally. Rather, through shared agreement about expectations from the beginning of class, consequences to misbehavior become a natural manifestation that displaces blaming to growing.

Mistakes redefined as lessons learned thwarts the accountability of the consequence from the onus of the professor who does not take the offense personally but rather remains committed to encouraging students to return to the track of appropriate communicative civility. This impersonal but firm rebuking of students' misbehavior saves face and protects students from humiliation. Saving face is crucial to upholding civility, but should not be confused with passivity. Just as appropriate classroom communication must be made explicit to students, misbehaviors must be made known and just as collectively undesirable. When professors are explicit about collective

consequences to students' misbehaviors from the inception of the class, collective action often manages incivility naturally. Therefore, if the student is texting during class, her interruption of other students and sinking grade will be the consequence of her own inaction to follow the rules. Like a collective culture, one student affects all members of the group. Therefore, the student whose misbehavior affects the group will be discouraged from disparaging herself from communicating in ways that collectively oppress the classroom culture.

### Conclusion

This chapter first examined the role of narrative. Next, a narrative ethic that upholds civility within the context of the classroom denotes a positive correlation between teaching and learning, especially in a postmodern society. The contributions of Freire and Buber's central ideas help to shape narrative ethic that upholds a civil classroom.

Freire and Buber faced disappointment by their environment but never wavered from their convictions about education. Despite external forces involving political and social upheaval at national and international levels, Freire remained firm in his commitment to the pedagogical needs of his students. Buber, who was at odds with his own people over the political discord affecting the peoples of Zion, never strayed from dialogic civility with political leaders involved in the establishment of the political State of Israel in 1948. Professors may be encouraged by Freire's commitment to education despite imprisonment and deportation and by Buber's unwavering and prophetic concern for the polemics surrounding the people of Zion. In fact, the two persisted in teaching and learning, engaging in dialogue and refraining from communicative incivility that would

have diminished their ability to attain their goals. The pedagogical contributions Freire and Buber have made bring attention to the oppressive and liberating qualities of communication.

Monitoring inevitable narrative shifts within the classroom is germane to upholding civility. A narrative of civility will change throughout the term as relationships develop between classroom participants and shifts occur in the class. Upholding communicative classroom civility is not just a response to CI, civil communication provides an opportunity to renew teaching and learning in creative and effective ways that are appropriate to the needs of students' learning within a given context and historical moment. Educators, and hopefully all, who claim to support teaching and learning must remain committed in their roles as educators and teach in a way as to assuage communicative classroom incivilities, which are undermining not only education but also the very fabric of the United States.

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