

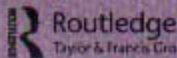


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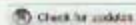
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In the thresholds of scholarly transition

Deanna P. Dannels

Department of Communication, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA

"Commit, mom. Come on. You've just got to commit."

It felt like time had stopped. My heart was pounding. A bead of sweat rolled down my face. My arms were shaking. I looked up to the bright yellow plastic rock climbing hold on the wall above me. This was the one I was supposed to reach for. There it was: right in front of me. Right there. But I would have to let go of where I was—comfortably steady with all appendages firmly placed on other holds—to reach up and grab it. I could not move.

"Take a risk, mom. Don't hesitate. You're already on the wall. Move. Commit!"

"Breathe, Deanna," I whispered to myself, "you've got this."

"Mom ... come on. Remember what you always say: Stay humble. Stay hopeful. Climb happy. ... Oh come on ... COMMIT!"

My 14-year-old daughter is a nationally competitive rock climber. I am afraid of heights. How is that for irony? Yes, I am working on it. And as the above experience shows, she is working on me. And she is good at it. For every climbing competition, I tell her (and hashtag when I post on social media): "Stay humble, stay hopeful, climb happy." Darn her for turning that back on me, in my moment of complete fear.

The moment

I remember clearly the exact juncture when I realized I had the reigns as the editor of *Communication Education*. There was a moment, in between reading Jon Hess' transition email to the editorial board and the flurry of journal-related action items that appeared in my inbox, where it felt like time had stopped and I could not move. Not a second later, everything was back to its normal, high-speed pace. In that single moment, though, when time was stopped, I was absolutely paralyzed with awe and fear and honor, all at once.

The backstory

On the top row of my office there is a wall-length shelf. On that shelf stands every issue of *Communication Education* dating back to January, 1952: Volume 1, Issue 1. Yes, you read that correctly. Thanks to retired faculty mentors at my alma mater, I own hard copies of every issue of this journal, predating my birth. I submitted my first journal article to



Navigating instructional dialectics: empirical exploration of paradox in teaching

Blair Thompson^a, C. Kyle Rudick^b, Jeff Kerssen-Griep^c and Kathryn Golsan^b

^aDepartment of Communication, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA; ^bDepartment of Communication Studies, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, USA; ^cDepartment of Communication Studies, University of Portland, Portland, OR, USA

ABSTRACT

Navigating contradiction represents an integral part of the teaching process. While educational literature has discussed the paradoxes that teachers experience in the classroom, minimal empirical research has analyzed the strategies teachers employ to address these paradoxes. Using relational dialectics as a theoretical framework for understanding paradoxes in teaching, we analyzed extensive interview data from 19 postsecondary instructors regarding the learning-oriented dialectics teachers experience and navigate. Findings here extend dialectics into a new instructional context by identifying three supradialectics these teachers experienced, as well as the strategies they report using to assist student learning in light of those dialectics. Subsequent analysis illustrates the dialectic nature of teacher strategies used in the classroom, offering insight into how teachers navigate dialectic tensions daily in the classroom. Further, this study provides researchers theoretical knowledge and evidence regarding how dialectic tensions and strategies function differently across communication contexts.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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Dialectic theory; dialectic strategies; teacher paradox; contradiction; instruction

What I find in these texts is an alternative account of classroom communication. The challenges identified are excruciatingly complex. These teachers are trying to pay attention simultaneously to the needs of individuals and groups, to fairness to self and other, and to the demands of the present and the future. They engage in sending and receiving messages while at the same moment carrying on inner dialogue. The solutions they offer are at best partial and temporary balances of conflicting demands. Even “when teaching works,” these teachers are plagued with second thoughts and loose ends to contemplate.—Sprague (1993b, pp. 350–351)

Sprague’s (1993b) words in the introduction to the special issue of *Communication Education* featuring “docustories” from distinguished teachers encapsulated the complex nature of the teaching process riddled with daily communication challenges. Part of this complexity stems from the often-paradoxical nature of teacher–student communication, which presents teachers with potentially contradictory goals in the classroom (Michalec, 2002; Palmer, 1998). For example, pedagogues have suggested teachers balance focusing on each student while addressing the needs of the class as a whole (Day, 2002; Johnson &

CONTACT Blair Thompson  blair.thompson@wku.edu  Department of Communication, Western Kentucky University, Fine Arts Center Rm. 147, 1906 College Heights Blvd, Bowling Green, KY, USA

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