

The
Pennsylvania
Scholars Series

Gerald M. Phillips

Introduction

.....Dennis S. Gouran

The Great Equalizer: Gerald M. Phillips's Contributions to the Study and Treatment of Reticence

.....Lynne Kelly and James A. Keaten

Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to Interpersonal Communication Studies

.....Janie M. Harden Fritz

The Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to the Study and Practice of Communication in Groups

.....Dennis S. Gouran

The Organization According to Phillips: A Rhetorical Perspective

.....Nancy J. Wyatt

Confessions of a Born-Again Humanist or How Jerry Phillips Influenced My Academic Career

.....Gerald M. Santoro

Communication's Last Renaissance Man

*Published by
The Pennsylvania Communication Association*

THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1939

PCA is dedicated to the research in, ethical use of, and education for excellent oral communication in every human activity, especially those in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Specifically, its members seek to: (1) Encourage recognition of speech communication and its partner system, listening, as an inherent part of basic human skill; (2) Advocate education in competent speaking and listening through the adoption of at least one required course in oral communication in all Commonwealth school districts and institutions of higher learning; (3) Encourage competent oral communication and listening across the curriculum in all class activities; (4) Encourage people to participate in co-curricular activities that develop speaking and listening skills; (5) Recognize communication as an integral and on-going process in the business and organizational world; (6) Promote literacy in the performance in and critique of competent mass communication; (7) Further recognition of the artistic merits and human growth potential of various performance settings that utilize oral communication; (8) Train all citizens in critical thinking and effective communication of their ideas; (9) Encourage scholarship in and publication of results that investigate various aspects of human interaction; (10) Communicate emerging or on-going concerns regarding speaking and listening in its various settings to decision-makers in government, organizations, business, and the arts.

-Article II, By-Laws of the Pennsylvania Communication Association

OFFICERS

President

John Lawson
Robert Morris University

Vice President

Ann Jabro
Robert Morris University

Past President

Grace Coleman
Crisis Center North

Second Vice President

Ed Arke
Messiah College

Treasurer

Terrie Baumgardner
Penn State Beaver

Editor, *Communication Annual*

John Chapin
Penn State Beaver

Member at Large

Kelley Crowley
Duquesne University

Executive Secretary

Todd Allen
Geneva College

Member at Large

André Moine
Millersville University

Editor, *PA Scholars*

Ann Jabro
Robert Morris University

The Pennsylvania Scholars Series
Published by The Pennsylvania Communication
Association

Gerald M. Phillips

Introduction

Dennis S. Gouran 1

The Great Equalizer: Gerald M. Phillips's Contributions to the Study and Treatment of Reticence
Lynne Kelly and James A. Keaten 6

Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to Interpersonal Communication Studies
Janie M. Harden Fritz 27

The Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to the Study and Practice of Communication in Groups
Dennis S. Gouran 50

The Organization According to Phillips: A Rhetorical Perspective
Nancy J. Wyatt 68

Confessions of a Born-Again Humanist or How Jerry Phillips Influenced My Academic Career
Gerald M. Santoro 98

Communication's Last Renaissance Man

Editor

Dennis S. Gouran
The Pennsylvania State University

Managing Editor

Ann Jabro
Robert Morris University

Editorial Assistants

Eric Grabowsky
Duquesne University

COPY DISTRIBUTION INFORMATION

Copies of issues from the Pennsylvania Scholars Series are distributed to members of The Pennsylvania Communication Association, Inc. The price per copy for non-members is \$35.00. All business correspondence regarding membership, payment of fees, and matters pertaining to the Pennsylvania Communication Association should be addressed to the Treasurer: Terrie Baumgardner, Penn State Beaver, 100 University Drive, Monaca, PA 15061, 724-773-3861, tbm2@psu.edu

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

The PA Scholars Series as published is the property of The Pennsylvania Communication Association, Inc. The right of reproduction of its contents is expressly reserved by the Association. The Association waives the requirement of permission in the case of fair use of brief quotations for scholarly purposes and criticism, requesting only that appropriate credit be given for each quotation. Persons and publishers wishing to reproduce articles should contact the Editor for specific permission.

Copyright© 2005 by The Pennsylvania Communication Association, Inc.
All rights reserved.

Dennis S. Gouran

Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
and Labor Studies and Industrial Relations

The Pennsylvania State University

The essays in this volume are reflections on the storied Penn State career of Gerald M. Phillips. Recipient of a Ph.D. degree from Case Western Reserve University (then Western Reserve University) in the 1950s, Professor Phillips spent the first several years of his career as a member of the faculty at Washington State University before coming to Penn State in the 1960s. It was during his more than twenty-five years at Penn State that he developed the breadth of interests and corpus of scholarship that are the subjects of the essays in this the third volume published by the Pennsylvania Communication Association commemorating the contributions of Pennsylvania Scholars in Communication.

Contributing to the volume are four of Professor Phillips's former graduate students and advisees, Lynn Kelly, James A. Keaten, Nancy J. Wyatt, and Gerald M. Santoro, the first three of whom all received the Ph.D. degree in Speech Communication from The Pennsylvania State University, and the latter of whom earned his degree in the University's Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities. Also contributing to the volume are Janie Harden Fritz and I, neither of whom was a student of Professor Phillips, but both of whom became intimately acquainted over the years with his work, as well as its impact, in our respective areas of specialty.

Lynne Kelly is Professor of Communication at The University of Hartford. She and James A. Keaten, Professor of Communication at The University of Northern Colorado, are co-authors of the essay acknowledging Professor Phillips's contributions to the study and treatment of reticence. Both have themselves done extensive research relating to the subject.

Nancy J. Wyatt, a noted Feminist scholar in Organizational and Group Communication, is Associate Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at the Delaware County Campus in the University College of The Pennsylvania State University. She is responsible for the essay relating to Professor Phillips's scholarship in the area of Organizational Communication and the uniquely rhetorical perspective that he brought to

its study. Professor Wyatt also worked closely with Professor Phillips on what turned out to be his major contribution to the area in the form of a massive communication audit of the Farmers Home Administration in the early 1980s.

Gerald M. Santoro, long-time Manager of Penn State's Microcomputer Information and Support Center, has an appointment as an Affiliate Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences and also holds rank as an Assistant Professor in the School of Information Sciences and Technology. Professor Santoro, an expert in computer technology, as applied to problems in Communication Education and college-level teaching more broadly, was instrumental in the design of an online introductory course in Group Communication, which Professor Phillips inspired, and provided vital technical assistance in its development. The focus of his essay is Gerald Phillips as teacher and mentor.

Janie Harden Fritz, a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is Associate Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University. She combines interests in both Rhetoric and Interpersonal Communication, which makes her a fitting individual to assess Professor Phillips's contributions to the study of Interpersonal Communication, which he also undertook from a distinctly rhetorical point of view. That is the focus of her essay in this volume.

Finally, I am Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences and Labor Studies and Industrial Relations at The Pennsylvania State University. My Ph.D. degree is from The University of Iowa, where I first developed an interest in Group Communication, the area of specialty I have since pursued throughout my professional career. Professor Phillips and I shared concerns about communication as the proper focus of group process, both in respect to scholar inquiry and what we as a discipline should be providing in the way of instruction to help students become more adept at learning how to function in introductory courses in Group Communication. I deal with his contributions to this area of study.

The articles in this volume have a deliberate order, which moves the reader from Professor Phillips's concern with reticence, an individual-level phenomenon, progressively into the more elaborate contexts of dyads, groups, and organizations as settings in which communication occurs, and then to an examination of the man as a teacher, as a concern with instruction was central to virtually everything he wrote concerning communication relating to the four areas above. If not apparent at the outset, the logic of this order, I hope, will be by the time the reader completes the volume. Recognizing, however, that some readers may be more interested in some

areas and topics than others, I should note that the five pieces that comprise the volume do not necessitate perusal in the order of arrangement in the Table of Contents. Were they to, my suspicion is that Professor Phillips, would not have approved on the grounds that such patterning is constraining, which would be antithetical to the sort of liberating force, if not iconoclast, he always sought to be.

In their article, Professors Kelly and Keaten trace the evolution of Professor Phillips's work with the concept of reticence as a communication problem common to many people in our society. Guided by an impulse to provide assistance that could enable such individuals to cope more successfully with, if not overcome, their inhibitions in various types of communicative situations, Professor Phillips developed a sustained interest in the etiology of reticence, studied it throughout most of his career, and was the pioneer of a highly successful treatment program that continues to have positive value for large numbers of students who take part in it and others for which it served as an archetype. Professors Kelly and Keaten provide the details of this historical odyssey.

Professor Harden Fritz, in discussing Professor Phillips's contributions to Interpersonal Communication and, thereby, illuminating another facet of this Renaissance Man's diversity of interests, concentrates on revealing the rhetorical foundations for much of his thinking about the subject and what he had to say about it in his assorted publications. Although she sees the promise of his approach not fully realized in respect to its impact on scholarly inquiry, Professor Harden Fritz makes a compelling case for its having had enduring influence at a pedagogical level. She explores a variety of reasons for this seeming discontinuity and offers some thoughts concerning how scholarly interest in the rhetorical approach might be rekindled, especially if combined in particular respects with narrative theory and analysis.

Concentrating on Professor Phillips's collected writings in the area of Group Communication, in my article, I identify four interrelated contributions to scholarship and teaching: his development of "The Standard Agenda"; his accent on communicative acts as critical determinants of the outcomes that decision-making and problem-solving groups achieve; his wedding of improvement in individual and group performance to the development of communicative skills; and his efforts to develop pedagogical competence among those who provide instruction to students in introductory courses. Although not as prolific in his publications relating to Group Communication as he was in regard to reticence, Professor Phillips nevertheless produced a body of work that had, and continues to have, impact on how many of us think and teach in the area, and for which, I contend, he

clearly deserves appropriate recognition.

Following along lines similar to those in Professor Harden Fritz's essay, Professor Wyatt focuses on Professor Phillip's rhetorical perspective on Organizational Communication. In so doing, she recognizes that his total list of publications relating to this subfield in the discipline was small. That is not to suggest, however, that his contribution was insignificant. On the contrary, by contrasting how Professor Phillips went about conducting a communication audit of the Farmers Home Administration in terms of a methodology based in principles deriving from Classical Rhetorical Theory with how those conducting such an audit using the International Communication Association Model, Professor Wyatt establishes that the former yielded a substantially richer fund of knowledge and, more importantly, led to deeper levels of understanding of the communication problems of the organization in question than would have been possible with the methods associated with the latter. The message in respect to Professor Phillips's contributions to Organizational Communication is clear. He showed us how to study communication in organizations in a manner that yields the sorts of clear and fruitful insights at which scholarly inquiry aims, and that other methods are apt to fall short in providing.

The final item in this volume is the piece that Professor Santoro prepared. Unlike the others his document is not an examination of Professor Phillips's writings. Rather, it is more a personal memoir of a special relationship that Professor Santoro developed during his years of association with his mentor, advisor, co-author, and friend. In discussing this relationship, he does not, however, indulge in the kind of unrestrained sentimentality in which those paying tribute to another frequently do. Professor Phillips undoubtedly would have found that something to anathematize. Rather, Professor Santoro, in his reconstruction of his relationship with Professor Phillips, highlights various aspects of his [Phillips's] philosophy of teaching, his efforts to engage the intellect of his students, and his respect for that which is imaginative, but also usefully creative. The reader completes the article with a greater sense of who Professor Phillips, as teacher, was and some of the many different ways in which he fostered the development of those students to whom he was personally most close.

As is appropriate to a volume acknowledging a person's scholarly and professional accomplishments and paying tribute to him or her, the spotlight in this one is clearly, and almost exclusively, on Professor Phillips. However, to leave unacknowledged a person who probably had more impact on Professor Phillips than any of us will ever know and who was a continual source of inspiration and comfort to him would, in my judgment,

be an egregious oversight. Hence, it is to his lifelong companion, spouse, and best friend, Nancy Phillips, that this volume is most respectfully and affectionately dedicated.

The Great Equalizer: Gerald M. Phillips's Contributions
to the Study and Treatment of Reticence

Lynne Kelly

Professor of Communication

The University of Hartford

James A. Keaten

Professor of Communication

The University of Northern Colorado

Introduction

The year was 1965. Gerald M. Phillips, Professor of Speech Communication at The Pennsylvania State University, launched a pilot program called "Option D" (or the Reticence Program) to help students overcome communication problems and fears. That same year, he published his first article concerning the communication avoidance problem he called "reticence," which provided the foundation for what has become the most studied construct in the communication discipline: communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970, 1997). Prior to Phillips's groundbreaking work, scholars in Speech Communication had focused exclusively on anxiety and avoidance problems confined to public speaking. Phillips's insight that people's communication problems extended to many situations generated interest among scholars and spawned cognate constructs, such as communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970) and unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), as well as initiated a central research tradition in the discipline.

Unlike most communication scholars who subsequently studied communication anxiety and avoidance problems, Phillips devoted much of his energy to devising a program to help reticent individuals because he believed that, "Orality is much closer to the way we live our lives than literacy," and that, "Society needs the services of all its citizens" (Phillips, 1990). He argued passionately that, "There really is a correlation between democracy and speech skills." In an interview with the first author, Phillips (personal communication, April, 1977) stated:

It's like this: the way the world is there are a lot of people who are sad and lonely and alienated. I see myself as a Great Equalizer. Aristotle says that if all ideas are given an equal hearing, good and justice will triumph over their opposites. If twenty-five percent of the people aren't giving their ideas because they are too shy, then all ideas aren't getting an equal hearing. Our job is to equalize.

From this commitment to helping the reticent individual grew Option D, perhaps in many ways the more important of the two contributions Gerald M. Phillips made in his work in the area. In this essay, we first discuss Phillips's view of reticence and then the Option D program. In doing so, we trace their development and highlight their significance in the field of communication.

Evolution of the Reticence Construct

The trouble with Phillips, according to Phillips, is that Phillips often changes his mind Strangely enough, this was intentional behavior by Phillips. He meant to disagree with himself (Phillips, 1980, p. 105).

Starting this section with the quotation above serves two purposes. First, it provides the reader with a glimpse into Gerald Phillips the person—enigmatic, humorous, and blunt. Second, it serves as a warning for those looking for a single sentence that encapsulates his thinking regarding reticence. In fact, the only consistent theme in Phillips's writing concerning reticence is his sincere desire to help people who suffer from communication problems. The reticence construct did not evolve haphazardly, however; Phillips continually refined it to reflect improvements he made in his approach to treatment. That is, his understanding of what reticence is and how to approach it grew as he observed what techniques worked to help reticent students.

Phillips's Early Approach to Reticence

Forty years ago, Gerald M. Phillips published the first article relating to a communication avoidance problem he referred to as "reticence." Drawing on a definition in the *American College Encyclopedic Dictionary*, he described reticence as "Avoidance of social, verbal interaction. Unwillingness to communicate unless prodded; disposed to be silent; not inclined to speak freely; reserved" (Phillips, 1965, p. 24). In his early thinking about the subject, Phillips drew heavily from Szasz's game theory (Phillips, 1965; Phillips &

Butt, 1966). Often, Phillips (1965) discussed the rules for the game of communication and contextualized reticent behavior as a way of handling the challenges of a social game: “[T]he chronically reticent may have adopted a permanent game behavior because of inability to cope with felt or projected values in the group around him” (p. 29). Phillips also framed the task of teaching public speaking as a game: “The job of teaching speech can be viewed as a formal game with specific moves All of his [the student’s] performing, reading, listening, responding is done in the game format” (Phillips & Butt, 1966, pp. 40-41). By adopting the game metaphor, Phillips conceived of reticence as a pattern of purposeful and goal-driven behavior couched within the framework of social rules and expectations.

In a 1968 article in *Speech Monographs*, Phillips moved away from a dictionary definition of reticence and generated his own definition: “a person for whom anxiety about participation in oral communication outweighs his projection of gain from the situation” (p. 40). Of note in this early definition of reticence was the centrality of anxiety. Phillips characterized reticence as a speech-personality disorder in which communication avoidance is both deliberate and calculated (i.e., anxiety is compared to potential gain in a social situation). After examining the diary reports of 198 reticent students, Phillips reported nine findings:

1. Reticent individuals experienced shakiness that interfered with classroom participation and public performances.
2. Reticent individuals experienced anxiety during public speaking. Phillips stated that “normal” students experience anxiety *before* a speech but “their symptoms tended to disappear during the act of speaking” (p. 41).
3. Reticent individuals broke off communication with someone abruptly because of anxiety.
4. Reticent individuals possess an inability to communicate with authority figures (e.g., teachers or counselors).
5. Others (parents or teachers) made explicit reference to the reticent person’s communication difficulties.
6. Reticent individuals viewed themselves as excessively quiet and “saw themselves consistently on the fringes of social gatherings” (p. 41).
7. Reticent individuals were excessively apologetic when their ideas were questioned and “interpreted questions about content of communication as personal criticisms” (p. 41).
8. Reticent individuals “preferred to communicate in writing where possible” (p. 41)

9. Reticent individuals were unable to talk with their parents, and many parents of reticent individuals voiced the concern, “You never talk things over with me” (p. 42).

Three years after his initial publication in 1965, Phillips (1968) had developed a unique definition of reticence based on his experiences and started the process of identifying pertinent indicators. In addition to a definition and indicators, he also initiated a discussion of the etiology of reticence. He speculated that reticence, in part, may derive from the value placed on silence in elementary education.

Much of practical elementary school pedagogy is concerned with maintaining silence at the right time. The tendency to regard quietness as a virtue instead of a convenience and to reward it accordingly tends to support reticent patterns adopted in childhood. (p. 46)

Phillips also noted both psychological causes of reticence (i.e., schizophrenia, emotional disturbances, etc.) and environmental causes, such as living in an abusive home, a family environment in which talk is devalued, or a predisposition to view talk negatively (e.g., conceiving of speech as “an aggressive weapon” [p. 47]).

In an article with Nancy Metzger in 1973, Phillips advanced an explicitly economic conceptualization of reticence, a condition in which “an individual’s perception of what he can gain through participation with others in general is outweighed by his perception of projected losses, and thus, he deems it in his best interest not to participate” (p. 222). As may be evident by its absence in this definition, anxiety was no longer central to the reticence construct (c.f., Phillips, 1968). Phillips and Metzger (1973) also proposed several correlates, possibly causes or predisposing influences, that could illuminate the development of reticence: (1) neurotic behavior (e.g., depression and obsessive compulsive tendencies), (2) schizophrenia, (3) stuttering, (4) stage fright, (5) physiological problems (e.g., endocrine malfunction), (5) learning problems (e.g., misperception of the communication cues of others), (6) marginality (e.g., individuals placed within an unfamiliar situation fraught with unknown communication expectations), and (7) self-perception (e.g., feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem). Although speech pathology was in the picture, it did not appear to show much relevance to the problem of reticence.

The Shift to a Focus on Skill Inadequacies

In the latter part of the 1970s, a major shift in the thinking regarding reticence occurred. In particular, Phillips turned away from his conception of reticence as the product of an anxiety-based problem and began to focus on communication inadequacies. In particular, he came to view anxiety as the *effect* of reticence rather than its *cause* (Phillips, 1977): “Emotions are responses to self perception, not causes of it” (p. 36). The view of feelings as a consequence of communication inadequacies rather than the cause became one of the distinguishing characteristics of the reticence construct.

Phillips (1977) also expressed a growing concern about speech teachers who adopted a medical model when helping students with communication difficulties (c.f., Phillips & Metzger, 1973). In fact, he made a point of distinguishing between the role of a speech teacher, whose domain is rhetorical principles, and the role of a psychiatrist, who focuses on disease and treatment: “To the psychiatrist, the person who cannot speak and who displays such symptoms [of anxiety disorder] is diagnosed as a ‘stagefright’ victim, and the treatment is usually pharmacological and clearly not in the province of the speech teacher” (p. 36). Nearly three decades later, the role of the speech instructor in addressing anxiety associated with public speaking remains an unresolved issue in the communication field.

By the end of the 1970s, Phillips had developed a standardized list of communication problems that characterized reticence. As evident from the following indicators of reticence, the focus was on people’s communicative ability (or lack thereof) rather than their emotional states: (1) inability to initiate conversations or engage in small talk, (2) inability to maintain conversations, (3) inability to offer relevant remarks in a discussion, (4) inability to answer questions in a classroom or job situation, (5) inability to phrase or time answers, and (6) inability to deliver a complete message. When an individual persistently experiences the negative consequences associated with such behavior, he or she develops the tendency to withdraw from communicating. In essence, reticent individuals choose silence because of their inability to initiate and maintain conversations, as well as their inability to speak to authority figures, and other such communication deficits.

Phillips (1980, 1990) provided a candid self-evaluation of his work on reticence. He openly, and perhaps proudly, acknowledged the contradictions in his writings. When asked about his view of ways in which the construct had changed, Phillips (1990), chuckling, replied: “I was right to begin with and then I was wrong and I hope I’m right now!” His 1980 article also provided a rare glimpse into Phillips’s view of himself. For example, he saw himself as an engineer who tinkers rather than a scientist who seeks to

reveal truth. Writing in third-person, he explained, “Thus Phillips claims to be a tinker. When he generates something that works properly, he brags about being an engineer. But he is not a scientist” (p. 106). In essence, Phillips viewed himself not as an intellectual, but as a pragmatist; he did what worked. Theoretical development was not an impetus for the student of reticence. Instead, his purpose was to help people who have communication problems they rather would not. As he stated, in response, “Rhetoritherapists [Phillips included] are not interested in what the problem [cause] *is*, but rather, what does it look like and what can be done about it?” (p. 107).

His emphasis on helping students and improving pedagogy became a consistent theme throughout Phillips’s later works. In a symposium in *Communication Education*, Phillips (1982) made this point forcefully in his challenge to speech teachers: “Declare independence from the research establishment and examine communication problems through observing behaviors amenable to pedagogical solutions” (p. 181). Developing a theoretical framework was no longer a driving force in Phillips’s research agenda (cf., Phillips 1965, 1968). In fact, he increasingly expressed skepticism regarding the academic process of conceptualization: “Designations like ‘apprehension’ [and reticence] appear to be notations of convenience. They do not describe observable behaviors nor do they demand particular treatment methods” (p. 181). His distrust of labeling individuals as shy, reticent, apprehensive became another consistent theme in his published works (see Phillips, 1991). Phillips’s disdain for labeling people and for a social scientific approach to such communication problems as reticence began with what he referred to as “The Phillips-McCroskey feud,” which reportedly was “famous across the land” and which “is something that we have carefully cultivated and sustained for 25 years” (Phillips, 1990).

The Addition of Reticent Beliefs

In the 1980s, Phillips added yet another aspect to his thinking by examining the cognitive dimension of reticence. Specifically, he identified several “myths” reticent individuals hold that serve to legitimize their avoidance of communication. “Virtually all of the reticent people who have participated in our program have expressed the following beliefs” (Phillips, 1986, p. 359). Kelly, Keaten, and Finch (1996) identified and summarized them in the following way:

1. *An exaggerated sense of self-importance.* Phillips claimed that: “Reticent people tend to see themselves as potentially more important to others than the others see them” (Phillips & Metzger, 1973, p. 14), a tendency he later

- labeled “egocentrism” (Phillips, 1991).
2. *Effective speakers are born, not made.* Reticent people believe that effective speakers, unlike themselves, are born with a “gift” (Kelly, Phillips, & Keaten, 1995; Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1997). Moreover, reticent individuals envy those they perceive to be effective speakers and accept their own failure as unavoidable (Phillips, 1984). To complicate matters further, reticents often select media personalities as role models. Selecting such individuals strengthens reticent individuals’ believe in inevitable failure.
 3. *Skillful speaking is manipulative.* Reticent speakers believe that using speech strategically (i.e., to persuade) is unethical (Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1997). Often, they use ethics as an excuse to avoid training: “Reticent speakers tend to believe in a linear system of influence. They suspect that some people have a ‘formula’ of proper phrases and expression that invariably ‘cause’ behavior in others. Reticents excuse their own failures on the grounds that they do not know the system and, furthermore, it would be unethical to learn it” (Phillips, 1984, p. 54).
 4. *Speaking is not important.* Reticents believe that most people talk too much, as well as that small talk is superficial and a waste of time (Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1997). However, as Phillips (1991) argued: “Social foreplay is carried out through small talk Shy people, especially, are so concerned about their own comfort and convenience that they seem unable to understand the necessity to provide quid pro quo to sustain the transaction of social business” (p. 45). Although reticence serves as a defense against negative social evaluation, devaluing communication might also be a form of passive aggression: “Ordinary people may engage in trivial talk, but I am above all that.”
 5. *I can speak whenever I want to.* Reticents claim they can speak when they want to, but they often choose not to. This belief may be the most common reason for nonparticipation (Phillips, 1986). Reticents overemphasize the role of effective listening because of the belief that most people talk too much anyway (Phillips, 1984, 1986). They see themselves as effective listeners, but they usually are not (Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1997). “Most are locked in their speculative fantasies while other people are talking” (Phillips, 1984, p. 55). Reticent speakers are able to imagine situations in which speech may be important, and they are convinced that when and if they encounter such situations, they will be able to cope with them.
 6. *It is better to be quiet and let people think you are a fool than prove it by talking.* Reticents tend to believe that others pay a great deal of attention to them. They overestimate, however, the amount of attention other people actually give to them. Reticent individuals are convinced they are inept com-

municators and, hence, fear the reactions of others (Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1997). Reticents are caught in a self-constructed double-bind—either remain silent and receive a negative evaluation, or break the silence and prove their communication inadequacy.

7. *What is wrong with me requires a cure.* Reticents think of themselves as victims of fate (i.e., innately incompetent) and are prone not to accept responsibility for changing themselves. As Phillips (1984) observed, reticents “regard their own disability as a disease, and they seek some form of applied treatment to obtain relief” (p. 56). Many who enroll in the rhetoritherapy program offered at Penn State are initially resistant because the program does not offer a quick cure (Phillips, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1997).

From Reticence to Communication Incompetencies

In a comprehensive refinement of the reticence construct, Phillips (1991) acknowledged the difficulty of defining and distinguishing among terms like reticence, shyness, and incompetence. He originally chose the term “reticence” because of its neutral connotations, but by the early 1990s, he felt that “reticence” had lost its neutrality, so he opted to begin using the phrase “communication incompetence” to refer to the condition about which he was concerned. In so doing, he reinforced the pragmatic philosophy he had advanced in prior writings: “The important question is, What do shy people do that leads others to regard them as shy? Once we focus on ‘doing,’ we can ignore all prior designations. It is no longer important to label people as ‘shy,’ ‘reticent,’ or ‘apprehensive.’ Once we have identified inept behaviors, we can work on modifying them, without labeling the individual at all” (p. 49).

In his 1991 book, Phillips returned to his academic training in citing Aristotle’s canons of rhetoric (invention, disposition, style, delivery, and memory) as the fundamental skill set required for a competent act of communication. The reticent communicator may be incompetent in one or more of these rhetorical processes, a theme he had introduced in earlier work (Phillips, 1977). This approach reflected prior writings in framing reticence as a form of avoidance behavior resulting from a self-perception of inadequacy. Reticent persons may or may not actually have deficient social skills (Phillips, 1986), but they think they do. In his final published work concerning reticence, Phillips (1997) asserted that most also, in fact, do. Either they have experienced social failure because of their ineptitude, or other people have pointed out their deficiencies.

Summary of the Reticence Construct

To summarize, Phillips conceived of reticence primarily as a behavioral problem (from the 1970s through the 1990s). Although reticence in his view also involved anxiety or fear about speaking (Phillips, 1986, 1997), a careful examination of the literature relating to reticence reveals ambivalence, perhaps even inconsistency, about the role of anxiety in this conceptualization. In some writings, Phillips described reticence as masking strong emotions, often accompanied by anxiety that can impede both performance and receptivity to instruction. In other writings, he downplayed the importance of anxiety when helping people with communication problems: “We have encountered no information that directly connects inept performance behavior with any measurement of feelings about communication” (Phillips, 1997, p. 129). In all his writings, however, Phillips (1980) asserted that skill in speaking is acquired, just as with shooting free-throws in basketball. Consequently, one should not assume that clinical strategies directed at extinguishing anxiety will do much for the performer who has never been trained to perform well. Continuing with the basketball analogy, Phillips explained:

[I]f anxiety impedes their [basketball players’] ability to sink the shot, removal of the anxiety should make them able. If they are not able and anxious about it, removal of anxiety will enable them to attempt to sink the shots, but since they are not able, they will not sink them. The problem with most of the reticent people we have dealt with over the last fifteen years is that they are not able. (p. 107)

Thus, his conceptualization of reticence in the 1980s and 1990s was clearly about reticent *behavior*. Phillips (1997) felt that whether or not reticent people experienced anxiety was not important. He stated this explicitly: “When attention is focused on behavior, such concepts as ‘communication apprehension’ and ‘anxiety’ are not relevant” (p. 129).

Gerald Phillips spent the greater part of his academic career helping people overcome communication problems. As he matured in his profession, he grew increasingly cautious of the labels academics use to classify individuals. Instead, Phillips focused on how to “tinker” with pedagogy. After many years and thousands of students, Phillips “engineered” a program that bettered the lives of reticent individuals. An anecdote that Phillips liked to share encapsulates his approach perfectly:

A distinguished scholar once confronted Phillips at an S.C.A. meeting and declared, "There is no such thing as reticent! Maybe all you have is just good teaching." Said Phillips, "Thank you, and what do you mean, 'just?'" (Phillips, 1980, p. 108)

Helping Reticent Communicators: The Option D Program

The creation of the Reticence Program, known as Option D at Penn State, because it was one of four versions of the required basic speech course (labeled A, B, C, and D), is arguably Phillips's most significant contribution to the field of communication. He was the first in the discipline to offer a comprehensive approach for working with reticent individuals, and he remained committed to the program throughout his lifetime. Given his concern with helping people, as evident from our discussion of his reticence construct, it is not surprising that his true passion was developing and refining an effective treatment program. In 1991, Phillips wrote: "The Pennsylvania State University Reticence Program . . . has served nearly five thousand students in its twenty-five years of existence. As far as we know, it is the oldest and largest program in the country for modification of the performance behavior of shy people" (p. vii). The program continues today at Penn State University, forty years after Gerald M. Phillips initiated it.

Development and Description of the "Option D" Reticence Program

Program beginnings. The pilot program was launched in spring of 1965. Phillips (personal communication, April 1977) explained how the staff attracted students for the program: "They had a file of people over at the Counseling Center who were going to drop out of school rather than take Speech 200. So we said give us all your people. I said we'd try the first run with the absolute worst." Phillips (1991) later described some of the students in the original group:

Joseph, an entomology major whose fear of social interaction made him appear almost mute;
Louise, an elementary-school teacher, whose fear of speaking to adults made her break out in hives . . . Levi, an angry young man, whose hostile tone of voice alienated virtually everyone . . .
Laura . . . who had learned to "shrink" into the background to avoid contact with others. (p. 3)

There were 37 students and 6 instructors, who operated with the objective of trying to help the students to feel better so they would be more willing to communicate. Phillips (personal communication, April 1977)

explained: “People sat and talked about their problems and they all helped each other. It was pretty bizarre. They were kind to one another, and they operated in a misery-loves-company kind of formula. Let’s give everybody warm fuzzies, pats on the head, and all that good stuff.” The program operated with that approach for about the first six years. Kent Sokoloff, a doctoral student who was working with Phillips in the program in its early years, said, “We didn’t know what we were doing. We talked a lot about communication and perception. We tried to encourage and be as nice as possible. There was a puppy-dog kind of attachment. Everyone was concerned about feelings. We had a lot of people who felt better about being incompetent” (personal communication, April 1977).

Then something happened to turn the program around. “We ran across some books. *Reality Therapy* changed the outlook on therapy. *Goal Analysis* seemed useful. It gave us the notion that you can’t get better until you know what better is” (Sokoloff, personal communication, April 1977). Thus, the Reticence Program, founded on the educational philosophy of Robert Mager, author of *Goal Analysis* (1972), was reborn.

The rhetoritherapy approach. “Rhetoritherapy” was the term Phillips coined to designate the special skills training approach used in the Reticence Program. The basic notion is that people use speech designed to bring about change or to influence another person, and that reticent individuals, in particular, need to understand this principle and become skilled in all of the “rhetorical sub-processes” involved in the making of rhetoric (Phillips, personal communication, April 1977). As Phillips and Sokoloff (1979) defined it, rhetoritherapy is “a form of systematic, individualized instruction directed at improving speech performance in mundane, task, and social situations” (p. 389).

Based on Aristotelian ideas about rhetoric, rhetoritherapy “combines cognitive restructuring and behavior modification” (Kelly et al., 1995, p. 9). The cognitive restructuring component of the training derived from Beck’s (1976) work. As implemented in Option D, cognitive restructuring aims to change reticent students’ thinking about communication situations. They are encouraged to perceive situations as rhetorical (Cohen, 1980), that is, as opportunities for which they can achieve a particular social goal (Phillips, personal communication, April 1977), as well as to set realistic communication goals. Phillips and colleagues stated:

We had to find ways to reorganize how people think about social situations and their personal responsibility in them. The speakers would have to learn what was possible as opposed to dreaming about the ideal out-

come. The rule of thumb became distinguish between the doable and the desirable. (Kelly et al., 1995, p. 8)

Phillips (1990) was adamant later in his career that what he was doing was behavior modification. The behavior modification component of rhetoritherapy focuses on changing the behavior of reticent individuals, specifically with a view toward improving their skills in the “rhetorical sub-processes” described by Phillips (personal communication, April 1977) as follows:

A person looks for a situation in which some goal can be achieved through talk.

He or she identifies who it is that is to be changed by the talk.

He or she sets a specific goal to be accomplished.

He or she searches his or her mind for ideas to say, which are then adapted to the situation and the audience.

He or she arranged the ideas in some order.

He or she chooses words to convey those ideas.

He or she says the words.

He or she observes the response to his or her talk to see how well the goal was accomplished and what remains to be done.

These rhetorical sub-processes represent the five canons of rhetoric, which serve as the basis for pedagogy in the Reticence Program (Phillips, 1991). As summarized by Kelly et al. (1995), the five canons as applied to rhetoritherapy can be described as follows:

Invention: This is the process of sizing up a social situation to discover the relevant participants and what they have at stake. What do they seek to gain and at whose expense? What can I gain and from whom? What can I talk about? What are the available “sayables” from which I can select?

Disposition: This is the sequence of ideas I have to present in this situation. To whom are the ideas directed? What is the sequence I should use?

Style: What are the words I use to make this presentation? What exactly do I say?

Delivery: What is the process of presentation? Once the script is written and the scene set, what constitutes skillful presentation?

Memory: What resources do I have? What has been successful in similar situations that I can apply to this situation? (p. 9)

Goal analysis. Given the emphasis of rhetoritherapy on speech as a means to accomplish goals, Robert Mager's (1972) concept of a goal analysis became the centerpiece of Option D (Kelly et al., 1995, p. 7). As Phillips (1991) noted: "There must be a method designed to accomplish goals, and there ought to be a way of assessing whether the goals are met" (p. viii). That method is goal analysis. Goal analysis helps students to pinpoint specific, realizable goals to accomplish, requires that they identify behavioral criteria that indicate successful goal achievement, and has them develop specific plans of action to attempt their goals (Kelly et al., 1995). Students are taught to avoid such goals as, "I wanted to be more interesting," and instead to set ones such as, "I want to ask three questions next week in my history class" (Phillips & Metzger, 1973, p. 23). Throughout the program, students identify what they hope to achieve across a range of contexts (e.g., social conversation, talking to authority figures, class participation, public speaking), prepare goal analyses, implement actions appropriate to the goals, and then evaluate their performance (Kelly et al., 1995). Students begin with easier goals and work on achieving progressively more difficult ones. It is the "doing" that is the essence of the program because this is how students practice the communication techniques they are taught in the course. As Phillips (1990) emphasized: "You can't learn how by learning about." Support for the goal analysis approach can be found in the results of a recent study (Keaten, Kelly, & Finch, 2003), in which Option D students evaluated the goal analysis process as very helpful.

Significance of the "Option D" Reticence Program

The significance of Phillips's rhetoritherapy approach to the treatment of reticence cannot be overstated. The genius of it is that it can be implemented as a communication course because it aims at improving communication skills; thus, it is a non-psychological remediation approach that does not require professional training in psychological counseling. As Phillips

argued time and time again, the rhetoritherapy approach focuses on training. Specifically, he claimed: “Rhetoritherapy is based on pedagogical principles of classical rhetoric. It purposely avoids a clinical flavor, rejects the medical model, and uses tested methods of performance training applied to tension-evoking social/communication situations” (Phillips, 1986, p. 372).

Not only does the rhetoritherapy approach put remediation in the hands of communication teachers, but those teachers do not have to be the most talented and brilliant. As Phillips (1991) stated: “But the genuine claim that can be made about the Reticence Program was that its pedagogy was ‘instructor free.’ That is, any speech instructor of average competence or better could take the standard syllabus, and if they followed the instructions to the letter, they could have a successful outcome” (p. ix). Although instructors can be of average competence, they must be committed to the goals of the program, to the students, and to following the standardized syllabus (Kelly, 1989). Phillips’s emphasis was on pedagogy because it worked, and he was adamant that techniques are what matters, not individual teachers with their unique styles and personalities. As he phrased it: “I would like somebody to look at the record and say, ‘Gee, he produced a lot of good students over a long period of time and he left behind some techniques that other people can use that did not depend on his personality’” (Phillips, 1990).

Perhaps determining the significance of the Reticence Program is best left to the students who took part in it and to Phillips’s graduate students who systematically tested the program’s effectiveness. Over the past 30 years, studies of the reticence Program, many of them doctoral dissertations or master’s theses directed by Phillips, have employed questionnaires, self-evaluation papers, standardized scales, and observer ratings and have consistently revealed the program to help reticent students. The earliest study by Metzger (1974) compared assessments of improvement made by the trainer, the students, and outside observers who viewed videotaped interviews of the students conducted prior to the training, at two points during the training, and six months or later after training was completed. For all three modes of evaluation, students generally showed noticeable or at least adequate improvement, although a few showed only minimal improvement (Metzger, 1974).

Oerkvitz (1975) was concerned with the long-term effects of Option D and assessed participants’ perceptions of their improvement one year or more after completion of the program. Of the 154 individuals who responded to the mailed questionnaire, 75% said that they had improved, 17% reported that they had not, and a number of them gave mixed

responses. Eighty percent said that they continued to use one or more of the skills they had been taught in the program. Similarly, Kelly (1992) mailed a questionnaire to former Reticence Program participants. Of the 100 returning questionnaires (a return rate of 64%), 91% reported that they had improved their communication skills upon completion of the program and 87% reported continuing positive benefits. They indicated greater confidence, less fear, communication skill improvement, and more control over their behavior as results of the program.

Domenig (1978) and McKinney (1980) both examined immediate effects of the Reticence Program. Domenig (1978) compared self-report papers of students in the program with those of students in regular speech classes at Penn State. After receiving treatment, Reticence Program participants rated their performance as more competent than other speech class students. McKinney (1980) used standardized self-report measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetoritherapy program by comparing three groups: (a) Reticence Program students, (b) students in public speaking courses, and (c) students in group discussion courses. In contrast to the other two groups, students in the Reticence Program reported significant decreases in anxiety and avoidance behavior on virtually all items concerned with social interaction, class participation, group discussion, and interviewing, and on 8 of 13 public speaking items.

Kelly, Duran, and Stewart (1990) utilized a pretest-posttest control group design to test the effectiveness of rhetoritherapy. They also incorporated standardized self-report measures, including the PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982), the SHY scale (McCroskey, Andersen, Richmond, & Wheelless, 1981), and the Social Reticence scale (Jones & Russell, 1982) to assess improvement. Students in a rhetoritherapy program modeled after the one at Penn State, students in a public speaking course, and students in an introductory sociology course completed the measures at the beginning and end of the semester. The results indicated that those in the rhetoritherapy program reported a greater reduction of social reticence (as measure by the Social Reticence scale) than those in the other courses. However, for the other measures, both the rhetoritherapy group and the speech class group differed from the control group, but not significantly from each other.

In a follow-up study, Kelly and Keaten (1992) focused on students in the Penn State Reticence Program. Although they used the same experimental design as Kelly et al. (1990), they used a statistical procedure to form equivalent experimental groups. The results indicated a greater reduction in self-reported shyness and communication apprehension for those in the

Reticence Program than for those in either a performance-based speaking course or a control group. The findings were quite consistent across the three dependent measures (PRCA-24, SHY scale, and Social Reticence scale).

As described earlier, central to the concept of reticence is a collection of beliefs that often proved to be dysfunctional (Phillips, 1986, 1991, 1997). Keaten, Kelly, and Finch (2000) designed a study to investigate these beliefs. The investigators used a 16-item instrument to assess a person's level of agreement with reticent beliefs (for a complete list, see Keaten et al., 2000, p. 140). The study incorporated a pretest-posttest design with a comparison group for detecting both pretest differences between reticents and non-reticents in the beliefs and the effectiveness of rhetoritherapy in reducing their intensities. Reticents differed from non-reticents before treatment in their level of agreement with seven of the 16 pertinent beliefs: (1) I have more to gain by remaining silent than by talking, (2) excellent speakers are born, not made, (3) good communicators speak spontaneously, (4) communication skills cannot be taught, (5) speaking is not that important to me, (6) in general, people talk too much, and (7) it is better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish. The most pronounced difference between reticent and non-reticent participants centered on a fear of negative evaluation; nearly two-thirds of the reticent participants agreed with the statement, "It is better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish." Approximately one quarter of the non-reticents, in contrast, agreed with the statement.

To test the effectiveness of rhetoritherapy on reticent beliefs, the seven beliefs that discriminated between reticents and non-reticents became the focus of analysis (Keaten et al., 2000). To control for the significant differences between the reticent and non-reticent groups at pretest, participants were selected if they either agreed or were undecided about a given belief. The results revealed a moderate treatment effect for three of the seven statements. Reticents were more likely than non-reticents to disagree with the following statements after rhetoritherapy: (1) excellent speakers are born not made, (2) good communicators speak spontaneously, and (3) communication skills cannot be taught. Keaten et al. characterized the impact of rhetoritherapy on the beliefs of interest as follows: "The most significant changes in beliefs center around [sic] the relationship between communicative ability and skill development . . . reticent individuals begin to realize that communication skills can be learned. . . . Furthermore, they learn that preparation is a vital component of effective speaking . . ." (p. 144).

Although research indicates that rhetoritherapy can reduce a variety of communication problems, few communication programs have the resources

to offer a specialized course for individuals with communication problems. Noting this dilemma, Keaten et al. (2003) decided to test the perceived effectiveness of the component parts of rhetoritherapy. Identification of the most helpful components might allow for a streamlined form of rhetoritherapy that one might offer as a workshop or perhaps integrate into the public speaking course curriculum.

Qualitative and quantitative data regarding the helpfulness of the components of rhetoritherapy came from approximately 100 participants in the Penn State Reticence Program for two different semesters. At the end of each semester, students responded to two open-ended questions: (1) What did you find helpful? and (2) What didn't you find helpful? In addition, they rated the helpfulness of the different components of rhetoritherapy (19 items in total) on five-point bipolar scales.

The study had four main findings. First, reticent individuals saw both the rehearsal and performance of a public speech and an oral interpretation of a piece of literature most helpful. Second, the responses to the open-ended items indicated a consistent belief in the helpfulness of goal analysis, although many students mentioned that the writing requirement of the goal analysis procedure was excessive. Third, participants reported that, in general, they found practice to be more helpful than instruction. Finally, the students reported that the classroom environment was instrumental in their development of communication skills. In particular, they responded positively to the caring and supportiveness the teacher displayed, as well as to the smaller class size (Keaten et al., 2003).

Systematic research as described above provides evidence for the success of Phillips's rhetoritherapy approach, but does not convey the depth of influence of the program on individuals. Although pleased that quantitative data supported the positive impact of his creation, Phillips was more impressed by what individual students had to say because his interest was first and foremost to help reticent people. An informal perusal of end-of-the-semester "Self-as-Communicator" papers from students in various sections over time shows that many feel they have improved in specific ways. Gary wrote: "I think the most important thing I learned from the class was just how important effective communication really is." Darlene said, "This class has really helped me in social situations. I find it easier to talk to people I don't know and it was easier for me to find things to talk about." For Holly, the course gave her "much more confidence in myself when speaking," and she found that "planning what I want to say and under what conditions has made speaking easier for me." Paul found Option D to be "the most worthwhile course I took . . . I learned many new things like how to

prepare for job interviews and how to judge whether I have been successful at speaking to others in social conversations, class participation, and public speaking.” For a paper as a graduate student at Penn State, the first author called a few students to see what they had to say about the program after completing it. What Joan said put a smile on Phillips’s face when he read the paper: “It [Option D] was great. I learned a lot of things about myself. It made me do things I wouldn’t have done. At the beginning I said—we all said—‘we’re not doing anything.’ I was embarrassed to tell people I’m in a special section. But not anymore!”

Conclusion

As former students of Gerald Phillips who have devoted much of our own academic careers to the student and treatment of reticence, we recognize more than most the invaluable contributions he had made to the discipline on Communication through his work on reticence. Phillips was always one to give credit to his students, and although he credited Laura Muir (Phillips, personal communication, April 1977) with the original idea, it was he who devoted three decades to refining the construct and developing a program to help reticent communicators become more competent. Phillips’s construct was the genesis of communication scholars’ study of communication anxiety and avoidance problems beyond the public speaking context. His Reticence Program is a lasting gift to the field and to the thousands of individuals who have benefited from the rhetoritherapy approach. In talk about the success of the Reticence Program, Phillips (1990) said that the program gave him much satisfaction, including:

the satisfaction of being entirely in harmony with my heritage because I can say to myself, “I am Quintillian. I am running an institute of oratory. I teach people to invent and compose and word and deliver discourse, and I teach them to use their memory as a database and also a source of experience to which to adapt.” It makes me feel very harmonious with my tradition.

Thus, Phillips’s work on reticence was far more consistent than may appear on the surface. He began with the desire to help reticent individuals become more competent communicators so that they could participate more effectively in their personal and private lives. At the end of his career, achieving that goal was one of his greatest sources of satisfaction. He called himself Quintillian. We call him “the Great Equalizer.”

References

- Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Burgoon, J.K. (1976). The unwillingness-to-communicate scale: Development and validation. *Communication Monographs, 43*, 60-69.
- Cohen, H. (1980). Teaching reticent students in a required course. *Communication Education, 29*, 222-228.
- Domenig, K.M. (1978). *An examination of self-reports of reticent and non-reticent students before and after instruction*. Unpublished master's thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
- Jones, W.H., & Russell, D. (1982). The social reticence scale: An objective instrument to measure shyness. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 46*, 628-631.
- Keaten, J.A., Kelly, L., & Finch, C. (2000). Effectiveness of the Penn State Reticence Program in changing beliefs associated with reticence. *Communication Education, 49*, 134-145.
- Keaten, J.A., Kelly, L., & Finch, C. (2003). Student perceptions of the helpfulness of the Pennsylvania State University Reticence Program components. *Communication Research Reports, 20*, 151-160.
- Kelly, L. (1989). Implementing a skills training program for reticent communicators. *Communication Education, 38*, 85-101.
- Kelly, L. (1992). *The long-term effects of rhetoritherapy*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT.
- Kelly, L., Duran, R.L., & Stewart, J. (1990). Rhetoritherapy revisited: A test of its effectiveness as a treatment for communication problems. *Communication Education, 39*, 207-226.
- Kelly, L., & Keaten, J.A. (1992). A test of the effectiveness of the Reticence Program at The Pennsylvania State University. *Communication Education, 41*, 361-374.
- Kelly, L., Keaten J.A., & Finch, C. (1996, November). *Exploring and changing beliefs associated with reticence*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Diego, CA.
- Kelly, L., Phillips, G.M., & Keaten, J.A. (1995). *Teaching people to speak well: Training and remediation of communication reticence*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Mager, R.F. (1972). *Goal analysis*. Belmont, CA: Fearon.
- McCroskey, J.C. (1970). Measures of communication-bound anxiety. *Speech Monographs, 37*, 269-277.

- McCroskey, J.C. (1982). Oral communication apprehension: A reconceptualization. In M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 6* (pp. 136-170). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- McCroskey, J.C. (1997). Willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communication competence: Conceptualizations and perspectives. In J.A. Daly, J.C. McCroskey, J. Ayres, T. Hopf, & D.M. Ayres (Eds.), *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension* (2nd ed., pp. 75-108). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- McCroskey, J.C., Anderson, J.F., Richmond, V.P., & Wheelless, L.R. (1981). Communication apprehension of elementary and secondary students and teachers. *Communication Education, 30*, 122-132.
- McKinney, B.C. (1980). *Comparison of students in self-selected speech options on four measures of reticence and cognate problems*. Unpublished master's thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Metzger, N.J. (1974). *The effects of a rhetorical method of instruction on a selected population of reticent students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Oerkvitz, S.J. (1975). *Reports of continuing effects of instruction in a specially designed speech course for reticent students*. Unpublished master's thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Phillips, G.M. (1965). The problem of reticence. *Pennsylvania Speech Annual, 22*, 22-38.
- Phillips, G.M. (1968). Reticence: Pathology of the normal speaker. *Speech Monographs, 35*, 39-49.
- Phillips, G.M. (1977). Rhetoritherapy versus the medical model: Dealing with reticence. *Communication Education, 26*, 34-43.
- Phillips, G.M. (1980). On apples and onions: A reply to Page. *Communication Education, 29*, 105-108.
- Phillips, G.M. (1984). Reticence: A perspective on social withdrawal. In J.A. Daly & J.C. McCroskey (Eds.), *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension* (pp. 51-66). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Phillips, G.M. (1982). Coming of age in the academy. *Communication Education, 31*, 177-183.
- Phillips, G.M. (1986). Rhetoritherapy: The principles of rhetoric in training shy people in speech effectiveness. In W.H. Jones, J.M. Cheek, & S.R. Briggs (Eds.), *Shyness: Perspectives on research and treatment* (pp. 357-374). New York: Plenum Press.

- Phillips, G.M. (1990, November). *Teachers on teaching*. Videotaped interview presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- Phillips, G.M. (1991). *Communication incompetencies: A theory of training oral performance behavior*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Phillips, G.M. (1997). Reticence: A perspective on social withdrawal In J.A. Daly, J.C. McCroskey, J. Ayres, T. Hopf, and D.M. Ayres (Eds.). *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension* (2nd ed., pp. 129-150). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Phillips, G.M., & Butt, D. (1966). Reticence revisited. *Pennsylvania Speech Annual*, 15, 40-57.
- Phillips, G.M., & Metzger, N. (1973). The reticent syndrome: Some theoretical considerations about etiology and treatment. *Speech Monographs*, 40, 220-230.
- Phillips, G.M., & Sokoloff, K.A. (1979). An end to anxiety: Treating speech problems with rhetoritherapy. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 12, 385-397.

Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to Interpersonal Communication Studies

Janie M. Harden Fritz

Associate Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies

Duquesne University

Introduction

The historical moment in which Gerald M. Phillips contributed to the discipline/field of communication permitted his work broad and enduring influence. The state of development of the discipline/field during those years, with specialization increasing, but not as pronounced as in later decades, further permitted him to engage a wide range of topics as a specialist/generalist. My focus, however, is his work in the area of Interpersonal Communication. The contributions of Phillips to interpersonal communication studies rest in a rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication and relationships (Ayres, 1984) and application of principles from that approach to a variety of contexts, including reticence (e.g., Phillips, 1981a, 1986), small group communication (Phillips, 1966; Phillips & Erickson, 1970; Phillips, Pedersen, & Wood, 1979), doctor/patient communication (Jones & Phillips, 1988), organizational communication (Phillips, 1982; Goodall & Phillips, 1984), marital and friendship communication (Phillips & Goodall, 1983; Phillips & Metzger, 1983; Phillips & Wood, 1983), and communication in educational settings (Phillips, Butt, & Metzger, 1974).

Phillips's rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication steered a thoughtful course between behavioristic social science and encounter-group humanist idealism and offered the potential for a uniquely disciplinary-based approach to dyadic interaction. However, while psychologically-based cognitive approaches (e.g., Hewes, Roloff, Planalp, & Seibold, 1990; Knapp, Daly, Albada, & Miller, 2002), phenomenological (e.g., Stewart, 1978, 1981), dialogic (e.g., Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2003; Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Cissna, Arnett, & Anderson, 1994; Stewart, 1981), and "social" approaches (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995) to interpersonal communication continue to receive scholarly attention, the rhetorical approach, predicted by Ayres (1984) to be a promising arena for development of interpersonal communication theory, remains, with rare exceptions (e.g., Ambrester, 1997; Ambrester & Strause,

1984; Ward, Bluman, & Dauria, 1982), relatively unattended in scholarly literature.

To date, Phillips's rhetorical approach to studying and teaching interpersonal communication enjoys robust influence at the pedagogical level, where elements of this model have been cited over the last two and a half decades in a number of textbooks through various editions by well-known authors (e.g., Fisher, 1978; Goodall, 1983; Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2001; Reardon, 1987; Trenholm & Jensen, 2004; Tubbs & Moss, 1981; Wilmot, 1987; Wilson, Hantz, & Hanna, 1992, 1995; Wood, 1992, 1997, 1998, 2001). The most prominent of these concepts are the notion of dual perspective (taking the cognitive perspective of the other) (e.g., Wood, 1992, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2004) and an understanding of relational development as stages, particularly the idea of communication as transaction in intimate interaction (in which unique relational rules characterize the interaction, as distinct from the notion of "interaction" between more formal relationships governed by public social standards) (e.g., Goodall, 1983; Knapp & Vangelisti, 1992; Wood, 1997b).

Given Phillips's devotion to application and improvement of human communication as goals of theory and research, this arena of influence is fitting. A re-examination of the approach in a new historical moment, is in the discipline's rhetorical tradition. This essay highlights the rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication as the center of Gerald M. Phillips's contribution to the area of interpersonal communication studies and addresses its assumptions, elements, and implications for current inquiry and practice.

Situating the Rhetorical Approach to Interpersonal Communication

Methodology, Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology

Phillips's rhetorical approach is situated within a series of methodological, ontological, and epistemological commitments tied to his view of human beings and is marked by an axiology grounded in recognition of responsibility in human choice and action and in the imperative of application: Interpersonal Rhetoric implies responsibility for communicative choices in one's own interactions and in advice to others when one is a teacher/critic, and therefore, implies an ethical stance (Phillips, 1978; Phillips & Wood, 1983).

Phillips argued against sole reliance on a "scientific" approach based on generalized conclusions for study of human behavior (Phillips, 1981b).

Predictions or generalizations available from large data sets offer possibilities for human interaction that may be helpful when examining a particular case, but are insufficient when applied unreflectively (Phillips & Goodall, 1983). Phillips supported the enterprise of communication research (though he resisted the term “science” as applied to the work of communication researchers; see Goodall & Phillips, 1981; Phillips 1981b) and believed in the value of results of empirical studies of human communication, as long as they were applied with care in individual cases (Phillips, 1978, 1986). In his criticism of behaviorism, Phillips can be understood as responding to a strong form of logical positivism, now tempered and recast as “post positivism” (e.g., Miller, 2000).

Far from taking a “soft” approach to interpersonal communication, Phillips rejected, as did rhetoricians Hart and Burks (1972) and dialogic scholars working from a philosophical perspective (e.g., Arnett, 1981, 1982), a utopian search for the “authentic self” that marked the encounter movements of the 1960s. He fought the excesses of an ideology of openness through unrestrained disclosure (Phillips, 1976), while still being willing to apply what might be useful in “encounterist” approaches (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p.177), assessing the work of “humanist” authors, such as Joseph Luft (of “Johari Window” fame) with fairness, and seeing to redeem what was useful in their work (Phillips, 1971). His position on the study of human communication can be viewed within the framework of a “unity of contraries” (Buber, 1948) and as walking the “narrow ridge” (Friedman, 2002) running between the particular and the general while always moving in the direction of “technologies of improving the art” (Phillips, 1978, p. 190).

It is in this “unity of contraries” approach that the genius of Phillips’s bent toward application emerges as interpersonal *phronesis*, practical interpersonal wisdom, derived from theory-informed action, or praxis (Schrag, 1986). The predominant scholarly approach to interpersonal communication remains the discovery of generalizable knowledge (Knapp, Daly, Albada, & Miller, 2002); however, Phillips sought to adapt generalized knowledge to the particular case. Given his applied bent, this tacking between the general and the particular and an orientation to rhetorical interpersonal pedagogy as “criticism” seems appropriate and necessary. As the critic takes principles of rhetorical theory for a standard and examines the individual case to note its successes and areas for improvement, so did Phillips take the results of studies as touchstones or guidelines rather than “truths” to see how they might be useful in the particular case (Goodall & Phillips, 1981).

It is where theory meets application that his criticism of a “covering-laws” approach to communication (Berger, 1977) is most pointed, for it is at the interface with the particular that generalizations are both potentially the most helpful and at the same time potentially the most uninformative. It is here, also, that epistemology meets axiology, where Phillips the “behavioral researcher nee rhetorician” (Phillips, 1989, p. 2) meets Phillips the humanistic “application [of a critical proposition] in a particular case is a moral decision” (Phillips, 1978, p. 192).

Phillips (1978) believed in the interaction of theory/research with application: the “end user” (p.190) contributes to theory through its testing in the classroom and in other arenas of life. Although he urged the use of the term “criticism” instead of “science” for the work of communication researchers (for example, in the work of conversation analysis; see Goodall & Phillips, 1981), Phillips believe that conclusions drawn from data were useful, for he gathered such data himself and used them to confirm theory (e.g., Phillips & Metzger, 1976). His study of intimate interpersonal communication, the foundation for three books (Phillips & Metzger, 1976; Phillips & Goodall, 1983; Phillips & Wood, 1983) and a scholarly article articulating a rhetorical perspective on interpersonal communication (Phillips, 1976), boasts quantitative and qualitative data, including a factor analysis as the basis for identifying “types” of relational orientations persons may assume in relation to others, with the richness of personal stories and narratives providing incarnations of principles drawn from that research (Phillips & Goodall, 1983, p. 5). The corpus of Phillips’s work in interpersonal communication could be described as quantitative and qualitative social science interpreted through the lens of rhetorical theory in service of application to the individual case: *praxis* (theory-informed action; Schrag, 1986) in the service of *phronesis* (practical wisdom).

Theory and Practice

“We do not have a formal, orderly theory about communication in nonpublic situations. And without orderly theory, practice is haphazard” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. v). Phillips believed in the reflexive interaction of theory and interpretation and practice. A final statement in the Phillips and Metzger volume articulates the need to move beyond “unproductive experiments and costly emotional innovations” (p. 412), which points to Phillips’s valuing of qualitative cases studied for patterns, regularities, and themes supplemented by quantitative results to find patterns and regularities to inform theory. Phillips was an advocate of triangulation in method and cautious application of generalizations to particular cases, always guided by

theory, engaging a form of *phronesis* or practical wisdom—a rhetorical framing of “applied communication,” for which an NCA prize is bestowed annually in his honor. Theory is needed to direct attention, interpretation, and action. Likewise, theory must be faithful to the nature of the phenomenon studied and is amended and revised through reflection on practice.

A Holistic Approach to Intimacy, Admitting Bias

Phillips did not believe that “parts” separately are sufficient to equal a “whole” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 178). Researchers should not and could not break intimacy up into parts to study it experimentally. Of his own foundational study of intimate relationships, he remarks, “[I]t often seemed so much like an art that we felt we were engaged in literary criticism rather than social science” (pp. 178-179). A researcher may observe with care, but a phenomenological distance exists between the observer and the observed (Phillips & Erickson, 1970), which makes “the individual...the best expert on his own life” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 179). Phillips admitted bias and the need to make biases clear in the research process (Phillips & Goodall, 1983; Phillips & Metzger, 1976).

Fit “Method” to “Subject”

Phillips’s application of rhetorical principles to interpersonal communication is consistent with his understanding of a phenomenological approach (Bemis & Phillips, 1967; Phillips & Metzger, 1976) to human communication behavior, which permitted generalizations derived from research to serve as a starting point for examination of a specific case for potential change/improvement (e.g., a person or interpersonal situation) but not as predictors of expected behavior. This phenomenological approach reflects Phillips’s view of the uniqueness of the particular human “case” that, in the aggregate, exhibits patterned behavioral regularity (Phillips & Metzger, 1976). He hoped to “anthropomorphize” (p. 412) the study of human communication behavior (e.g., Phillips, 1978). In Phillips and Metzger (1976), this position is articulated well:

In our research we have, where useful, utilized the methods of both behaviorists and humanists. For the most part, we have attempted to function as rhetorical critics, taking each case (and recognizing that our data were often limited) and analyzing it in terms of its rhetorical properties. We felt that we took a phenomenological position, a position which allows us to work with objective reality when it is available, but which also permits us to formalize our interpretations and draw conclu-

sions from them. (p. 178)

A Rhetorical Approach to Interpersonal Communication

Ayres (1984) recognizes Phillips and his colleagues as responsible for the “resurrection” (p. 420) of a rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication and observes that “the most intensive early treatment of interpersonal communication in the speech communication journals was by rhetoricians” (p. 419). Wood (1976), in her review of Phillips and Metzger (1976), remarks about the originality of this approach to interpersonal communication and its primacy in moving interpersonal communication in a rhetorical direction. The rhetorical approach is articulated in four major publications: Phillips (1976), Phillips and Metzger (1976), Phillips and Wood (1983), and Phillips and Goodall (1983). These works are all based on the same data set, described in detail in Phillips and Metzger (1976).

Phillips’s rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication, the only major approach to communication with its roots anchored firmly in antiquity (Ayres, 1984), is integrative and interdisciplinary. The rhetorical approach applies and extends Hart and Burk’s (1972) exploration of rhetorical approach applies and extends Hart and Burk’s (1972) exploration of rhetorical sensitivity and Bitzer’s (1968) conceptualization of the rhetorical situation by integrating these with a number of other theories, primarily Murray Davis’s work concerning intimacy and George Homans’s social exchange theory. Phillips draws on G. H. Mead’s symbolic interaction for identify formation as a connection to Aristotle’s notion of “ethos,” as well as on Korzybski’s general semantics and a number of other authors, including Harry Stack Sullivan. The writings of Hart and Burk, Bitzer, Davis, Homans, and Mead provide the most important conceptual foundation of the model, however.

Rhetorical/Communicative Foundations

The Hart and Burks (1972) concept of rhetorical sensitivity provided the conceptual tool to “[adapt] the notion of rhetoric from the public to the intimate situation” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 11). Phillips and Metzger added to rhetorical sensitivity the notion of “dual perspective,” offered by David Butt in his interest in “rhetorical readiness,” or the state of a child’s being ready to appeal to needs of others rather than egocentric expression (Phillips, 1976; Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 11). Phillips and Metzger employed the Hart and Burks work for their model, adding distinct conceptual contributions: “The problem with the Hart-Burks material is that the authors really did not have interpersonal relationships in mind when they generated their conception of rhetorical sensitivity. Thus, their material

needed considerable adaptation...Hart and Burks have provided the theoretical impetus and we have applied it to interpersonal relations” (p.426).

Bitzer’s (1968) exploration of the rhetorical situation, when applied to private and intimate talk, established a rhetorical conceptual foundation for the interpersonal rhetorical approach that focused on (1) personal experience of the world; (2) a felt need to accomplish something through changing another person or person’s behavior; (3) awareness that “a particular time and place afford...an opportunity to speak”; (4) situational analysis, including other people, “to discover what is allowable and what is not”; (5) preparation of an oral statement, the purpose of which is change in opinions and/or behavior of listeners; (6) delivery of the statement, observation of the result, and decision about what to do next (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 7), Bitzer’s model served to justify the connection between public and interpersonal rhetoric by the goodness of the model’s fit, as Phillips and Metzger describe it, to the interpersonal context.

Sociological and Psychological Foundations

Preliminary observations by Phillips and Metzger (1976) of their data suggested the existence of reciprocity between people as vital to a view of interpersonal rhetoric, for “in this area...interpersonal rhetoric differs in form from public rhetoric” (p. 30). Murray Davis and George Homans developed theories addressing reciprocity in human relationships that fit with a rhetorical view.

Davis’s theory provided a “political structure” for relationships (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 30), with each action (apparently) evoking a responsive one and, thereby, exhibiting reciprocity of structure. Two people form a mini-society with “executive, legislative, and judicial components” (p. 30). Here we see a precursor to the notion of relational culture later developed and articulated by Wood (1992) and Phillips and Wood (1983). Davis’s thinking presented a convergence of a sociological and psychiatric view that was supportive of their rhetorical approach, in that it “was orderly and dependent on persuasive exchanges of communication” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 30).

Homans’s exchange theory advanced propositions that “[accounted] for 1) exertion of human decision making, 2) reciprocity, and 3) use of persuasive strategies that would characterize a rhetorical format” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 31). In Homans’s theory, Phillips and Metzger found “an element of decision (seeking a certain behavior), of analysis (selecting a strategy that would reward it, hence motivating its occurrence), and an ele-

ment of reciprocity (an expectation that there will be some response to each action)” (p. 31). Reciprocity appears to emerge more explicitly at the level of process in Homans’s theory, but it is implicit in Davis’s. Phillips and Metzger go on to demonstrate how each proposition of Homans’s theory works rhetorically.

Resonant with the interactionist view of communication derived from symbolic interaction and referenced as representing that perspective by Fisher (1978), the rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication draws on the thinking of George Herbert Mead on communication, with others as essential to identity construction, which connects it to the Aristotelian notion of ethos: “The essence of the process of interpersonal rhetoric seems to be the acquisition of identity through persuasion of others to confer that identity, followed by the use of the established identity to broaden the consensus and thus enhance personal esteem” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 12). Self-esteem is not an end product, but an “instrumentality” (p. 12). For Aristotle, projection of one’s identity was the most important factor in controlling others’ behavior, via establishing identity with others. The interpersonal rhetor and public rhetor are, therefore, confronted with the same challenges, as described by Phillips and Metzger. However, this ethos and identity generation is social, interdependent, and constructed cooperatively with others. The major rhetorical task is to persuade others who we are, and interpersonal relationships are the arena in which to seek agreement for the proper definition.

These initial theoretical foundations provide the groundwork for the rhetorical interpersonal approach. The next section clarifies more specific assumptions.

Assumptions About Interpersonal Communication, Human Beings, and Rhetoric

The domain. **The domain of interpersonal communication is broad.** Phillips and Metzger (1976) provide broad scope for the domain of interpersonal communication: “[A]ll communication is interpersonal, because all communication takes place between and among persons” (p. 175).

The difference between interpersonal and public rhetoric. Interpersonal rhetoric differs in limited ways from the public forms, and in all other ways, it is similar to public rhetoric in its components and requirements. In the interpersonal situation, goals are security and satisfaction, basic human needs, expressed symbolically. Identity confirmation is the primary human goal, and for this purpose, we engage in interpersonal transactions. We use transactions to find ways of confirming our identity. People can learn or

improve their skill in management of discourse in the private situation by analyzing the situation, the audience, and the other's intent based on reciprocal, dialectical exchange between the two persons. The outcomes of the process of interpersonal rhetorical exchange are changes in the interpersonal relationship's content and form (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 168).

Interpersonal relations are fundamentally rhetorical (Phillips, Butt, & Metzger, 1974). A footnote to Winans, who addressed public speaking as "enlarged conversation," suggests that he provided "a bridge from formal rhetoric to interpersonal rhetoric" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 432). Phillips and Metzger (1976) summarize: "Essentially, Aristotle's rhetorical view, as modified by philosophers up to the present day, is that rhetoric is the deployment of talk according to some plan and directed at another person or persons in order to alter their behavior and thus to satisfy some goal held by the person who is talking" (p. 6).

Interpersonal communication is rhetorical: "Conversation is patently persuasive and rhetorical" (Murray, Phillips, & Truby, 1969, p. xxxii). "The basic premise of an interpersonal rhetoric is that *it is impossible to carry on talk without having some purpose*" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 13). "The conscious effort to achieve goals in intimate relationships is called *interpersonal rhetoric*" (p. 12). The main difference between intimate talk and public discourse is in the rapidity with which the speaker and listener roles are exchanged (p. 13). Furthermore, intimate relationships differ from public relationships in the quality of their discourse and action: **Transaction** is distinguished from the more public **interaction**; interpersonal relationships develop their own unique rules.

Communication is rhetorical because it is made by human beings, who are rhetorical creatures: **goal-seeking**, desiring to influence others, choice making, responsive, and responsible. **Our identity is tied to ethos and depends on others for its validation—our identities are conversationally interdependent.** "What we are is largely determined by the response of other people to us" (Murray, Phillips, & Truby, 1969, p. xxxii). Human behavior is **orderly, rational, and observable** (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. viii), and humans **need to control their worlds** (p. 3). Interpersonal communication has traditionally been considered spontaneous and unplanned (p. 9), but a rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication assumes intentionality. "It is our contention that individuals do seek goals in their intimate relations, and, furthermore, that they go about this goal seeking in an orderly way, which can be described and criticized as we can describe and criticize public discourse" (p. 10). The implication is that content and function of interpersonal relations can be improved, an applied focus that threads

Phillips's work.

Following Bitzer (1968), rhetoric is deliberate, goal-driven **influence** on others, **arising in response to situational exigencies**: "Rhetoric can be most appropriately used as a means of exerting personal influence on people and events around you" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 5). "Rhetoric starts with the decision made by a human to make some change in the behavior of other humans" (p. 5). The rhetorical perspective comes closest to the notion of human communication as action (rather than motion) because of the focus on **human will**: "The important element offered by a rhetorical view is the operation of the human will" (p. 5).

Rhetoric is **responsive** to others, which is necessary to accomplish goals: "[W]hen we approach the issue of personal power from a rhetorical standpoint, we discover that considerable concern for the other people involved is imperative...rhetoric, as an art, is based on understanding and appeals to the needs of others" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 5). This assumption connects to the term "**dual perspective**," an important rhetorical concept (credited by Phillips to David Butt; see Phillips, 1976, p. 11, and Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 426, 437), which refers to the ability to take others into account when generating messages.

Rhetoric's responsiveness implies **reciprocity**. Rhetoric is reciprocal, that is, addressed to an audience with the power to respond in relatively unpredictable ways. "Every rhetorical situation is uncertain, for the person employing the rhetoric must always take into account the past, present, and future potential for behavior on the part of his audience" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 6). Rhetorical reciprocity implies an **exchange model** that is **orderly and responsive**, reflecting several of the guiding assumptions about human behavior underlying the model: "[T]he kind of talk associated with intimate relationships is a rhetorical exchange, in which both parties to the relationship attempt to manage the other in order to achieve personal goals. . . . [The] rhetoric of private relationship [is] orderly (just as the rhetoric of public discourse is orderly)" (p. 6).

The Shape of an Interpersonal Rhetoric

An interpersonal rhetoric emerges through connection of rhetorical terms to elements of interpersonal relationships/communication:

Rhetoric is represented in interpersonal terms by the role played, the reward offered, and the exchange proposition submitted, as well as the discourse about the medium of exchange. In an interpersonal situation, rhetoric will be reciprocal, i.e., both parties will be making the rhetoric,

for unless both parties participate, there is no exchange, and with no exchange, there is no relationship. (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 40)

The major rhetorical task is persuading others who we are, and interpersonal relationships are the arena in which to seek agreement for the proper definition.

The process of selecting an action likely to bring about a desired result is **rhetorical invention**. In this process, we “analyze the other person and the possibilities of rewarding him in exchange for a given action, and we select our behavior accordingly” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 31). This selection of action is tied to roles: “rhetorical strategy in the interpersonal situation must be seen as role” (p. 153). Rhetorical invention is selecting the proper role to achieve the desired result.

Rhetorical invention from an interpersonal perspective, as from a public perspective, requires a **situational or audience analysis**, in that one is likely to use a strategy that has worked before in a given situation in similar new situations. Here emerges a rhetoric of the particular from Aristotle’s principle that **each situation must be analyzed to discover the available means of persuasion. Rhetorical discovery** implies identifying what it is that evokes the most valuable response from the other person; these responses will be stored and used (a type of **memory**, one could say). Some rewards retain value, and others lose value over time. **Rhetorically speaking, observation is necessary to determine what is rewarding now to the other, which implies that there is no formula and that each instance is unique.**

Additionally, when analyzing each case, the interpersonal rhetor must learn what is expected and then, depending on the result desired, can choose to deliver what is expected or not. From Homans’s theory, we see that “exchange is the primary characteristic of intimate interpersonal behavior” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 35). Homans’s principles of rationality suggest that we do a cost-benefit analysis to see “whether the rhetorical effort made to get a particular behavior is actually worth the effort” (p. 36). **The issue here is about choice and decision-making, which makes the situation rhetorical.**

A critical element of the model is the notion of rhetorical roles: we operate on the basis of roles. We project roles “designed to bring a specific response from other people” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 133). An assessment of the situation helps us choose our roles. Instead of a sociological understanding of role as an expectation of others, role from a rhetorical perspective suggests possibilities for the person that are used to “adjust to

new situations, to modify old ones, and to seek specific responses he finds gratifying” (p. 134). It implies choice of strategy, adaptation to situation, and negotiation with others—a participating audience—to gain supportive responses and resulting self esteem in a given interpersonal rhetorical situation. **“Rhetorical strategy in the interpersonal situation must be seen as role”** (p. 153). **Rhetorical invention is selecting the appropriate role to bring about the desired result** (p. 153).

Phillips’s conception of interpersonal rhetoric could be summarized as follows: Interpersonal rhetoric is orderly, goal-directed, strategic, reciprocal, responsive, situationally-sensitive, identity-implicative communication exchange. Wood (1976) highlights the metaphorical summary offered by Phillips and Metzger (1976) of the human being as “a symbolic merchant” (p. 181). The next section assesses this perspective’s historical trajectory and contributions.

The Interpersonal Rhetorical Model’s Trajectory and Contributions

A few years after the interpersonal rhetorical model saw print in its various forms, Ayres (1984) predicted that the rhetorical and dialogic models of interpersonal communication would see significant development in the coming years. While dialogic approaches have confirmed that prognostication to a large extent (e.g., Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2003; Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), the rhetorical model has yet to move in that direction. There are several possible reasons for why, which I believe relate to other developments in the area of Interpersonal Communication and the breadth and nature of Phillips’s scholarship and pedagogy.

Dialogic and philosophical, phenomenological approaches continued to influence developments in Interpersonal Communication, but with greater attention to theory and less to “therapy,” with therapeutic approaches being tempered by social science findings and the articulation of philosophical differences between Buber’s notion of dialogue and a Rogerian therapeutic approach (Arnett, 1982). In addition, the continued ascendancy of quantitative approaches, along with an approach to interpersonal persuasive goals within a psychological framework (e.g., Dillard, 1989), joined by “social approaches” to interpersonal communication within a social constructionist framework (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995), moved the area in other directions.

The rhetorical approach eclipsed by alignment of the three coordinates of philosophical, quantitative, and social approaches. However, Julia Wood’s perspective on the subject, initially connected to Phillips’s (e.g., Phillips & Wood, 1983), continued apace at the textbook level and carried that tradi-

tion, particularly the notion of “dual perspective” as an alternative to “empathy” or “feeling with” (e.g., Wood, 1998), into hundreds of communication classrooms (I base this latter claim on Bodon, Powell, and Hickson’s 1999 piece on book and article productivity in the field of communication, which ranks Wood as the most prolific author of books among communication scholars). The strategic notion of “taking the perspective of the other” is both rhetorical and reflective of the symbolic interactionist roots of Phillips’s views. These two concepts are the strongest contributors to interpersonal communication theory at the applied pedagogical level through the medium of Wood’s textbooks, as well as their appearance in other pedagogical works (e.g., Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2001).

Rhetorical perspectives related to interpersonal interaction maintain a respectable position in the field of Communication. The concepts of rhetorical sensitivity (Hart & Burks, 1972) and message design logic (O’Keefe, 1988, 1991), the latter of which includes “rhetorical design logic” as the most sophisticated and other-centered of the types, keep salient a rhetorical interpersonal approach at the message level, even though they were not designed specifically as theories of interpersonal relationships and communication. The development of a measure of rhetorical sensitivity (Hart, Carlson, & Eadie, 1980), consistent with expectations of Phillips and Metzger (1976) for future development of this concept, and graduates from schools of research who continued in the constructivist/message design logic tradition may have contributed to the continued viability of those approaches.

Phillips’s wide-ranging interests may have dissipated his energy for advancing his particular position after three books and an article on the topic. Phillips himself, often identified primarily with reticence, may have drawn more attention for that applied interpersonal communication approach rather than for the rhetorical background from which it derives. For example, the Morse and Phelps (1980) reader contains a number of essays referencing Phillips’s reticence work, but his publications concerning the interpersonal rhetorical model appears only in the bibliography, with no mention of it elsewhere in the work. Julia Wood (1995) notes in her tribute to Phillips that his students were “neither clones of him nor of each other,” with “diverse theoretical commitments [and] methodological preferences” (p. 4), which suggests that Phillips was more concerned with idea engagement than with building theoretical “empires” (see also Goodall, 2002).

The immediate move to the practical, applied level through a trade book (Phillips & Goodall, 1983) and a textbook (Phillips & Wood, 1983), the lack of formal axioms and postulates to characterize the theory (as com-

pared to the work, for example, of Berger and colleagues; see Berger & Calabrese, 1975), and the prominence of disputes about methodology and the proper focus of communication research surely would have influenced the prominence of any rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication advanced in the late 1970s.

Cohen (1994), in his history of the discipline, points to ideas prominent among various figures that did not receive attention in one historical moment, but that were received with great vigor when emerging at other moments when advanced by persons of a different era who had, most likely, never encountered the work of the earlier author. The focus on intentionality as opposed to a more “natural” and “unplanned” approach to interpersonal communication may have steered “humanists” away from the model, while lack of “scientific rigor” yielded limited attention at best from members of the field concerned with advancing the area through social science methodology. On the other hand, as Ayres (1984) points out, it may have been Phillips’s stance as a maverick, iconoclast, or “porcupine” (Lentz, 1995), resulting in the limited reception of his rather vigorous and sharply drawn presentation of alternative perspectives (e.g., Phillips, 1981b), that prevented the interpersonal rhetorical model from realizing much in the way of further extension.

Phillips’s work is touted as contributing to the interactionist perspective on interpersonal communication (Fisher, 1978). In his classic volume on perspectives on communication, Fisher offers this analysis of the interactionist approach:

[It] . . . has not generated the amount of research even approaching the reams of studies from the mechanistic or psychological perspectives . . . More than anything else, interactionism has resulted in a heightened awareness or consciousness among members of the scientific community of the shortcomings of more traditional perspectives. If nothing else, the benefits of this heightened consciousness include serious consideration of humanistic principles that had too long been stifled in the nearly scientific rush of communication scholars to achieve what they considered to be the academic respectability of science . . . The communication scholars who function within an interactional perspective have bridged the gaps existing between symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, therapeutic transaction, and dialogue . . . [the interactional approach] is “traceable to symbolic interactionism . . . and the specific research applications to communicative phenomena . . . include the concept of self-disclosure . . .” (p. 187)

If for no other reason, the very existence of alternatives to the “received” view permits the engagement of difference in the realm of ideas and promoted creativity through multiple perspectives.

Connections to Other Work in Interpersonal Communication and Implications

Phillips’s rhetorical model of interpersonal communication addresses the notion of “goals,” a theme prevalent in the work of many interpersonal researchers (e.g., Benoit, 1990; Dillard, 1989; Hewes, Roloff, Planalp, & Seibold, 1990; Kunkel, 2002), and ties it specifically to rhetoric and “will,” intention, and responsibility while framing it within the concepts of reciprocity and interdependence of the “audience/other.” Goals are vital to the definition of rhetoric. Non-goal directed, expressive speech is ineffective in eliciting behavioral change in another and is not directed to an audience and, hence, is not rhetorical (Phillips & Metzger, 1976). However, as Oliver (1967) points out, “expression” in the service of goals describes what Phillips was attempting in his applied interpersonal work on reticence. In order to assess and evaluate one’s message, one might engage in “expression” rather than deliberate construction of a message with an audience in mind, consistent with Phillips and Wood’s (1983) discussion of the “I” and the “me” from symbolic interaction theory, in which the “me” evaluates the “I.” Thus, Phillips redeems expression from pure expressiveness and puts it in the service of “communication” that, according to Oliver, takes the other into account. Phillips’s focus on goals manifests a direct, explicit concern for applied interpersonal communication.

The interpersonal rhetorical model has points in common with uncertainty reduction theory: “People use rhetoric to reduce or eliminate uncertainty in situations . . . [the terms of exchange of the relationship are] resolved . . . by the outcome of the contact of roles deployed rhetorically by the bargainers” (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 367). The interpersonal rhetorical model offers an alternative understanding of the purposes of uncertainty reduction during relational development: to assess and discern the value of continued interaction, and particularly to generate a unique relational culture through “transaction” at the private level.

Phillips offers the concept of rhetorical exchange as a communicatively rich framing of interpersonal interaction, rather than social exchange, and brings the focus explicitly onto the mediating/constructing effect of messages. Phillips does for intimate relational communication from a rhetorical approach what Berger did for uncertainty reduction from a psychological

perspective: he places the focus on messages, with sociological and psychological concepts employed as additive background texture.

This interpersonal rhetorical work's resonance with principles later or concurrently confirmed by the research of others in the field suggests that Phillips's interpersonal rhetorical model provided, at the very least, a "leg" of triangulation for principles of interpersonal communication, as well an early emergence or glimpse of triangulation in method through the qualitative and quantitative data of his study. Ayres (1984) points out possibilities for interpreting data from a number of interpersonal theoretical perspectives, confirming, if not providing rigorous tests of, a given theory. Phillips's approach accommodates, or can address, a number of findings accounted for by other theories and offers alternative insights for the field of interpersonal communication.

Praxis of Interpersonal Communication

Phillips's rhetorical interpersonal model achieved application as interpersonal rhetorical praxis in a number of areas. First, in the area of reticence (e.g., Phillips, 1981a), a rhetorical model of interpersonal communication suggests possibilities for planned action directed toward behavioral change and relational improvement. For doctor-patient communication (Jones & Phillips, 1988), interpersonal communication in the professional service context helps accomplish interpersonal goals of physician and patient. In educational settings (e.g., Phillips, Butt, & Metzger, 1974), interpersonal communication as rhetoric is a vital aspect of the educational process. In organizational communication (e.g., Phillips, 1982), communication in the organization reflects a rhetorical interpersonal approach to recognize and value the role-governed and contextual nature of professional interpersonal communication. In this area, Phillips advocates sensitivity to context by maintaining a work focus and avoiding intimate disclosures or developing private relationships in the workplace. Intimate interpersonal communication (e.g., Phillips & Goodall, 1983) serves an important role in family and friendship and can be studied productively for improved relationships. During his later years, Phillips shifted his applied focus to the intersection of technology and interpersonal communication in gracing several internet discussion lists with frequent and content-rich interaction and, thereby, enriching the lives of many through his personal presence and theoretical contributions (see King, 1995).

Implications of the Rhetorical Model of Interpersonal Communication

The richness of Phillips's rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication has yet to be tapped fully. Hewes, Roloff, Planalp, and Siebold (1990) state: "Interpersonal communication must be approached from theoretical positions that integrate both the individual processes and social forces that shape social interaction" (p. 164). The rhetorical approach has such potential. In this section, I articulate possibilities for further contributions of the interpersonal rhetorical model.

The emphasis on rhetoric in the Phillips model of interpersonal communication provides a link to the discipline that extends beyond the present moment. The concepts of agency and rhetoric, so prominent in this work through its focus on will and choice, can be engaged to move beyond the modernist assumption of lack of situatedness of an agent (see Arnett, 2005). Phillips and Wood (1983) pointed in the direction of a postmodern recognition that agents are situated or embedded in their discussion of gender and communication. The emphasis on rhetoric as applied to interpersonal communication brought beginnings of the recognition that all messages are inherently persuasive because they must hail from an embedded standpoint; discussion of gender increased that emphasis and opened the way to recognition of multiple additional standpoints. Emphasizing the rhetorical nature of discourse reminds us of that situatedness.

Models that focus purely on agency may include sociocultural factors as elements contributing to particular outcomes, but lack the framing that recognizes situatedness as more than an "attribute" of an agent. A rhetorical approach, with its focus on the situation and audience, highlights the notions of "interests" and "standpoints" in particular, which reminds us of diversity of perspective and the need to take difference into account when constructing messages, whether interpersonal or public. Reclaiming rhetoric for intimate interpersonal discourse recognizes the power of standpoint and narrative as persuasive. To escape the trap of emotivism, with its anchoring of "the good" within personal preference rather than in sources external to the self (MacIntyre, 1984), a rhetorical stance recognizes the inherent persuasive nature of all forms of discourse. Even in intimate communication marked by a uniquely formed interpersonal context, we speak from a standpoint.

A renewed focus on rhetorical approaches to interpersonal communication would permit extension into philosophical approaches, such as dialogue conceived from a philosophical hermeneutics approach (Arnett, 1981), whereby persuasive content and stance are recognized explicitly, and the "between" becomes a locus of suasive action newly conceptualized as

learning (Arnett, 2003). This rhetorical learning represents postmodern interpersonal action in a variety of settings. In the public sphere, the notion of “interaction” can be maintained as role-bound and with adherence to public norms and “contracts.” Learning at the more intimate level permits transaction to identify relational cultures that take the learning to a different level, in which more change happens within the “between,” with each participant adopting more of the between as formative and transformative for the embedded self. The embeddedness of each “agent” becomes textured differently through the interaction.

Phillips’s approach to interpersonal communication as rhetorical could benefit from taking account of a narrative perspective (e.g., Fisher, 1989) and, thereby, moving rhetorical action away from agency, while still holding to choice situation, constraint, and will. A textured sense of will that recognizes standpoint and story, much as the Phillips and Wood (1983) textbook began to do, with its recognition of gender as standpoint and the rich focus on lived experience of participants who provided “data,” would be an element of that perspective. A narrative approach could situate “ethos” in the interpersonal rhetorical model differently, wherein credibility is tied to consistency, or a type of interpersonal coherence, within a particular narrative structure. Narrative forms a substratum for coherence of a life, with accounts working persuasively and interpersonally to re-align narrative identity within a story or to explain the move from one narrative location or “ground” to another. For example, conversion experiences as interpersonal rhetoric could be examined as situated within narrative shifts. A potential title for such a work might be: “Reconstituting Narrative Identity: Conversion Stories as Interpersonal Rhetorical Accounts.” Phillips’s recognition of the intentional nature of discourse encourages recognition of the persuasive nature of standpoint in interpersonal communicative interaction, a necessary recognition in a postmodern moment.

References

- Ambrester, M. L. (1997). *A rhetoric of interpersonal communication and relationships*. Bloomington, IN: Tichenor Publishing.
- Ambrester, M. L., & Strause, G. H. (1984). *A rhetoric of interpersonal communication*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Anderson, R., Baxter, L. A., & Cissna, K. N. (Eds.). (2003). *Dialogue: Theorizing difference in communication studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Arnett, R. C. (1981). Toward a phenomenological dialogue. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 45, 201-212.

- Arnett, R. C. (1982). Rogers and Buber: Similarities, yet fundamental differences. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46, 348-372.
- Arnett, R. C. (2003). The responsive "I": Levinas's derivative argument. *Argumentation & Advocacy*, 40, 39-50.
- Arnett, R. C. (2005). *Dialogic confession: Bonhoeffer's rhetoric of responsibility*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Arnett, R. C., & Arneson, P. (1999). *Dialogic civility: Community, hope, and interpersonal relationships*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Ayres, J. (1984). Four approaches to interpersonal communication: Review, observation, prognosis. *Western Journal of Speech Communications*, 48, 408-440.
- Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogue and dialectics*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Bemis, J. L., & Phillips, G. M. (1967). A phenomenological approach to communication theory. *Speech Teacher*, 13, 262-269.
- Benoit, P. J. (1990). The structure of interaction goals. In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 13* (pp. 407-416). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Berger, C. R. (1977). The covering law perspective as a theoretical basis for the study of human communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 7-18.
- Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Theory*, 1, 99-112.
- Bitzer, L. F. (1968). The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1, 1-14.
- Bodon, J., Powell, L., & Hickson, M., III. (1999). An analysis of book versus article productivity based on top research careers. *Communication Research Reports*, 16, 213-222.
- Buber, M. (1948). *Israel and the world: Essays in a time of crisis*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Cissna, K. N., Arnett, R. C., & Anderson, R. (1994). *The reach of dialogue: Confirmation, voice, and community*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Cohen, H. (1994). *The history of speech communication: The emergence of a discipline: 1914-1945*. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.
- Dillard, J. P. (1989). Types of influence goals in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 293-308.
- Fisher, B. A. (1978). *Perspectives on human communication*. New York: Macmillan.
- Fisher, W. (1989). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value and action*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

- Friedman, M. S. (2002). *Martin Buber: The life of dialogue* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Goodall, H. L. (1983). *Human communication: Creating reality*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Goodall, H. L. (2002). Meet your footnote: Gerald Phillips. *American Communication Journal*, 5, Retrieved July 2, 2005, from <http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol5/iss2/phillips.htm>
- Goodall, H. L., Jr., & Phillips, G. M. (1981). Assumption of the burden: Science or criticism? *Communication Quarterly*, 29, 283-296.
- Goodall, H. L., & Phillips, G. M. (1984). *Making it in any organization*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2001). *Close encounters: Communicating in relationships*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Hart, R. P., & Burks, D. M. (1972). Rhetorical sensitivity and social interaction. *Speech Monographs*, 39, 75-91.
- Hart, R. P., Carlson, R. E., & Eadie, W. F. (1980). Attitudes toward communication and the assessment of rhetorical sensitivity. *Communication Monographs*, 47, 1-22.
- Hewes, D. E., Roloff, M. E., Planalp, S., & Seibold, D. R. (1990). Interpersonal communication research: What should we know? In G. M. Phillips & J. T. Wood (Eds.), *Speech communication: Essays to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Speech Communication Association* (pp. 130-180). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Jones, J. A., & Phillips, G. M. (1988). *Communicating with your doctor*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- King, S. A. (1995). *On the impersonal nature of interpersonal cyberspace relationships*. Retrieved July 2, 2005 from <http://webpages.charter.net/stormking/impers.html>
- Knapp, M. L., Daly, J. A., Albada, K. F., & Miller, G. R. (2002). Background and current trends in the study of interpersonal communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (3rd ed., pp. 3-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Knapp, M. L., & Vangelisti, A. L. (1992). *Interpersonal communication and human relationships* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Kunkel, A. (2002). Explaining sex differences in the evaluation of comforting messages: The mediating role of interaction goals. *Communication Reports*, 15, 29-42.
- Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (Ed.). (1995). *Social approaches to communication*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Lentz, T. (1995, October). *Porcupine: Gerald M. Phillips remembered*. Panel presentation, Speech Communication Associate of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh.
- MacIntyre, A. (1984). *After virtue: A study in moral theory* (2nd ed.). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Miller, K.I. (2000). Common ground from the post-positivist perspective: From “straw person” argument to collaborative coexistence. In S.R. Corman & M.S. Poole (Eds.), *Perspectives on organizational communication: Finding common ground* (pp. 46-67). New York: Guildford Press.
- Morse, B.W., & Phelps, L.A. (1980). *Interpersonal communication: A relational perspective*. Minneapolis: Burgess.
- Murray, E., Phillips, G.M., & Truby, J.D. (1969). *Speech: Science-art*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- O’Keefe, B.J. (1988). The logic of message design: Individual differences in reasoning about communication. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 80-103.
- O’Keefe, B.J. (1991). Message design logic and the management of multiple goals. In K. Tracy (Ed.), *Understanding face to face interaction: Issues linking goals and discourse* (pp. 101-117). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Oliver, R.T. (1967). Contributions of the speech profession to the study of human communication. In F.E.X. Dance (Ed.), *Human communication theory: Original Essays* (pp. 264-287). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Phillips, G.M. (1966). *Communication and the small group*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Phillips, G.M. (1971). Of human interaction. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 57, 255-256.
- Phillips, G.M. (1976). Rhetoric and its alternatives as bases for examination of intimate communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 24, 11-23.
- Phillips, G.M. (1978). Rhetoric and the proper study of man. *Communication Education*, 27, 189-201.
- Phillips, G.M. (1981a). *Help for shy people, & anyone else who ever felt ill at ease on entering a room full of strangers*. New York: Dorsett.
- Phillips, G.M. (1981b). Science and the study of human communication: An inquiry from the other side of the two cultures. *Human Communication Research*, 7, 361-370.
- Phillips, G.M. (1982). *Communicating in organizations*. New York: Macmillan.
- Phillips, G.M. (1986). Treatment/training of speaking problems: A study in reification. *Communication Quarterly*, 34, 438-450.
- Phillips, G.M. (August, 1989). Claims do not make a discipline: Answer to Tompkins. *Spectra*, p. 2.

- Phillips, G.M., Butt, D.E., & Metzger, N.J. (1974). *Communication in education: A rhetoric of schooling and learning*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Phillips, G.M., & Erickson, E.C. (1970). *Interpersonal dynamics in the small group*. New York: Random House.
- Phillips, G.M., & Goodall, H.L., Jr. (1983). *Loving & living: Improve your friendships and marriage*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Phillips, G.M., & Metzger, N.J. (1976). *Intimate communication*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Phillips, G.M., Pedersen, D.J., & Wood, J.T. (1979). *Group discussion: A practical guide to participation and leadership*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Phillips, G.M., & Wood J.T. (1983). *Communication and human relationships: The study of interpersonal communication*. New York, Macmillan.
- Reardon, K.K. (1987). *Interpersonal communication: Where minds meet*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Schrag, C.O. (1986). *Communicative praxis and the space of subjectivity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Stewart, J. (1978). Foundations of dialogic communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64, 183-201.
- Stewart, J. (1981). Philosophy of qualitative inquiry: Hermeneutic phenomenology and communication research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 67, 109-120.
- Trenholm, S., & Jensen, A. (2004). *Interpersonal communication* (5th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tubbs, S.L., & Moss, S. (1981). *Interpersonal communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House.
- Ward, S.A., Bluman, D.L., & Dauria, A.F. (1982). Rhetorical sensitivity recast: Theoretical assumptions of an informal interpersonal rhetoric. *Communication Quarterly*, 30, 189-195.
- Wilmot, W. (1987). *Dyadic communication* (3rd ed.). New York: Random House.
- Wilson, G.L., Hantz, A.M., & Hanna, M.S. (1992). *Interpersonal growth through communication* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Wilson, G.L., Hantz, A.M., & Hanna, M.S. (1995). *Interpersonal growth through communication* (4th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark.
- Wood, J.T. (1976). Review of Intimate communication. *Communication Education*, 25, 180-181.
- Wood, J.T. (1992). *Spinning the symbolic web: Human communication and symbolic interaction*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Wood, J.T. (1995, July). In appreciation of Gerald M. Phillips. *Spectra*, 4.

- Wood, J.T. (1996). *Everyday encounters: An introduction to interpersonal communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J.T. (1997a). *Communication in our lives*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J.T. (1997b). *Communication theories in action: An introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J.T. (1998). *Communication mosaics: A new introduction to the field of communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J.T. (2001). *Communication mosaics: An introduction to the field of communication* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wood, J.T. (2004). *Interpersonal communication: Everyday encounters* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

The Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to the Study and Practice of Communication in Groups

Dennis S. Gouran

**Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
and Labor Studies and Industrial Relations**

The Pennsylvania State University

Introduction

Although Professor Gerald M. Phillips is perhaps best known for his work in the area of reticence and the training of individuals experiencing it to deal with the variety of problems that being reticent can pose, as the other essays in this volume serve to make clear, his scholarly interests, if nothing else, were diverse. Hence, it should come as no surprise to readers that he included among those interests communication in groups, especially ones that perform decision-making and problem-solving tasks. In fact, as a graduate student at the University of Iowa in the late 1960s, my first exposure to Professor Phillips's scholarship was not anything he had to say about the subject of reticence, but rather the volume *Communication and the Small Group* (1966) he contributed to the "Bobbs-Merrill Series in Speech Communication" that the late Russel Windes had initiated.

As a Ph.D. candidate enamored with different aspects of group process, and, more particularly, the question of why some groups are able to reach consensus when other, comparably equipped ones are not, I was frustrated by how little attention scholars had paid to this issue, and by how even less that which they did pay reflected a concern with communicative behavior in such groups. Beginning to think that I may have been pursuing the wrong set of concerns, I subsequently disabused myself of that notion when I ran across the following observation by Professor Phillips (1966): "Achieving consensus is the essential purpose of interpersonal communication" [in groups] (p. 39). Bolstered by the words of "an expert" implying that communication is the instrumentality by which groups come to consensus, I retained my interest and went on to specialize in the study of communication in decision-making and problem-solving groups. Hence, I am, in part, writing this retrospective in a sense of belated gratitude for having been encouraged by an individual who, at the time, did not even know of my existence, and despite the fact that he later developed a kind of animus

toward consensus both as the ideal achievement of decision-making and problem-solving groups, in the Habermasian (1996) sense of the term as rationally motivated agreement, and, in a methodological sense, as necessarily the best means for arriving at decision and solving problems (see Phillips, 1984; Phillips & Wood, 1984b; and the essays in Phillips & Wood, 1984b).

As one peruses the assorted writings of Professor Phillips concerning communication in groups, he or she uncovers a variety of contributions. Among these are four that comprise the foci of this document: (a) his introduction of the so-called “Standard Agenda,” which one might think of as an operationalization of John Dewey’s (1910) views regarding “reflective thought” (p. 2), into the lexicon of group communication scholars; (b) his accent on communication as the essential ingredient in group process, particularly in the context of decision making and problem solving; (c) his wedding of improvement in group performance to the cultivation and regular utilization of skills, as opposed to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge; and (d) his abiding concern with the pedagogical aspects of Group Discussion as an area of specialty in the discipline, as well as related efforts to develop competence among those who teach it.

These spheres of interest and action are by no means mutually exclusive. In fact, in consulting what Professor Phillips has written involving the subject of Group Communication, one finds the four to be intricately, if not inextricably, intertwined. For purposes of describing his contributions, however, I have found it necessary to do some unraveling—albeit in a bit, but necessarily artificial manner, by which I am implying something arbitrary. When Professor Phillips uses the term “artificial” and applies it to groups, the reader will later discover, he has a rather different meaning in mind.

Areas of Contribution

Development of “The Standard Agenda”

Although for some reason, Professor Phillips in private, and some not so private, conversations periodically claimed that John Dewey’s (1910) *How We Think* had no impact on his own thinking (incidentally, he also denied using telephones and watching television), the influence is blatantly obvious, as well as in black and white, in both editions of *Communication and the Small Group* (1966, 1973). Phillips was by no means the first scholar interested in group discussion to recognize the value of Dewey’s reflections on the habits of thought that distinguish those who prove to be skilled in problem solving and those who fall short when confronted with felt difficulties, for

which means of resolution are not obvious. James H. McBurney and Kenneth G. Hance (1939), as well as Henry Lee Ewbank and J. Jeffrey Auer (1941), had made that discovery at least 25 years earlier. There was an important difference, however.

Whereas others tended to use Dewey's (1910) description merely as a convenient organizational scheme or framework for the presentation of public discussions, Phillips (1966, 1973) more clearly saw reflective thought as what, in today's parlance, one might refer to as an "input" requiring the sorts of communicative exchanges ("throughputs") that transform it into outcomes, or "outputs," that have desired consequences, such as the discovery of a solution to a problem having a high probability of success, and about which the participants in the process can genuinely be in consensus. To this end, he worked out a multiplex system of questions that he believed the members of problem-solving and decision-making groups should ask of one another, criteria they need to insist be applied in rigorous fashion in responding to the questions, and the conditions they must satisfy as they address the general requirements of the tasks they are performing.

Professor Phillips (1966) referred to his application of Dewey's (1910) views concerning "reflective thought" and the system for engaging in group discussion to which it led him as "The Standard Agenda" (p. 73), a term that he carried into the 1973 edition of his textbook and two editions of another that he co-authored with Julia T. Wood and Douglas J. Pedersen (Phillips, Pedersen, & Wood, 1979; Wood, Phillips, & Pedersen, 1986). Presenting the system in the form of a flow chart, Phillips (1966, 1973) identified twelve main divisions of communicative activity: "specification, definition of problem, fact finding, causation, authority defined, limitation stipulated, goals determined, solutions presented, solution selected, PERT [Program Review and Evaluation Technique], Actuate, and Evaluate" (see p. 74 in the 1966 edition of *Communication and the Small Group* and p. 100 in the 1973 edition).

For each of the twelve categories, Phillips indicated the sorts of issues that the members of a group need to discuss and resolve if they are to generate workable solutions to problems and to make "appropriate choices" (Gouran, 1988). What Phillips generated from Dewey's (1910) conception of reflective thought was a set of actions for engaging in group decision making and problem solving that both pre-dated and is comfortably accommodated within more recent theoretical frameworks, such as Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann's (1977) "Vigilance Model" and Randy Hirokawa and my own "Functional Theory of Communication in Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Groups" (Gouran & Hirokawa, 1996, 2003).

Space limitations do not allow for an exhaustive examination of all of the specific forms of communicative activity that Professor Phillips described, but the following excerpts from the 1973 edition of *Communication and the Small Group* give one a flavor of how his thinking revealed attention to the sorts of interactions in which participants in decision-making and problem-solving discussions need to engage to be confident that they have adequately fulfilled the requirements of their task. In commenting on “specification” and “definition,” Phillips insists that, “It is imperative . . . to agree about the facts needed, if the group is to confine itself to appropriate discussion of the problem” (p. 100). Regarding the problem to be addressed, he raises four questions that members of groups need to answer, not prior to discussion, but as part of it: “Does the problem fall within the legitimate purview of the group?”; “Is the problem pertinent?”; and “Does the wording of the question allow the widest possible latitude for investigation?” (pp. 100-101). Finally, in speaking of solutions that the members of a group may present to others in the form of a program, Phillips contends:

If the solution is to be phrased as a program, particular care must be exercised to avoid nebulous and ambiguous wording. Program planners must recognize that the words in their solutions will be transformed into actions that will be allowed to proceed for a time and then tested to determine their effectiveness. (p. 113)

One of the elements in “The Standard Agenda” that Professor Phillips (1973) included in its development is PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique), which he notes was originally “developed by the United States Navy in 1958 to solve some of the problems of coordinating the Polaris guided-missile program” (p. 114). He saw possibilities for more general applicability and, in his adaptation of PERT, seemed to anticipate what now passes more routinely in scholarly discussions of group process as a form of retrospective called “risk procedure” (Seibold & Krikorian, 1997, p. 301) or “second-chance meeting” (Janis, 1982, p. 270), whereby the members of a group force themselves to take one more look at what they have done in arriving at a decision or proposing a solution to a problem and consider the potential costs of having chosen injudiciously or otherwise inappropriately before committing to their choice.

Perhaps somewhat ironically, most of those writing about Group Discussion as an academic subject prior to 1966 invested communication in

groups with a fairly limited role in the process of reaching sound decisions and attempting to identify effective solutions to problems. For the most part, they seemed to subscribe to what Hirokawa and Salazar (1999) refer to as the “meditational” perspective (p. 168), from which one considers communication as merely the conduit by which inputs (the essential influences on choice) and outcomes become connected. As the preceding discussion suggests, however, Professor Phillips was unwilling to ignore the “black box” of group interaction and saw what people say as having much greater significance as a result of its transformational qualities, that is, its determination of what, in fact, the inputs, conceived of as resources group members may possess, are manifested as, and how those manifestations, in turn, determine, in large part, the outcomes the members of groups achieves, such as the quality of their choices, consensus, the level of cohesion they develop, and the longer-range nature of the interpersonal relationships they form. It is to that contribution that I now turn.

Accent on Communication as the Essential Ingredient in Group Process

At the time Professor Phillips (1966) was writing the first edition of *Communication and the Small Group*, signs of dissatisfaction concerning what scholars in the area of Group Communication were studying (perhaps more accurately were neglecting to study, namely communication) were beginning to take form. Spawning this dissatisfaction were a couple of landmark studies by Thomas M. Scheidel and Laura Crowell (1964, 1966) showing that communication in groups should not be thought of so much in presentational terms, but more as functional, as well as consequential in respect to the outcomes groups achieve. With these demonstrations and others in work by Gouran (1969), Fisher (1970), and Leathers (1969), as well as concerns raised in the New Orleans Conference (see Kibler & Barker, 1968) suggesting that the proper focus of the discipline should be communication acts, a slew of critiques surfaced (Bormann, 1970; Fisher, 1971; Gouran, 1970; Larson, 1971; Mortensen, 1970).

Common to the criticisms was the concern that most of what those in the discipline interested in research relating to groups had produced was derivative, if not merely imitative of the contributions of scholars in other disciplines, such as Sociology and Social Psychology, and seemed to have little to do with communicative acts, which seemed to be rather ironic in light of the discipline’s presumed focus and the new names for its two major associations: The Speech Communication Association and the International Communication Association. In wanting to become like sociologists and social psychologists by identifying with their scholarly agendas, moreover,

there was an even further note of irony in Communication scholars' neglect of interaction, inasmuch as one of the foremost sociologists focusing on groups was Robert Freed Bales (1950), who pioneered interaction analysis (IPA) as a tool of inquiry for understanding such entities. He was, however, the exception rather than the rule in the domains of those in the social sciences that many individuals in Communication sought to emulate, and of whom they were envious.

Although not a part of this particular chorus of critics at the beginning of the 1970s voicing their concerns about the value of much of research involving groups produced by Communication scholars, Professor Phillips, among the representatives of the discipline interested in groups, expressed similar concerns both prior and subsequent to this advent and took a powerful stance that communication is the proper focus for understanding what the members of them do, especially in respect to solving problems and making decisions, as well as accounting for how successfully or unsuccessfully they perform such tasks. He also believed that for those scholars who were interested in communication in groups, what was most important about it, specifically, how it contributes to the achievement of desired outcomes, was not driving their decisions concerning what to study. His feelings about these matters are evident in any number of his publications relating to group process, as the following sample of his observations and comments abundantly reveals.

In *Communication and the Small Group*, Professor Phillips (1966) observes that, "It is necessary to examine the communication process in the small group to determine what behavior leads to successful and unsuccessful outcomes" (p. 18). Consistent with this position is Phillips, Pedersen, and Wood's (1979) observation in *Group Discussion: A Practical Guide to Participation and Leadership* that, "Much of the research on groups has paid little, if any, attention to the content of . . . discussion . . . and has, therefore, left unexamined communication variables capable of exerting considerable influence upon discussion participants, processes, and outcomes" (p. 4). Contrasting the interests of others who deal with groups, such as psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and sociologists in the second edition of *Group Discussion: A Practical Guide to Participation and Leadership*, Wood, Phillips, and Pedersen (1986) observe that, "Speech communication focuses [or at least should] on the speech behavior associated with effective group performance" (p. 3).

Although one can presumably arrive at understandings of successes and failures in group life by other means, from Phillips's perspective, communicative behavior provided the most direct route. Noting, for instance,

that “personality” had been the focus of training in group process and was thought by many to relate to how successfully groups perform given tasks, Phillips and his co-author, sociologist Eugene C. Erickson (1970), in *Interpersonal Dynamics in the Small Group*, concluded that it had proved not to be “particularly helpful” (p. 24) because there are no aspects of personality that are uniformly predictive of outcomes. Even if there were, however, that knowledge would not equip one to know how to function in a group.

On the other hand, according to these scholars, it is possible for once to identify the rhetorical requirements of any given situation and, by focusing on what the members of the group or groups involved say, develop an understanding of what served to satisfy those requirements and what did not, with heightened prospects for subsequently knowing how and how not to interact in similar situations. This view is also implicit in the preface of the second edition of *Group Discussion: A Practical Guide to Participation and Leadership*, in which Wood, Phillips, and Pedersen (1986) indicate, “We offer the background and the instruction by which knowledge can inform performance, informed performance can become skill, and constant skillful behavior can become experience” (p. 12).

“Performance,” in Professor Phillips’s thinking, was virtually interchangeable with the term “Communicative behavior.” In short, he, and his co-authors, regarded communicative behavior as the responsible agent in the determination of the outcomes groups achieve. As the paragraph immediately above reveals, he was also of the strong opinion that we can specify the respects in which such behavior contributes both to successful and unsuccessful outcomes and, hence, have practical bases for preparing and otherwise enabling those who participate in a group discussion to maximize their individual effectiveness and, thereby, that of the group as a whole. It was this sense of conviction that made Professor Phillips prone to inveigh against non-performance centered approaches o teaching about group problem solving and decision making in introductory courses, as well as that lay at the base of his contributions in the third area I noted at the outset, and to which I now direct my attention.

Improvement in the Performance of Members and Groups as a Function of Skills Development: The Proper Domain of Introductory Courses in Group Communication

One of the ongoing tensions in the discipline, at least among those represented at the college level, involved what, for want of a better expression, many people in the field refer to as “theory versus practice controversy” (Phillips, 1990b, p. 278). I first became aware of this particular tension in the 1962-63 Academic Year when David K. Berlo (1963), then Chair in

the Department of Communicative Arts at Michigan State University, visited my undergraduate *alma mater*, Illinois State University, and presented a series of lectures under the general rubric of *Communication and the University*. In addition to doing formal presentations, Professor Berlo also interacted informally on different occasions with students, members of the faculty, and other interested parties. On one of those occasions, he was sharing his views of how worthless performance-centered courses, such as Group Discussion, were. When I volunteered that I had taken such a course and had found it to be “personally” valuable, Professor Berlo’s retort was that, in such a case, the University should re-name the course something along the lines of “Personal Problem Solving,” as it, and others like it, had no relationship to understanding how groups function, even if individuals such as I thought the instruction was useful.

As the conversation continued, it soon became apparent that Professor Berlo’s aversion was to the notion that enrollment in courses accenting formal instruction in how to communicate and engaging in such activities as group discussion did not make individuals better communicators. Rather, to become an effective communicator, he believed, one needs to understand how various processes function and under what circumstances. The tension to which I have been referring did not originate with Berlo (it existed almost from “Day One” following the establishment of The National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking; see Cohen, 1994), but he was certainly an individual who contributed to its often divisive impact.

Among those whom Berlo inspired, instruction in what traditionally had been skills-oriented introductory college courses in Communication began to take on a theoretical character, with emphasis on “what we know about X” rather than “what we can do better in the interests of achieving Y.” To some individuals, not only was Berlo correct, if not profound, in his thinking, but even to have performance-centered courses was anathema, and unbecoming for a discipline with aspirations to qualify as “intellectually respectable.”

There is little mistaking where Professor Phillips stood in this controversy, not only in regard to introductory courses in Group Communication, but also to others in different subfields in the discipline—at least, in his more passionate moments. His position, as expressed in the observations, “If one mucks about the library, a great deal of redundant information can be found. It is mostly about small groups of various types; it has little to do with how to perform in small groups, or how small groups perform” (Phillips, 1990b, p. 270), and, “Discussion cannot be learned without participation in live-action situations in which there is something at stake”

(Phillips, 1973, p. 163), is the very antithesis of the Berlo perspective described above. That is, Professor Phillips considered introductory courses in Group Communication lacking an emphasis on the cultivation and mastery of communicative skills appropriate to the sorts of situations students are likely to encounter in making consequential choices as members of groups to be as useless as Professor Berlo did courses having such an emphasis.

Echoing the philosophy of Professor Phillips, in the Series Editor's foreword to the second edition of *Communication and the Small Group* (Phillips, 1973), Russel Windes observed that, "Many students will never stand on a public platform, but they will continually work with others in a small-group setting to deal with problems at work, in the home, in the community, and at school," and, "For that reason it is imperative that they learn how to deal with others to understand each other and to resolved conflicts" (pp. v-vi). One does not develop such competencies by reading about communication or listening to professors talk about it, or so thought Professor Phillips. Given the amount he had to say about group process in print, however, in taking such a position, Phillips may have presented himself, as well as his devotees with a bit of paradox, as I am confident that in publishing all that he did, he wanted to be read and to have his readers become more proficient as a result. And certainly, no one who knew him would ever have accused him of not caring about being listened to.

I am of the view that, at a deeper level, Professor Phillips did not fully believe what he said at times about "theory v. practice" and may have gone further toward an extreme than he actually wanted, but felt a need to do so to level the playing field for proponents of skills-based instruction in introductory courses in Group Communication and other areas involving the use of speech to achieve goals. His reliance on ancient figures like Aristotle and more contemporary ones, such as John Dewey and Herbert A. Simon, to inform his thinking suggests that he found potentially practical import in abstractions and ideas that did not always have immediately apparent applied value. Moreover, his occasional concessions to non-performance based classroom activities in such statements as, "Most of the time should be spent on actual discussion both in and out of class. Lectures and readings should be devoted to orientation toward group process and explanation of individual behaviors in response to situations the students are likely to encounter" (Phillips, 1990b, p. 283), and, "A pedagogy based on a combination of theory and practice offers the most learning potential to the student, and is the most efficient for the teacher" (Phillips & Erickson, 1970, p. vi), additionally suggest that he was not as rigid in his understanding of how

people can learn to participate effectively in decision-making and problem-solving discussions as one could easily infer from other comments about the “theory-practice” dichotomy that appear in his writings and that I mention below. In any event, I carry this assumption into my characterization of Phillips’s views regarding the importance of concentrating on the cultivation of communication skills for one’s becoming a more effective participant in decision-making and problem-solving discussions.

In the first edition of *Communication and the Small Group*, Phillips (1966) asserts that, “It would be unreasonable to believe that merely telling people to modify their attitudes when they participate in small groups would be sufficient to bring about the desired behavior change” (p. 17). This observation is a precursor to, as well as a somewhat softer view than, what one finds subsequently in the position of a more aggressive Gerald M. Phillips in respect to the knowledge versus skills controversy. For instance, in later writings, Phillips makes such observations as, “A sound pedagogy of discussion demands that participants be trained to be responsive to changes in sociopolitical milieu [*sic*] and to structure decision-making techniques to meet the requirements of members as well as the setting in which the discussion takes place” (Wood & Phillips, 1990, p. 51).

Professor Phillips (1990) is perhaps most explicit about the experiential basis for improving member and group performance in two passages from his introduction to *Teaching How to Work in Groups* and the concluding chapter, which he wrote, and in which he lays out his teaching philosophy. Of three claims that Phillips and his coauthor Lynne Kelly, in the introduction, advance in relation to instruction in Group Discussion, the first, and seemingly most unamenable to exception, is that, “[I]nstruction must focus on performance skills” Kelly and Phillips, 1990, p. 2). In addition, “[I]t is important to do it [provide instruction] under realistic conditions” (p. 3). Third, “[T]o train people to work effectively in groups, the teacher must have information that allows him or her to formulate heuristics” (p. 4), or means by which participants can read situations and respond appropriately without resorting to the use of behavioral prescriptions.

In the concluding chapter, Professor Phillips (1990b), as a justification for his focus on training individuals in particular sets of communication skills, offers the following observation concerning the theory-practice duality with which I began the discussion in this section: “Unless and until satisfactory evidence is offered that people can learn skillful performance behavior by reading theory, training in behavior in artificial groups must be experiential” (p. 278)—his point being that such an approach is the only one in which we can presently place much confidence for producing desired

results. As he observes earlier in the essay, “[We] have a good idea of what people who appear to be successful do when they are in . . . discussions” and know “that it is effective to allow learned to experiment in real settings, to rehearse, and then apply analysis and critique to facilitate improvement” (p. 276). Given the influence of John Dewey (1910) on Phillips’s (1966) development of “The Standard Agenda” (p. 74), his protestations of the latter’s influence notwithstanding, it is a hardly startling revelation that the observation above resonates with Dewey’s (1961) pragmatic, highly experiential (“We learn by doing”) approach to learning in general. This philosophy was clearly at the base of Professor Phillips’s pedagogical contributions to Group Communication, which is the focus and last of the sections of this essay that deal with his contributions to Group Communication.

Contributions to the Teaching of Group Discussion

In addition to his concern with the content of introductory courses in Group Communication and their aims (see, for example, Phillips, 1966, 1973; Phillips, Pedersen, & Wood, 1979; Phillips & Wood, 1984; Wood, Phillips, & Pedersen, 1986; Wood & Phillips 1990), Professor Phillips was enamored with how best to deliver such content and achieve related pedagogical objectives. Late in his career, for instance, he became vitally interested in teaching group discussion via computer-mediated communication (see Phillips & Santoro, 1990; Santoro’s essay in this volume), about which I have more to say later in this document. I mention it here simply to indicate that at a point when many individuals in the profession evince patterns of stability, if not rigidity, in their pedagogy, Professor Phillips was innovatively and creatively exploring, with considerable enthusiasm, I might add, the intersection of technology and improvement in performance in an area of study that historically had assumed face-to-face interaction.

Professor Phillips’s ideas and beliefs, indeed frequently firm convictions, involving discussion pedagogy are implicit in many of his publications concerning communication in groups. However, one uncovers additional evidence of them in more explicit forms in others of his various treatises on the subject. In *Interpersonal Dynamics in the Small Group*, for instance, Professor Phillips and his co-author Eugene Erickson (1970) offer such observations throughout as, “It would be useful to novices at the group discussion process if they could learn early the distinction between sharing of ideas in a group and focused problem solving,” for which “[a] relevant approach . . . would necessarily involve permitting the students to deal with questions about how the class should be conducted, what performances should be, and how they should be evaluated and graded” (p. 13). Some

refer to this approach currently as “problem-based learning.” Arranging for such learning opportunities is at the heart of Phillips’s pedagogy, which he and Erickson describe in greater detail in the introduction to their book and illustrate in the sorts of activities and exercises they include at the ends of the chapters that comprise the volume.

In articulating their approach to teaching students to learn how to participate in groups, Phillips and Erickson (1970) center their philosophy in six propositions. First, discussing problems in groups is essential to the success of society. Second, traditional approaches to teaching participation have been largely detached from reality. Third, learning participation is best under “real” conditions, in which those involved have a stake in the outcome. Fourth, such conditions can be created in the classroom. Fifth, students learn principles of group interaction more effectively via participation than by reading, or hearing from an instructor, about them in isolation. Finally, a pedagogy that combines both theory and practice has the best prospects for optimizing one’s learning how to become a competent performer in decision-making and problem-solving groups.

Professor Phillips’s (1990a) anthology, *Teaching How to Work in Groups*, is a most conspicuous testament to his interest in the pedagogical aspects of courses whose aim is to teach students how to participate in groups with the prospect of their having maximum favorable impact. He reserved the first and final chapters (see Kelly & Phillips, 1990; Phillips, 1990b) for himself. In the first one, he and Lynne Kelly lay out what they see as the central pedagogical issues related to helping people become more effective participants in groups. These include the mission of pedagogy, how to evaluate performance, the incorporation of technology, and the needs for a useful model. The first three matters are ones that other contributors to the volume address. Phillips himself approaches the final one in a chapter he entitled “Theoretical Basis for Instruction in Small Group Performance,” which perhaps represents his most comprehensive and cohesive discussion of how to address the task of teaching others to participate in groups.

In his tract concerning pedagogy for introductory courses in Group Communication, Professor Phillips (1990b) grounds his thinking in three premises. First, he indicates that central to teaching individuals to become competent performers in group decision-making and problem-solving discussions is understanding the need to recognize that the entities in which such interaction occurs are what he refers to as “artificial groups,” or ones “conceived by some human agency to accomplish human goals” (p. 265). He credits this notion to Nobel Laureate Herbert A. Simon (1981). Such recognition, Phillips suggests, has considerable impact on what one chooses

to teach, as well as how.

A second premise undergirding the Phillips (1990b) perspective on pedagogy is that those providing instruction need to be aware that they are teaching others to participate in a process. To participate effectively, group members have to “perform some activities presumably for the good of the order, as well as to follow rules about their personal behavior” (p. 269). It is incumbent on the teacher to make clear how one does this in return for what students, as group members, individually may be seeking as a consequence of their participation, for instance, “protection, remuneration, or affection” (p. 269).

Yet another premise underlying Professor Phillips’s perspective on how to teach students to become proficient contributors to group discussions requires that they regularly engage in oral performance, skill in which is the product of attention to and execution of the same sorts of exercises that one might expect to find in courses in English composition. The notion that simply by placing individuals who have read about groups in them and letting them interact, they, as members, will somehow come to develop and display competence is pedagogically indefensible. “Illegitimate” is the term that Phillips applies to “the assumption that *study about* confers *skill in*” (Phillips & Erickson, 1970, p. xii).

To Professor Phillips, at the introductory course level in Group Communication, teaching and training, if not identical processes, were certainly highly interrelated activities, and, in his estimation, a person not willing to “train” his or her charges to engage in certain types of communicative behavior while eschewing others might be well advised to focus his or her energies in areas of study that do not concern how best to contribute to the groups in which students may find themselves. He felt very strongly about this matter.

What Professor Phillips considers “an appropriate teaching model” (p. 275) entails four responsibilities for instructors. First, the person providing instruction must concentrate on and emphasize students’ enactment of problem-solving behavior, including defining problems, finding facts, evaluating solutions, reporting findings to responsible agents, and/or implementing choices. Second, he or she needs to monitor students’ performance in the interests of being able to provide assessments that can help them as participants in groups to improve in the categories of behavior noted. Third, the teacher needs to place students in “real” situations. On the surface, this might seem to contradict the premise that one recognize that he or she is dealing with artificial groups, but not if he or she recalls the definition of this type of group appearing above. By “real,” moreover, what

Professor Phillips has in mind are situations that are consequential for the participants. To think in other terms, such as having students attempt to solve problems for which they do not possess the requisite resources, is to miss the point of what he has to say regarding this matter. Finally, the person who attempts to help students become better contributors to, and, hence, more effective participants in, groups has three mandatory roles (designing the tasks to be performed, serving as a consultant to the members, and helping students individually who may be having trouble mastering particular skills), but also needs studiously to avoid others (including trying to alter learners' personalities and functioning as a psychological counselor).

Of his pedagogical innovations, the one of which I think Professor Phillips came to be most proud was his development of an on-line version of what then was a course called SpCom 350: Small Group Communication at The Pennsylvania State University. To describe the course in any depth would require more space than I have available. Perhaps more pertinent is that a well-articulated description already exists (see Phillips & Santoro, 1990). In addition, one of the contributors to this volume, Professor Gerald M. Santoro, worked carefully with Professor Phillips in the design and testing of the course and could speak far more knowledgeably than I as to what it entailed. For purposes of this peek into Professor Phillips's contributions to Group Communication, of greater significance than the course itself was his receptivity to innovation that its development reflected.

Professor Phillips enjoyed being surrounded by "toys" (often, very costly ones, I can attest, as one of his former Department Heads), indulging himself in active play, and determining ultimately how they might assist him in teaching and scholarship, which they almost always eventually, if not immediately, did. That he was infatuated with gadgets, devices, and hardware of numerous kinds was quite evident to anyone who ever visited his inner sanctum on the second floor of his home, which functioned as a sort of "control center," from which Phillips, "The Director," engaged in seemingly endless forms and amounts of communicative activity.

Inveterate tinker and thinker that he was, not long after Phillips entered the computer age and uncovered the pleasures of cyberspace, he reached the conclusion that "the teaching of group problem solving" had proved to be "essentially uneconomical" (Phillips & Santoro, 1990b, p. 115). Consequently, he set out to demonstrate that one could achieve the same results and cultivate the same level of skill development among students he or she might expect in conventional face-to-face classroom arrangements, but with greater efficiency and while, at the same time, reaching a larger number of them. His confidence, which to skeptics appeared to be exces-

sive, received vindication in an empirical investigation that his then doctoral advisee Professor Santoro (1990) conducted for his dissertation.

Given the remarkable extensions of technology into today's college, and even secondary and primary school curricula, Professor Phillips's particular design for teaching group discussion via computer-mediated communication might strike one as nothing out of the ordinary; however, in the mid-to-late 1980s, it was ground-breaking to say the least, especially in the context of conventional conceptions of groups, such as Marvin Shaw's (1981) "two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person" (p. 8), that seemed to assume face-to-face encounters and synchronous exchanges among the participants.

Professor Phillips's version of a "classroom without walls," but one also operating under greatly diminished time constraints, I think, gave encouragement to others who shared his view that performance-centered instruction in introductory courses in Group Communication is important, that it should be broadly accessible, and that it need not be restricted only to students who enroll in such courses in resident instruction. How many, I cannot say; however, thanks to the development of University course software that had rudiments in Phillips and Santoro's project, I presently teach an online version of CAS 100B: Effective Speech (Communicating in Groups) for Penn State's World Campus, which, in any given offering, enrolls students from Asia, Europe, and the United States. Some of these students take other courses via resident instruction, but most to date have been non-traditional, location-bound students learning to become more competent group communicators from their homes, but all the while engaging in much the same sorts of activities they would in a conventional classroom environment. Hardly qualifying as a "technogeek," I suspect that I would have been far more hesitant to develop the course, had Professor Phillips not been such a strong champion of the possibilities for technology-based approaches to instruction in Group Communication, especially computer-based ones, at a time when such delivery systems typically struck many unknowledgeable, and otherwise unschooled, individuals as incomprehensible, infeasible, likely to be ineffective, ludicrous, or even completely off the wall.

Conclusion

I began by observing that Professor Phillips is likely to be best remembered in respect to his interest in and scholarship concerning reticence.

However, that was not the only sphere in which he engaged his intellectual prowess. He was certainly no stranger to Group Communication and made a number of important contributions to it as an area of study that I have attempted to chronicle in this overview of his work. In so doing, I hope that I have provided a sufficient degree of illumination that those who read this essay will realize that Professor Phillips is also deserving of being remembered for this other set of contributions.

References

- Bales, R. F. (1950). *Interaction process analysis: A method for the study of small groups*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Berlo, D. K. (1963). *Communication and the university*. Normal: Illinois State Normal University.
- Bormann, E. G. (1970). The paradox and promise of small group research. *Speech Monographs*, 37, 211-217.
- Cohen, H. (1994). *The history of speech communication: The emergence of a discipline, 1914-1945*. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston: D.C. Heath.
- Dewey, J. (1961). *Philosophy of education: Problems of men*. Paterson, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co.
- Ewbank, H. L., & Auer, J. J. (1941). *Discussion and debate: Tools of a democracy*. New York: F.S. Crofts.
- Fisher, B. A. (1970). Decision emergence in small groups: Phases in group decision making, *Speech Monographs*, 37, 53-66.
- Fisher, B. A. (1971). Communication research and the task-oriented group. *Journal of Communication*, 21, 136-149.
- Gouran, D. S. (1969). Variables related to consensus in group discussions of questions of policy. *Speech Monographs*, 36, 387-391.
- Gouran, D. S. (1970). Response to "The paradox and promise of small group research." *Speech Monographs*, 37, 218-219.
- Gouran, D. S. (1988). Group decision making: An approach to integrative research. In C.H. Tardy (Ed.), *A handbook for the study of human communication: Methods and instruments for observing, measuring, and assessing communication processes* (pp. 247-267). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Gouran, D. S., & Hirokawa, R. Y. (1996). Functional theory and communication in decision-making and problem-solving groups: An expanded view. In R. Y. Hirokawa & M. S. Poole (Eds.), *Communication and group decision making* (2nd ed., pp. 55-80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Gouran, D. S., & Hirokawa, R. Y. (2003). Effective decision making and problem solving in groups: A functional perspective. In R. Y. Hirokawa, R. S. Cathcart, L. A. Samovar, & L. D. Henmen (Eds.), *Small group communication theory & practice: An anthology* (8th ed., pp. 27-38). Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse of law and democracy* (W. Rehg, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Hirokawa, R. Y., & Salazar, A. J. (1999). Task-group communication and decision-making performance. In L. R. Frey, D. S. Gouran, & M. S. Poole (Eds.), *The handbook of group communication theory & research* (pp. 167-191). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decision and fiascoes* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Janis, I. L., & Mann, L. (1977). *Decision making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment*. New York: The Free Press.
- Kelly, L., & Phillips, G. M. (1990). Teaching how to make groups work. In G. M. Phillips (Ed.), *Teaching how to work in groups* (pp. 1-10). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Kibler, R. J., & Barker, L. L. (Eds.). (1968). *Conceptual frontiers in Speech Communication*. New York: Speech Association of America.
- Larson, C. E. (1971). Speech Communication research on small groups. *Speech Teacher*, 20, 89-107.
- Leathers, D. G. (1969). Process disruption and measurement in small group communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 55, 287-300.
- McBurney, J. H., & Hance, K. G. (1939). *Discussion in human affairs*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Mortensen, C. D. (1970). The status of small group research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 56, 304-309.
- Phillips, G. M. (1965). PERT as a logical adjunct to the discussion process. *Journal of Communication*, 15, 89-99.
- Phillips, G. M. (1966). *Communication and the small group*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Phillips, G. M. (1973). *Communication and the small group* (2nd ed.) Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Phillips, G. M. (1984). Consensus as cultural tradition: A study of agreements between marital partners. In G. M. Phillips & J. T. Wood (Eds.), *Emergent issues in human decision making* (pp. 97-119). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Phillips, G. M. (Ed.). (1990a). *Teaching how to work in groups*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Phillips, G. M. (1990b). Theoretical basis for instruction in small group performance. In G.M. Phillips (Ed.), *Teaching how to work in groups* (pp. 265-291). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Phillips, G. M., & Erickson, E. C. (1970). *Interpersonal dynamics in the small group*. New York: Random House.
- Phillips, G. M., Pedersen, D. J., & Wood, J. T. (1979). *Group discussion: A practical guide to participation and leadership*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Phillips, G. M., & Santoro, G. M. (1990). Teaching group discussion via computer-mediated communication. In G. M. Phillips (Ed.), *Teaching how to work in groups* (pp. 115-129). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Phillips, G. M., & Wood, J. T. (Eds.). (1984a). *Emergent issues in human decision making*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Phillips, G. M., & Wood, J. T. (1984b). Introduction. In G. M. Phillips & J. T. Wood (Eds.), *Emergent issues in human decision making* (pp. vii-x). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Santoro, G. M. (1988). *Support of group problem-solving instruction through computer-mediated communication*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Scheidel, T. M., & Crowell, L. (1964). Idea development in small discussion groups. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 50, 140-145.
- Scheidel, T. M., & Crowell, L. (1966). Feedback in group communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 52, 273-278.
- Seibold, D. R., & Krikorian, D. H. (1997). Planning and facilitating group meetings. In L. R. Frey & J. K. Barge (Eds.), *Managing group life: Communicating in decision-making groups* (pp. 270-305). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shaw, M. E. (1981). *Group dynamics: The psychology of small group behavior* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Simon, H. (1981). *The sciences of the artificial* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wood, J. T., Phillips, G. M., Pedersen, D. J., & Wood, J. T. (1986). *Group discussion: A practical guide to participation and leadership* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Wood, J. T., & Phillips, G. M. (1990). Teaching groups alternative patterns of decision making. In G. M. Phillips (Ed.), *Teaching how to work in groups* (pp. 50-65). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

The Organization According to Phillips: A Rhetorical Perspective

Nancy J. Wyatt

Associate Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

Penn State Delaware County Campus

“To do two things at once is to do neither” (Lyman, 1862, p. 13)

Introduction

It all began with Paul Harvey. Some of us old folks may remember Paul Harvey’s radio spots, especially his cheerful trademark signoff “Good day!” A popular commentator, Paul Harvey used his program to call attention to issues he thought important. On the fateful day in question, Paul Harvey reviewed a book by Dr. Gerald M. Phillips, Professor of Speech Communication at The Pennsylvania State University. The book was *Loving & Living: Improve Your Friendships and Marriage* (Phillips & Goodall, 1983). The Director of the Planning and Analysis Staff (PAS) of the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), stuck in traffic on his way to work at the Department of Agriculture building in Washington, D.C., heard the review.

PAS was the investigative and enforcement division of the FmHA and directly responsible to the politically appointed Administrator. PAS was charged with determining whether or not the agency carries out its mandate from Congress. A series of meetings with field staff had revealed discontent and malaise, but the exact nature or cause of that condition was not clear. The Director had decided to contract for a communication audit of the agency to identify and describe any problems and, if necessary, propose solutions. Apparently thinking that communication is communication and, hence, any communication scholar is qualified to conduct a communication audit, the Director instructed his deputy to get in touch with Phillips. The deputy, a Penn State alumna, began negotiations, and a year later, the contract was signed. It was a good day for Dr. Phillips, for the Department of Speech Communication, and for a lot of impecunious graduate students. Had the stars been better aligned, it might have been a good day for the FmHA as well.

This essay uses the Farmers Home Administration communication audit as a framework on which to build a description of Phillips’s scholar-

ship and contributions to organizational communication. I worked closely with Phillips in conducting the audit. I was a graduate student in the department at the time, one of many who were included in the study. My dissertation was an analysis and evaluation of the research methodologies used in that audit. We co-authored a case study report of the communication audit process (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988), from which much of this essay is drawn.

The question of Phillips's qualifications to conduct a communication audit of a federal agency apparently never arose in the FmHA. I raise the issue, however, since the purpose of this essay is to analyze Phillips's scholarship in organizational communication. Would a scholar who had specialized in organizational communication be better qualified than a generalist whose scholarly roots were in rhetoric? Phillips was from an earlier generation of scholars, a neo-Renaissance man. He was thoroughly familiar with both classical rhetoric and modern social science theory. His scholarship bridged that divide. His dissertation was *The Theory and Practice of Rhetoric at the Babylonian Talmudic Academies from 70 C.E. to 500 C.E. as Evidenced in the Babylonian Talmud* (1956). Yet, he boasted that he was one of the first communication scholars to learn and apply statistical methods in communication research. He learned to conduct statistical methods in communication research. He learned to conduct statistical analyses before computers made it easy. He published both scholarly and popular books concerning small group communication, public speaking, interpersonal communication, communication apprehension, political communication, and medical communication.

Perspective on Organizational Communication

More to the point of this essay, Phillips had published a textbook entitled *Communicating in Organizations* in 1982. He addressed it to "students who will someday work in our business, educational and social institutions, and government" (p. 1). In the book, he covered issues of organizational structure and governance, interviewing, presentational speaking, interpersonal relationships, group problem-solving, leadership, and writing. These topics would subsequently serve as a structure for the design of the communication audit, as they cover the range of communication situations that are part of the fabric of any organization.

The textbook was not specifically based on the study of any organization; instead, it drew on and reflected Phillips's understanding of communication and his personal experience with organizations. Undoubtedly, his background in academic settings influenced his work on organizational communication, as did his experience in sales during graduate school and as

a communication consultant from 1977 to 1980. *Communicating in Organizations* contained suggested readings at the end of each chapter, but no name index of referenced scholars. Hence, it is difficult to pinpoint the academic sources for the content of the book.

Some of the recommended readings derive from contemporary organizational communication theory; others reflect Phillips's broad-based scholarship in cognate disciplines. For example, the suggested readings for the first chapter include the following titles on organizations and organizational communication: *Handbook of Business Problem Solving* (Albert, 1980), *Beat the System* (Allen, 1980), *How to Run Any Organization* (Caplow, 1976), *Turning Around: The Behavioral Approach to Managing People* (Potter, 1980), *Communication in Organizations* (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976), *Human Behavior in Organizations* (Williams, 1978), and *Organization Theory: Integrating Structure and Behavior* (Dessler, 1980). The sources further include *Through the 80s: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally* (Feather, 1980) published by the World Future Society, and Neil Postman's (1976) *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk*. In more than one chapter, however, the suggested readings also include Phillips's own textbooks relating to public speaking, communication apprehension, and group discussion (Phillips & Zolten, 1976; Phillips, 1981; Phillips & Erickson, 1970; Phillips, Pedersen & Wood, 1979).

What these references help us understand is that this book focused clearly on *communication in an organization*, not on the organization itself. This distinction is an important one. Speaking metaphorically, communication is the water in which we all swim, scholar and practitioner alike. Describing and analyzing the contexts in which we interact and function requires the skills of an expert cultural anthropologist. However, since communication always has to be about something, studying communication also requires a competent knowledge of the subject matter as well. For example, to understand medical communication, it is necessary to know a lot about the practice of medicine, medical conditions, the economic and political situations in which medicine is practiced, etc. However, to focus on the medical issues is to lose sight of the communication that should be the focus of the study. Phillips's scholarship was always informed by a broad knowledge of the subject matter about which he wrote, but he never lost focus on communication as the object of his attention. He did this by grounding his scholarship in a rhetorical perspective. He used some concepts, theories, and research methods from social science to inform his analyses, but his basic approach to any research project was rhetorical.

The structure of *Communication in Organizations* (Phillips, 1982) is essentially a taxonomy of communication situations within organizations.

Taxonomy was one of Phillips's major tools. He devised a taxonomy for any subject that captured his interest. The taxonomy of communication situations in this textbook include information-seeking and employment interviews, public speaking, interpersonal communication, group decision making and problem solving, leadership, and writing. These are all topics about which he had written previously, both for scholarly and general audiences.

Three chapters cover public speaking: "The Presentation of Ideas in Public," "The Preparation of the Speech," and "The Argument of the Case." These three chapters constitute a "quick-and-dirty" public speaking course. For example, the first chapter includes a taxonomy of purposes for public speeches in organizations: information, inspiration, proposals, evaluations, briefings, social events, public relations, professional meetings and technical papers, orientation and instructions, and other situations, e.g., labor negotiations. He describes situation analysis and audience analysis. The next chapter, "The Presentation of the Speech," explains how to set goals, how to develop a speech thesis, how to organize the main ideas using a method known as structuring, how to support ideas, and how to use visual aids. The final chapter dealing with public speaking, "The Argument of the Case," is a short course on argumentation, including accounts of the burden of proof, types of evidence, and false reasoning patterns. These chapters draw on *Structuring Speech, A How-To-Do-It Book about Public Speaking* (Phillips & Zolten, 1976).

The chapter entitled "Personal Communication in the Organization" addresses the following issues: orientation, questions and responses, evaluation, personal relationships, influence on decisions made about you, and problems. The section concerning problems includes the following topics: small talk, competition, cooperation, personal loyalties, mixed attention, and gossip and rumor. This chapter draws on *Intimate Communication* (Phillips & Metzger, 1976). The chapters involving group communication are an amalgam of the pragmatic advice and concepts drawn from several books concerning that subject (Phillips, 1966; Phillips & Erickson, 1970; Phillips, Pedersen, & Wood, 1979).

A very interesting section relating to stress and burnout in the interpersonal communication chapter contains the following advice:

Mobility in organizations means that you will frequently suffer emotional separations.

Moving to a new job is a time of important social decisions.

It is a good idea to avoid complication and unnecessary relationships within the organization.

Your career will place pressure on your family.

Sex can be more trouble than it's worth.

You must not expect too much.

Be aware of the effect economics will have on your life.

You will need to find satisfactions off the job.

You should maintain reasonable human relations on the job.

Alcoholism and drug abuse are sometimes serious problems for people in organizations.

As you become more successful, you may make enemies.
(Phillips, 1983, pp. 189-196)

Each comment is explained in considerable detail with examples. The advice is vintage Phillips. It is absolutely true, eminently pragmatic, and straight to the point. The advice incorporates two of the most important aspects of Phillips's scholarship: he was intellectually rigorous, and he was concerned that his scholarship should improve the lives of ordinary people.

The advice cited above did not derive from research in the area of organizational communication; hardly any studies address these situations. Instead, the headings reflect Phillips's own experience and his observations of the experiences of friends and colleagues in organizations. The advice also incorporates attention to what Phillips called "the dark side." In graduate seminars, he often called attention to the fact that most communication research avoided the twin issues of emotion and evil. Look in the index of any textbook about organizational communication for the following topics: envy, greed, jealousy, anger, hatred, fear, or revenge. You will not find them. We do not talk about them. Yet we all know from experience that we are affected daily by behavior generated by these and similar motivations.

The perspective represented in *Communicating in Organizations* (Phillips, 1982) is that an organization can be viewed as a concatenation of rhetorical situations, not as a substantively different order of communication. This

approach contrasted with the usual approach, which was to frame communication in organizations *sui generis*, and draw on one or more of the following sociological theories: classical management theory, scientific management, human relations, systems theory, or the cultural approach. This is not to say that Phillips was not versed in these perspectives. However, when he set out to write about communication, he took a rhetorical perspective. This perspective also guided the development of the communication audit of the FmHA.

Phillips's book also differed in its being written for new employees, not for managers. Many, if not most, organizational communication books were (and still are) written by professors in business schools or by consultants. They are nearly all based in a view of the organization from the manager's perspective and written to help managers be more effective in enacting their roles. A case in point is Goldhaber's (1983) third edition of *Organizational Communication*. A comparison of the contents of this popular textbook and those in Phillips's textbook highlights the paradigmatic differences in approach to the study of communication.

Why Goldhaber? I chose Goldhaber because in this context he probably served as Phillips's "enemy." I do not recall Phillips mentioning Goldhaber while we were working on the audit, but he always had an enemy. "Enemy" is the term he used for the person who articulated a theoretical position that ran counter to his own concerning whatever topic he was researching. When he was writing about communication apprehension, James McCroskey was his designated enemy. The enemy was always a person, but the relationship was not necessarily personal. I doubt that some of Phillips's enemies were even aware of their serving this function. To Phillips, scholarship was a contest, in which the best kernels of ideas were winnowed from the chaff. In the context of organizational communication, Goldhaber was a perfect enemy.

Goldhaber's work drew exclusively from social science theory and focused narrowly on the organizational context. Goldhaber earned a B.A. in speech, with a minor in political science, an M.A. in communication theory, with a minor in statistics/measurement, and a Ph.D. in organizational communication, with a minor in industrial psychology. His dissertation was entitled *Experimental Effect of Ego Involvement* (Goldhaber Research Associates, 2004). An active communication consultant, Goldhaber had been instrumental in the 1970s in developing the International Communication Association (ICA) communication audit. The ICA communication audit was designed as an off-the-shelf tool that any consultant might use to elicit relevant information she or he could use to identify organizational communica-

tion problems and formulate remedies. Alternatively, communication scholars could use the audit to compare communication structures or processes among organizations to build theory. The audit entailed a plan using a combination of research techniques: questionnaire surveys, interviews, communication diaries, network analysis, and communication experiences. (Goldhaber & Rogers, 1979; Goldhaber, 1983). Goldhaber claimed that the audit could be completed in three months. In a later section, I compare this approach to the FmHA audit Phillips designed. First, however, I want to compare the two textbooks.

Goldhaber's (1983) textbook has four parts. Part One contains chapters on the definition of organizational communication and theories of organizations. Specifically, he describes the classical school, the human relations school, the social systems school, and the systems approach. Part Two presents the basic elements of verbal and nonverbal communication, with an emphasis on the exchange of information through networks. Part Three identifies and describes the basic communication situations in organizations: dyadic, small group, and public communication. Part Four describes the process of designing and implementing organizational communication change. Goldhaber cites several hundred scholars and corporate leaders, focusing on management issues.

Chapter 10 is of particular interest, because it describes how to design and conduct a communication audit. The chapter covers the following topics: a) benefits for organizations and researchers of a communication audit, b) alternative plans for conducting a communication audit, c) primary data-gathering and analysis tools used in a communication audit, d) practical problems associated with data gathering in a communication audit, and e) seven steps in writing a communication audit report.

The purported benefits of a communication audit include measuring and evaluating proposed changes to communication programs, organizational innovations, and organizational structure. Goldhaber contends that a communication audit can also help organizations prepare for expansions or identify and solve organizational problems. He lists 20 possible questions that a communication audit might answer. The questions range from broad ("What environmental factors affect the organization's communication system?") to specific ("What nonverbal communication variables exist within the organization?"), from structural ("What structural factors affect the organization's communication system?") to technical ("What are the most effective communication media under specific conditions?"), as well as from theoretical ("What is the effect of intergroup relationships on the decision-making process in the organization?") to logistical ("How much change in

the organization is realistic? attainable? practical?") (p. 375).

Goldhaber suggests that communication scholars might also gain important insights into communication theory through a communication audit. He sees the following areas as relevant: homophily studies, apprehension studies, credibility studies, contingency studies, network studies, and communication and organizational effectiveness studies. In short, Goldhaber views the communication audit as an important and versatile tool for building communication theory while having utility in solving organizational problems.

The claim that roles of scholar and consultant is, or could be, symbiotic is one with which Phillips differed. In *Studying Organizational Communication*, Phillips wrote:

The person examining an organization must decide whether he or she wants to be an investigator or a philosopher/scientist Philosopher/scientists study organizations to build theory. Investigators, on the other hand, are required to answer specific questions about specific organizations. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 33)

Further evidence of this view appeared in a 1992 commentary, in which Phillips laid out his reasoning. "I declare," he wrote, "that it is impossible to do genuine research while consulting" (p. 220). Consultants, he claimed, have to be consulting, which means they cannot be attending meetings, teaching, and writing papers or books. His evidence was anecdotal, culled from his and his colleagues' experiences, which he reported in some detail. He described several factors that separate the consultant from the scholar. Consultants must serve their clients' needs and heed the clients' wishes, which include solving problems and respecting confidentiality. Organizations do not want to pay for the quality of research necessary for scholarly work, and they do not want proprietary or sensitive information to appear in scholarly journals. In sum, he wrote:

The demands consulting places on you to serve the client subvert the objectivity needed to gather data intelligently. Even if the experience is potentially instructive, it is not possible to retain your own objectivity in the face of the potential seductive power of money and your need to save face. It is no more a part of the academic enterprise than the campus bookstore or the football team. (p. 224)

Phillips was not opposed to consulting, per se. However, he distinguished clearly between the two roles, and he himself chose for the most part to be a “philosopher/scientist.” Nevertheless, being a pragmatist as well as a philosopher, he recognized a good opportunity when it knocked at his door. The FmHA communication audit was a good opportunity to make some money, provide research experience for graduate students, and enhance the reputation of the department and university. In conducting the audit, Phillips was clear that he was active as an investigator assisting the administrator of the FmHA to identify and solve communication problems, not a philosopher building theory. In fact, Phillips never built organizational communication theory. Reflecting on the FmHA communication audit, he wrote:

The investigators in this study of FmHA have their doubts about whether explanation of organizations in general is necessary or even desirable [T]here is no reason to believe that whatever law or rules govern spoken and written discourse should be suspended because it was carried on in a corporate headquarters or a government bureau. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 38)

Phillips found classical rhetoric a sufficient framework to understand organizational communication in the specific case.

The FmHA Communication Audit

We move now from Phillips’s approach to the study of organizational communication to the FmHA audit itself. To understand the audit, it is necessary that one know something of this history and structure of the Farmers Home Administration. The FmHA grew out of the Resettlement Administration, created as a part of the New Deal in 1935. That organization was assigned to the Department of Agriculture in 1937. The original program supervised loans to needy rural people and required recipients to develop farm and home management plans (United States Department of Agriculture, 1984). This program structure remained the central focus of FmHA through its various iterations until its demise in 1994 when it fell victim to the Clinton administration’s wholesale reorganization of the Department of Agriculture. In 1994, the farm programs of FmHA, along with other services for farmers provided by other agencies, were gathered into the Consolidated Farm Service Agency. Other programs supervised by the FmHA were reassigned to new structures within the USDA.

An administrator appointed by the President of the United States headed the FmHA, but civil service employees who did not change with turnover in political administration actually ran it. The agency consisted of three loosely-coupled sections. The National Office in Washington, D.C. interpreted laws into regulations and administered the entire organization. The Finance Office in St. Louis, Missouri kept track of the money. Field offices in every county in the United States and its territories accepted and approved applications for loans and grants. In many ways, the interests of these three parts of the organization were divergent and, sometimes, in conflict. The National Office served Congress; the local officers served farmers. The Finance Office tried to keep track of the money efficiently. It was the only office with any computers at all. All other transactions, e.g., loan applications, were recorded on paper. There were no databases. There was, indeed, very little communication among these three sections.

At the time of the audit in the mid-1980s, the FmHA was responsible not only for farm programs, but also for many other kinds of programs. Over the years, Congress had found the FmHA a convenient structure for a wide variety of programs aimed at improving the lives of rural people. By 1983, the FmHA supervised not only farm programs, but also natural disaster emergency programs, as well as a variety of programs for rural residents. These programs included loans or grants to improve water facilities, housing loans, low rent apartment projects for the elderly, and recreation programs. Nearly every year, Congress made some changes in the programs that included subsidized loans, direct loans, and grants to both individuals and collectives, such as communities and, occasionally, commercial vendors. Between 1935 and the end of fiscal year 1983, FmHA and its predecessors had lent or obligated over \$116 billion in more than 9.3 million loans and grants. The unpaid principal due the FmHA on all loans as of September 30, 1983, totaled over \$58 billion. And in 1983, the year of the audit, the FmHA lent an additional \$7 billion (United States Department of Agriculture, 1984, p. 11). As we were to discover to our dismay, the FmHA was using a modified keypunch computer system to keep track of all of the money going out and coming in.

The task of auditing a bureaucracy with more than 10,000 full-time and 2,000 part-time employees with offices in every county in the United States was a complex one. This complexity was compounded by the political crisis that had been the impetus for the audit. Administrators do not generally commit large chunks of their budgets (in this case \$197,000) just to understand organizational communication. They do it as a last resort to solve specific problems. In the 1980s, corporate farming was putting small

farmers out of business at an alarming rate. The controversy was not only economic, but also political and philosophical. The “family farm” was (and may still be) an icon of American values. Its demise was seen as a national tragedy. News media featured heartbreaking stories; the Sam Shepard/Jessica Lange movie *Country* (Pearce, 1984) dramatized the crisis.

The specific concern that led to the communication audit was the Director’s perception that there was discontent among employees and confusion concerning whether the agency’s main role was making or collecting on loans. Collecting on loans merged into forcing family farms into bankruptcy, an unpopular action for the USDA. It was within this context that the Director of PAS decided to commit funds for a communication audit. Phillips began with those concerns, but he signed his study broadly to investigate a wide variety of possible communication problems. The communication audit consisted of four major components: a questionnaire, interview, observations, and document analysis.

Phillips first developed a pilot questionnaire on the basis of information from PAS. He subsequently used these data to refine the questions for the final version, which he sent to every employee in the organization. The questionnaire appears in Appendix A in *Studying Organizational Communication* (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 281). It consisted of 163 items including demographic items, forced choice questions, and open ended questions. It had a mix of questions about communication in general and participants’ attitudes and opinion about FmHA issues in particular. The return rate varied from a high of 60% from field offices, where employees hoped for improvement in their work situations, to less than 20% from the National and Finance Offices, where employees were suspicious of, if not hostile to, the audit.

Interviews were integral to the audit. Preliminary interviews with farmers who had loans from FmHA helped shape the questionnaire. Later interviews with agency personnel clarified or supplemented questionnaire data. Phillips sent investigators to offices at each level of the organization in a variety of locations, so as to be representative of the kinds of work done by the agency. Interviewers in the field offices followed a schedule, which appears in Appendix B in *Studying Organizational Communication* (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 287). These questions related to policies and procedures. The interview schedule allowed for comparison of answers across locations. Interviewers sent to the National Office and the Finance Office acted as investigative reporters. These interviews were necessary partly because of the low response rate of questionnaires from these offices. The interviews also served to validate and illuminate information elicited in the questionnaire study.

In addition to questionnaires and interviews, Phillips used observation and document analysis as research methodologies. The observations provided a context for interpreting other data and helped to validate questionnaire findings. I remember Phillips describing one observational study involving several field offices. The observer sat in a corner and kept track of the interruptions a single clerk experienced in one morning. As I recall, in one case, the clerk found herself mired in thirteen levels of interruption as she dealt with clients' questions and requests. Only with such hands-on information could we have understood some of the issues that emerged from the study as well as we did.

Phillips did the document analysis himself. Reading reams of paper, he analyzed administrative directives and responses to them, bulletins, advisories, policy statements, letters and memos pertaining to the daily operation of the agency, correspondence between each type of field office and the National Office, press releases, and reports to Congress. These data provided more context both for the design of the questionnaires and interview protocols and for interpretation of the data from questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Comparison to the ICA Communication Audit

In the 1980s, communication was increasingly recognized as an important element in the success or failure of organizations of all kinds. Communication audits had emerged as a method for studying communication in organizations. In the 1970s, scholar/consultants in the International Communication Association (ICA) had developed a standardized communication audit that could be used for a variety of purposes, including analysis of communication patterns within a specific organization. Goldhaber's description of the ICA audit (Goldhaber & Rogers, 1979; Goldhaber, 1983) informs my analysis. The ICA audit is still in use in a variety of settings (Yearwood, 2001). The comparison that follows provides further illustration of Phillips's approach to and understanding of organizational communication.

The ICA communication audit relies on five tools: questionnaires, interviews, reports of communication experiences, communication diaries, and network analysis. Phillips used questionnaires and interviews, but not the other three methodologies. Instead, he employed observation and document analysis. Since both types of audit purport to identify, describe, and remedy communication problems, differences in choice of methodology reflect epistemological positions or logistical considerations. One important

difference between the two approaches is that the ICA audit consists entirely of self-report data. Phillips's decision to supplement self-reports via questionnaires and interviews with observations of communication behavior and analysis of documents entailed a variety of considerations.

Phillips chose not to use communication diaries. Such artifacts include self-report documents of typical communicative activities associated with one's job or position in an organization. Selected participants keep records of these activities over a specified length of time in a form designed by the researcher. Prototypes of communication diaries appear in publications by Goldhaber and Rogers (1979, pp. 155-163) and Goldhaber (1983, pp. 392-394). Participants keep a record of communication activities: conversations, phone calls, meetings, and written materials received and sent for one week. Every day, the participant completes a form on which she or he records her or his name and the name of the person(s) with whom the communication occurred.

Along the left side of the form are a series of categories: initiator (self/other party), channel (face-to-face/telephone/written), kind (job-related/incidental/rumor), length (less than 3 minutes/3 to 15 minutes/15 minutes to 1 hour/over 1 hour), and qualities (useful, important, satisfactory, timely, accurate, excessive, effective). It is not clear whether the items in the final category overlap or are mutually exclusive. For each category, the participant must put a check in a column under a series of numbers that run across the top of the page. This particular prototype has numbers that represent the order of communication contacts through the day. Goldhaber (1983) estimated that completing this form for every communication interaction for a week would require approximately one hour and a half. It is also not clear to me how he came up with this number; obviously, the time required to complete such a form could vary widely as a function of the nature of the participant's occupation. Neither Goldhaber nor Goldhaber and Rogers explain how to analyze the data. Samples of the completed analysis show the number and percentage of contacts in each category. Apparently, the point is to record frequencies for each category.

Although Phillips did not discuss the design of the study with me, I can offer several reasons that he chose not to use communication diaries. First, participants would have no incentive to provide accurate information. Busy people may not be able to enter data immediately after an interaction. Those who would be able to enter data only at the end of a busy day or even a day or two later may fail to remember something or could have distorted recollection. Second, simply completing a form would influence the communication process, as participants would likely be reflecting on their

communicative behavior and its meaning. At the least, they might be tempted to make themselves look good by emphasizing work-related communication interactions, while downplaying other types. Finally, the judgments concerning interactions required by such a form are complex and difficult to make. One harbors such private thoughts and questions as: "When someone gives me information, I may not know whether or not that information is accurate until days or weeks later, and probably not even then. What is incidental communication, anyway, and what makes communication satisfactory? When I manage to tease my supervisor into a snit, that is very satisfactory to me. I doubt that would be what communication consultants had in mind." The likelihood is that a busy person would simply check a few boxes and move on to the next task. For all of these reasons, data gathered by such a methodology are likely to be incomplete and inaccurate. Inaccurate information is as bad as, if not worse than, no information at all.

Phillips had another reason for being skeptical of communication diaries. Response to items on the questionnaire confirmed his observation that most people, including the employees of the FmHA, do not know how to think or talk about communication per se:

We learned quickly that we could not assume that anyone in the organization knew anything at all about communication in the technical sense in which we were trained to think about it We had asked some very simple (to us) questions about communication training and perceived needs for training. The words we used (public speaking, group discussion, voice training, i.e.) did not seem to make sense to our respondents Most people left the item blank. Many wrote in the margins to tell us they didn't know what we were talking about. Our suspicions about standard communication audits were confirmed. Communication "principles" . . . were completely irrelevant to respondents. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 54)

Instead of burdening busy employees with communication diaries that they likely would not or could not complete accurately, Phillips sent observers to watch and record interaction in field offices. Teams of two or more investigators spent an entire day in each office. While one investigator conducted interviews, the other watched the action in the office and recorded what the employees were doing and talking about. The observer had instructions to look for categories of communication specific to the FmHA. For example, the observers listened for disagreements about what the participants felt should be done in given cases, for how staff explained compli-

cated matters to clients, or for problems in making contact with the Finance Office. These focused observations, which investigators trained in the technical understanding of communication conducted, proved to be extremely helpful in analyzing communication problems in the agency. This procedure is, of course, vastly more expensive and time consuming than having participants maintain communication diaries.

Phillip also chose not to use the critical communication experience technique prescribed in the ICA communication audit. For this procedure, participants write descriptions of “critical communication episodes which they felt were representative of typically successful or unsuccessful incidents” (Goldhaber, 1983, p. 391). In Goldhaber and Rogers’s 1979 report, the accounts of communication experiences were included in the questionnaire; in 1983, Goldhaber described the accounts as being collected separately from the questionnaire. The accounts included with the questionnaire in 1979 were coded along with the questionnaire data. They were coded for the organizational level identified in the account, whether participants judged the experienced to be effective or not, and the number of the questionnaire item referenced in the account. In his 1983 discussion of the critical communication technique, Goldhaber characterized these accounts as qualitative data and noted they were useful for their “richness.” However, he also reported that the data were “computer analyzed confidentially” (p. 391). He did not explain how this analysis was carried out. In both the 1979 and 1983 accounts, findings from computer analyses or critical communication experiences appeared as frequency tables. Phillips would have had similar objections to this research method as to the previous one. He gathered qualitative data concerning communication through the agency via interview and observation.

To illustrate the differences between qualitative data gathered by means of a communication experience self-report and qualitative data gathered for the FmHA audit through interviews, I compare three examples from Goldhaber with one interview I conducted in the National Office of the FmHA. The following sample incidents appear in Goldhaber and Rogers (1979). The original handwritten notes have been transcribed and are copied from a reproduction of a computer printout. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors may or may not have been present in the original text.

WELL I WORK AT LAKEVIEW AND MY BOSS IS NAMES [sic] ART AND WE
COMMUNICATE VERY WELL BECAUSE WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER HE GIVE
ME A JO [sic] TO DO AND I DO IT HE DON’T [sic] HAVE TO TELL ME TWICE HE

NEVER DID ANYTHING IN MY SIGHT SO TO ME THAT FINE. (p. 141)

The second example clearly illustrates Phillips's claim for the difficulty ordinary people have in analyzing their own communication:

INCINEBATOR [*sic*] CHUTES WHILE FABRICATING INCINERATOR CHUTES ALL
NEEDED SUPPLIES WERE PROVIDED EMEDIATELY [*sic*]. (p. 141)

The following example appears in Goldhaber's 1983 textbook:

I lack information concerning departmental philosophy and goals because I am not included in monthly departmental meetings or other special meetings. Last month a meeting was held which I didn't know about. As a result, I didn't give my co-workers vital information they needed to do their jobs. (p. 391)

I believe that the two incidents from the 1979 text are actual examples; I am not sure whether or not the 1983 example was an actual or an illustrative example.

The following typical critical incident report is a true one. I collected it in interviews at the National Office. Phillips sent me to that location for a week, with the instruction, to discover what I could about communication in the organization. These interviews were necessary primarily because of the low return rate for questionnaires from that location. PAS set up interviews for me with people in a variety of positions, usually two interviews by telling respondents the literal truth—that I wanted to understand their work. One day I spent half the morning with a man who had case files piled nearly two feet high on both sides of his desk. At first, he said he was too busy to talk. I agreed with him and requested permission simply to watch him work. I sat in a corner of the room for about half an hour. Eventually, he began to tell me about his work—how information came into the office, what happened to it there, where it went, and what happened to it when it left his office.

My informant's task was to adjudicate cases in which farmers appealed negative decisions made by field offices. Most of the appeals were time-sensitive. For example, a farmer might need money for seed to plant wheat, corn, or cotton. The appeal came up from the field office to the informant. Each of the files on his desk was one such case; there must have been fifty

files on his desk that day. The informant told me that it was not unusual for cases to sit on his desk for three weeks before he had time to get to them. He read each case and made a determination. He wrote out in longhand a letter recording his determination. That letter then went to his secretary who typed it on a word processor.

The determination had to be reviewed by the informant's immediate supervisor, who marked changed in longhand on the letter. That revision next went to the supervisor's secretary, who had to type the entire letter with revisions into her word processing program, because her program was incompatible with the word processing program the other secretary used. The revised letter went back to the informant's secretary who had to reenter it into her word processor and later present it to the informant for signature. Finally, the response was mailed to the field office. By that time, of course, the deadline for planting a crop or for responding to any other emergency was long past, and the determination was moot. The informant was literally in despair.

I cannot imagine how the informant could have summarized this situation on a communication experience form or how this experience would have figured into a table of frequencies. "Negative" and "ineffective" seem too mild to describe the Kafkaesque nature of the process that the FmHA was using to respond to emergency appeals and for the agony of the informant's soul at being himself caught up in the machine. I am not even sure whether this incident would qualify as problematic communication with the client or with the immediate supervisor. The client, of course, initiated the communication and suffered the consequences of the communication problem. However, the immediate problem lay in communication with the immediate supervisor. The ultimate cause of the problem was the structure of communication flow through the agency, not the relationship between the informant and his supervisor. After all, the supervisor was equally a victim of the system. As Phillips observed:

Had we used a standard audit questionnaire phrased in communication jargon and asking only generalized questions, we simply would not have gathered pertinent information. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 76)

Phillips further noted that it is not possible to study communication apart from the content of that communication. "Understanding its content was much more important to us than understanding the process, which, after all was relatively simple" (p. 36).

Phillips forewent network analysis. Goldhaber and Rogers (1979) defined a communication network as the intertwined pattern of communication links among roles in an organization (p. 164). Network analysis is based on self-reports of regular communication contacts. Participants complete a form on which they provide information about the people with whom they regularly communicate, whether that communication occurs within the formal or informal communication structure of the organization, and how important the communication is. Goldhaber and Rogers advise researchers to list every person in the organization by name with no more than 25 persons to a page (p. 167). Participants reports communication interactions with persons selected from the list. The 1983 example in Goldhaber's textbook shows job descriptions, e.g., stenographer-secretary, senior stenographer, executive secretary, etc., instead of individuals' names (p. 389). As a group, participants complete these forms in approximately half an hour. Researchers use computer program to probe the data for patterns. At the time this account of network analysis was written, the computer program enabled a research to identify reciprocated and unreciprocated links between individuals and the strength of those links. Researchers could use these data, in turn, to identify groups whose members communicated regularly with one another, as well as connection between groups, or isolated who did not regularly communicate as members of any group. The purpose of the network analysis is to capture the flow of information through the organization.

I cannot authoritatively say why Phillips declined to use network analysis for the FmHA communication audit. My guess is that the size of the organization would be one reason; the cost of designing and administering appropriate forms to an organization with 12,000 members would probably have been prohibitive. Goldhaber and Rogers (1979) warned that "network analysis cannot be completed thoroughly unless 90% of the nodes in the system complete the task properly" (p. 167). In this account, "nodes" referred to individuals. Network analysis would, therefore, only be feasible in a small organization. In 1984, data for each questionnaire item had to be entered into the computer by hand; the number of mistakes and the cost of cleaning the data would possibly have been higher than the value of the information gained. It is also entirely possible that the kinds of questions for which Phillips was seeking answers did not call for such data. Finally, a general understanding of how information flowed through the organization could be inferred from questionnaire, interview, and observational data, which would render network analysis possibly redundant.

In his account of the FmHA audit, Phillips wrote:

We must be clear at the outset whether we believe organizational communication is the study of communicating in general in a setting called “organization” or whether it is the study of a kind of communication that can only take place in an organization. This decision determines whether we draw conclusions about communication or about organizations. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 8)

Phillips was insistent that he was studying communicating in a setting called “organization”; the ICA communication audit purported to study “organizational communication,” a particular species of communication. In fact, the methodologies designed for the ICA communication audit very effectively abstracted communication from the humans who engaged in it. The ICA communication audit focused on organizations in the form of hypostatizations, e.g., networks, attitudes, and patterns of exchange. Phillips studied rhetoric.

The Rhetorical Perspective

Unlike flocks of birds or herds of animals, groupings of humans that we call “organizations” are rhetorical constructions, not natural forms of behavior. Organizational scholars have acknowledged this fact in their recognition that organizations have cultures or climates. Acknowledgement of this fact is also implicit in the recognition that researchers inevitably approach the study of organizations in terms of metaphors: information systems, organisms, cultures, etc. Although science is well suited to the study of natural, instinctive behavior, it is not to the study of purposive human behavior. In any event, the data available to an organizational communication scholar are like smoke from a fire; smoke is evidence of a fire, but it is not the fire itself. “Communication is pervasive throughout the organization, but *it is not the organization*” (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 9). Hence, rhetorical analysis is the appropriate method for studying communication in organizations. This insight forms the basis of Phillips’s contribution to organizational communication.

Rhetorical Analysis

Phillips distinguished clearly between studying organizations for the purpose of theorizing about them, which is the province of sociologists, and studying communication within a specific organization, which is the

province of communication scholars. He argued that general theories like Aristotle's *Politics*, Weber's theory of the bureaucracy, or Machiavelli's theory of power are generally applicable in attempts to understand organizations as entities (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 36). To understand communication in a specific organization, however, scholars can apply theories developed by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian (p. 39). In the first chapter of *Studying Organizational Communication*, Phillips listed seven elements of a rhetorical analysis of an organization:

1. finding out whose job it is to influence others and in what ways;
2. finding out what topics and issues those people are seeking to influence others about;
3. finding out what changes in information, attitude, and/or behavior people seek and from whom;
4. finding out how they seek to bring about those changes (invariably involving either speaking or writing);
5. examining the units of communication and describing form and content;
6. examining the effects of the communication on the people who receive it, and;
7. drawing conclusions about the relative effectiveness of the communication in bringing about the desired effects. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, pp. 35-36)

The FmHA communication audit provided answers to all of these questions. We determined that personnel in the field offices and the National Office tried very hard to influence each other and the Finance Office but were resoundingly unsuccessful. Information went in a circle from the clients/farmers in letters and phone calls articulating their needs to their Congressional representatives, from Congress to the National Office in the form of laws, from the National Office to the field office as regulations, and from the field offices to the clients/farmers as application of the regulations. The Finance Office operated as a separate fiefdom, pursuing its own course and receiving instructions from and responding only to Congress. In fact, the Finance Office contracted all communication with the field offices to private firms authorized to answer only formulaic questions. Furthermore, Finance Office personnel refused to attend meetings with or reply to queries from the National Office. Among the field offices, however, personnel discussed their mutual problems and developed common solutions that enabled the FmHA to continue to operate relatively effectively in

the interests of their clients. This analysis, however, could not serve to build theory about other federal agencies or other organizations.

I wish I could report that the FmHA communication audit was useful in solving the communication problems we identified. Unfortunately for both the FmHA and the researchers, however, none of the recommendations were ever implemented. It is likely that only the PAS staff ever read the report. By the time the report was in final form, the politically appointed Administrator who had commissioned the study had been replaced. The new Administrator was unfamiliar with the project. The report was shelved and ignored.

Defining Organizational Communication

If organizational communication is not a natural fact, scholars need an operational definition of the phenomenon they study. Phillips defined it as talk or writing “*about something related to organizational operations*” (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 10). This definition included communication that is

in the name of the organization or to accomplish some organizational purpose or goal;

about the organization or things, events, people, and conditions associated with the organization;
and

between people who share time and space because of their affiliation with the organization or interest in the organization. (pp 7-8)

By this definition, rumor, small talk, and gossip are not organizational communication, even when they occur within the physical or social context of the organization. Phillips warned that researchers can become caught up in the personal talk that inevitably comes to their attention, but that most of this kind of talk is irrelevant to the organization’s function. However, as he repeatedly emphasized, the organization is an abstraction, not a thing or a place. The organization can exist in any location and at any time when two people carry on communication about organizational business. Consequently, this definition also allows for organizational communication to take place outside the physical and temporal confines of the organization, e.g., on a golf course or in restaurants or hotels, etc. Scholars can identify organizational communication by the topic being discussed, which brings us to the taxonomies Phillips developed for the FmHA audit.

Taxonomy

One of the most valuable of Phillips's contributions to the rhetorical study of organizational communication was his creation of taxonomies that researchers adopting a rhetorical approach can use to organize their data collection and analysis. Some of these lists derive from classical rhetoric. For example, Phillips listed researchers' concerns as "speakers, audiences, situations for discourse, media of discourse, strategies of discourse, preparation and delivery of discourse, and records of discourse" (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 11). In another taxonomy, he enumerated the forms of writing one can analyze: "notes, memos, letters, instructions, directives, proposals, plans, blueprints, production schedules, logistical writing, reports, catalogs, records, ledgers, data files, public relations documents, and sales and advertising documents" (p. 12).

Phillips admonished scholars to decide whether to interpret these artifacts historically—to determine the state of mind of the writers—or hermeneutically—to evaluate the impact of the message on the person receiving it. Researchers might also apply that distinction to understanding communication problems in organizations. For example, personnel in the FmHA National Office used the method of historiography in interpreting laws into regulations; they tried to implement what they conceived to be the "will of Congress." The result was often that the field offices were entirely unable to act. To illustrate, in 1984 Congress set new guidelines for housing loans (referred to colloquially by FmHA personnel as 60/40), which required 40% of all money lent for housing to go to applicants in the lowest income bracket. Regulations required those funds to be distributed before the field offices could lend the other 60% of the money to the better qualified borrowers. In practice, people in the lowest income bracket could not qualify for credit; hence, that money could not be lent, and the rest of the qualified borrowers could not get loans either. This situation was the direct result of interpreting the laws using historiography instead of hermeneutics.

A useful taxonomy lists the problems addressed by organizational research. These include misunderstanding, governance, power, leadership, goals, personnel problems, gossip and rumor, labor and management issues, public relations and public information, clients/customers/products/services, research and development, space/physical plant/ambience, and money. For each of these topics, Phillips provided guidelines for identification and analysis of relevant issues.

Phillips also identified a general set of heuristics that he used in a variety of contexts to assist in problem description. Personally, I have found this taxonomy extraordinarily useful; hence, I present here his modification

of that set of heuristics for the FmHA communication audit:

1. What is going wrong? What is happening that should not be happening? What is not happening that should be happening? Who is getting hurt?
2. What evidence do we have of the former? Did someone tell us about it? If so, how credible is that person? Did we see it? Did we infer it? If we were called before Congress to testify, what argument could we make for our point of view?
3. Is there anything that could be done about it? If so, is there any guarantee that the solution would not bring worse problems? If we had to argue on behalf of our proposal before a panel of decision makers, what is the best case we could make? (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 34)

This set of heuristics is but one of the many pragmatic devices that characterize Phillips's scholarship in organizational as in other areas of communication study.

Ethics

Phillips insisted that researchers never engage in deception: "NEVER, NEVER LIE to the people who provide you with information" (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 258). In the FmHA study, that injunction meant that we always prefaced our requests for information with the qualifier that we could not guarantee that any improvement in working conditions would result from the study. In fact, in the end, nothing did happen. Additionally, we did not promise anonymity. As a matter of fact, however, we discovered that most of our respondents did not want anonymity; they wanted recognition for their contributions.

Serendipity and Silence

Phillips recommended finding knowledgeable people in the organization to help design the study, in particular to identify specific topics unique to the organization. He recommended Hunter's (1953, 1980) method of determining who is actually in charge and to whom people look for direction (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 16). We discovered one of the most critical communication problems in the agency almost by accident in our interviews at the Finance Center in St. Louis. I have already described the isolation of the Finance Center from the rest of the organization. Dr. Tony Lentz and I spent a hot, tedious week in St. Louis in July trying to find out what was going on there. Personnel at that location did their best to stonewall us and

presented an admirable performance of efficiency, competence, and camaraderie. However, in an informal chat with a computer expert over lunch, we discovered that the computer the Finance Center used to process payments was outdated, overloaded, and likely to crash at any minute. When we reported that state of affairs to the Administrator in Washington, D.C., he berated us soundly for spreading false rumors. That is, he berated us soundly until he was called out of the room by the news that the computer had just crashed at the Finance Center. It took years to straighten out the records following that catastrophe.

Organizations are unknown territory to investigators and only partly known to any member of the organization, including the leaders. Often, the most important things are matters members do not talk about openly. The situation with the computer at the Finance Center is a case in point. The computer analyst was willing to tell us the truth about the situation only because he was disaffected because he was being forced to relocate his family from St. Louis to Kansas City. It was fortuitous that we happened to sit beside him at lunch on that particular day.

The serendipitous incident in the cafeteria at the Finance Office illustrates another important facet of investigating organizational communication. The apparent problem may not be the actual problem. As noted above, the most important issues in an organization may never be discussed. Two of the most important issues the FmHA faced were not mentioned by the PAS staff who engaged Phillips and helped to design the study. One issue I have already described—the Congressional mandate to allocate 40% of the housing loans to people who were not qualified for loans before lending the remaining 60% of the funds to qualified borrowers. The second issue was the “Combined Financial Statement,” a complicated financial reporting form farmers were required to complete for the FmHA. The 25-page form had been designed by a relative of a cabinet officer and was so complicated that even accountants were reportedly unable to make sense of it. Field office personnel were obviously frustrated but unable to convince the National Office to address their concerns. The National Office was silent on the issue.

Power and the Dark Side

Phillips's recognition of and willingness to confront the twin topics of power and the dark side of human nature distinguish his organizational communication scholarship. Traditional group and organizational communication scholarship treats power as simply one element of group process, and as though it were benign. Although power can be used for good, it can

also be used to harass, torture, and injure people in organizations, as well as on the street. Women and minorities are particularly aware of this.

Sexual and racial discrimination and harassment are serious topics seldom addressed in communication audits. They were not originally a focus of the FmHA communication audit. However, observations led to the conclusion that there was systematic racial and sexual discrimination in the agency. The only African Americans in the agency were concentrated in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office, and even those individuals did not seem to be particularly concerned by the absence of minorities in others parts of the organization, but conspicuously absent at the upper levels. “Patronizing women was the order of the day in both the national office and the finance office,” Phillip concluded (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 96). Women in the agency were furious about the discrimination and quite vocal about their resentment—but to little effect. Phillips concluded that one means by which the agency maintained the discrimination was the promotion system. Evaluation procedures for promotion emphasized rigid qualifications in agricultural education that African Americans and women were unlikely to possess, whether or not those qualification were relevant to the positions in question. Description of this discrimination in the audit report resulted in the document’s being classified as secret, and making it unavailable to the press and other interested parties.

Power can be institutional or personal. Institutionally, one of the problems facing the FmHA was that real power resided in the Congress. Nearly every year without any consultation with the agency, Congress passed laws that affected the FmHA’s operations and required continuous changes in procedures. For example, in the field offices, personnel had to deal with literally hundreds of application forms for the many types of loans and grants Congress had mandated. Congress had mandated the impossible 60/40 housing loan program. Interest rates also changed regularly, which made it difficult at best for the Finance Office to process loan payments with their outdated equipment. The lack of ability of personnel in the agency to control the conditions under which they worked was a substantial problem, for which no apparent communication fix was possible.

Internally to the agency, we can look at power in interpersonal terms. Phillips wrote that inartistic proof in the form of threats, bribes, etc. are intrinsic to leadership. Leaders, Phillips noted, use inartistic forms of persuasion to get people to do their work and artistic forms to get them to do it well. In a federal bureaucracy, however, the civil service regulations take most of that power away from leaders. In fact, Phillips concluded that the

nature of the bureaucracy drained nearly all power from the system. The only real power was in the Finance Office, where control of information concerning money constituted the basis for power. I have already noted how tightly the head of the Finance Office controlled the information. In the best Machiavellian tradition, he had also recruited fateful lieutenants to serve him personally. Even so, his concern was actually to maintain the most efficient operation with the least possible interference from administrators at the National Office.

Phillips concluded that the dark side of human nature *was* conspicuously absent in any operations in the FmHA. "What we encountered in the field offices of the FmHA," Phillips wrote, "was *universal commitment on the part of agency personnel to give service to family farmers and by doing so, to save that great American institution, the family farm*" (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, p. 52). In the National Office, there was a similar commitment to implement the will of Congress, and in the Finance Office a commitment to processing loans and payments efficiently. The tragic outcome, however, of the dysfunctional flow of information through the agency, coupled with the force of economic and social forces beyond the venue of the agency, eventually led to the demise of the family farm and of the agency that he served it since the Great Depression.

Conclusion

For those readers who always skip to the end to see how the story will come out, I provide a summary of the main points from this essay. Compared to his published work in other areas of communication research, e.g., medical communication and small group communication, Phillips's contribution to organizational communication were relatively limited. He published a textbook for college students in 1982, and he conducted a communication audit of a federal agency, the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) in 1984. Phillips's most important contribution to organizational communication scholarship appears in a book based partly on my dissertation, *Studying Organizational Communication: A Case Study of the Farmers Home Administration* (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988).

Phillips's perspective on organizational communication was rhetorical. He theorized the organization as a location in which rhetoric takes place, not a special case calling for a separate set of communication theories. He argued that scholars can either look at the organization as an entity, in which case they are acting as sociologists, or study communication in organizations, in which case they are acting as rhetorical critics, but they cannot

do both at the same time. He also argued that the roles of consultant and scholar are mutually exclusive. In both areas, Phillips's perspective differed dramatically from traditional organizational communication scholars.

Phillips's (1982) textbook concerning organizational communication drew on his knowledge of rhetoric and his own and his colleague's experience in organizations. It contained the basic elements of his research in the areas of interpersonal communication, public speaking, and small group communication, but within the context of an organization or bureaucracy. He supplemented this theory with some good practical advice concerning common situations new employees face in any organization. As was typical for Phillips, he directly addressed issues of power and emotion, topics that do not generally appear in the indices of organizational texts.

Phillips conceived of organizations as artificially constructed rhetorical structures, not natural groupings of humans. Hence, the research techniques for their study, he felt, should be drawn not from science but from rhetoric. He developed a variety of heuristics and taxonomies that scholars who seek to understand communication in a specific organizational setting can use to focus their analyses. Instead of relying on communication research techniques as the ICA communication audit does, he used the heuristics and taxonomies to guide his choice of methods and issues in the FmHA communication audit. One of the most important findings of the audit was the insight that ordinary people do not think of their lives in terms of communication situations or rhetorical strategies. This fact, Phillips contended, invalidates much of the data gathered by the self-report techniques he eschewed: communication diaries, critical incident reports, and network analyses.

One of these things I appreciated most about Phillips was his pragmatism. He advised researchers never to lie, not just because lying is unethical, but because it might sabotage the research. He also advised consultants that very often executives who authorize and pay for communication audits may not be the best sources of information concerning what is actually going on in the organization. Phillips thought that the proper way to understand communication in an organization is to treat the organization as a foreign country and seek knowledgeable insiders as guides to the critical issues in that organization. He warned researchers to pay careful attention to issues of power and emotion as they design the research and as they interpret the results.

At heart Phillips was both a rhetor and a rhetorician. The basic premise of classical rhetoric that underlies the political system of democracy is that given an equal hearing, the best ideas will win out in the end (Phillips,

1983, p. 128). In the forum of the communication discipline, Goldhaber and his colleagues' social scientific approach to the study of organizational communication appears to have won out over Phillips's rhetorical approach. Organizational communication as a sub-discipline is flourishing. Scholar/consultants give speeches and write articles and books expounding new theories every year. Rhetorical studies of organizational communication are rare, if not nonexistent. I must conclude that a) Phillip was wrong, b) he failed to make his case well, or c) the premise is flawed. Frankly, as a woman and a feminist, my own confidence in the validity of the premise has always been shaky, and this outcome further undermines my faith in the claim. I believe that a) Phillips's rhetorical perspective was the best one, b) he made his case well, and c) (typically) no one was listening. The truth can win out only if people are listening with open minds.

Phillips, the optimist, argued for the application of rhetoric to every aspect of the human condition. He always sought the truth, and he sought to make his research useful to ordinary people. Phillips, the cynic, probably felt that human motivations darker than the desire for truth would win out in the end. He knew that organizational scholars would end up doing it for the money (Phillips, 1992). He acknowledged as much when he wrote that:

Those who commission the studies are often sufficiently fearful of the results that they would be most satisfied with no finding at all. Indeed, the idea of being able to say "We did a study" is much more important than talking about what the study discovered. (Wyatt & Phillips, 1988, pp. 52-53)

That being the case, the quicker and more economical standard communication audit is as good as the more time-consuming and costly rhetorical audit. However, from my own perspective, Phillips's most admirable quality was his refusal to subordinate his respect for truth to expedience. His organizational communication scholarship should be an inspiration for all communication scholars.

Paul Harvey can have had no idea of the consequences of his review of Phillips's book on that fateful day when he took note of it. In fact, we, none of us, know the consequences of our smallest action, a phenomenon known in meteorology as the butterfly effect. Let us hope that the essays in this collection may reap rewards as rich as those that grew out of Mr. Harvey's review.

References

- Albert, K.J. (1980). *Handbook of business problem solving*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Allen, R.F. (1980). *Beat the system*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Caplow, T. (1976). *How to run any organization*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Dessler, G. (1980). *Organizational theory: Integrating structure and behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Feather, F. (Ed.). (1980). *Through the 80s: Thinking globally, acting locally*. Washington, DC: World Future Society
- Goldhaber, G.M. (1983). *Organizational communication* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Goldhaber, G.M., & Rogers, D.P. (1979). *Auditing organizational communication systems: The ICA communication audit*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Goldhaber Research Associates, L.L.C. (2004). *Gerald M. Goldhaber resume/curriculum vita*. Retrieved May 10, 2005, from http://www.goldhaber.com/about_drg.php
- Hunter, F. (1953). *Community power structure*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Hunter, F. (1980). *Community power succession*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lyman, D., Jr. (1862). *The moral sayings of Publius Syrus, a Roman slave*. New York: Andrew J. Graham.
- Pearce, R. (Director). (1984). *Country* [Motion picture]. United States: Touchstone Pictures.
- Phillips, G.M. (1982). *Communicating in organizations*. New York: Macmillan.
- Phillips, G.M. (1966). *Communication and the small group*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Phillips, G.M. (1981). *Help for shy people*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Spectrum.
- Phillips, G.M. (1956). *The theory and practice of rhetoric at the Babylonian Talmudic Academies from 70 C.E. to 500 C.E. as evidenced in the Babylonian Talmud*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
- Phillips, G.M. (1992). They do it for the money. *Journal of Applied Communication*, 20, 219-224.
- Phillips, G.M., & Erickson, E.G. (1970). *Interpersonal dynamics in the small group*. New York: Random House.

- Phillips, G.M., & Goodall, H.L., Jr. (1983). *Loving & living: Improve your friendships and marriage*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Phillips, G.M., & Metzger, N.J. (1976). *Intimate communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Phillips, G.M., Pedersen, D.J., & Wood J.T. (1979). *Group discussion: A practical guide to participation and leadership*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Phillips, G.M., & Zolten, J. (1976). *Structuring speech: A how-to-do-it book about public speaking*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Postman, N. (1976). *Crazy talk, stupid talk*. New York: Delacorte.
- Potter, B.A. (1980). *Turning around: The behavioral approach to managing people*. New York: Amacom.
- Rogers, E.M., & Agarwala-Rogers, R. (1976). *Communication in organizations*. New York: Free Press.
- United States Department of Agriculture. (1984). *A brief history of the Farmers Home Administration*. Washington, DC: USDA.
- Williams, J.C. (1978). *Human behavior in organizations*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- Wyatt, N., & Phillips, G.M. (1988). *Studying organizational communication: A case study of the Farmers Home Administration*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Yearwood, D.L. (2001, May/June). What we have here is a failure to communicate: Conducting a communications audit within your agency. *American Jails: The Magazine of the American Jail Association*, 15(2), 69-72.

**Confessions of a Born-Again Humanist
or
How Jerry Phillips Influenced My Academic Career**

Gerald M. Santoro

Assistant Professor of Information Sciences and Technology

The Pennsylvania State University

In a 1960s spy movie, the hero confronts a super computer, and it appears that all is lost. After all, how could the mere human defeat such an intelligent and logical nemesis? The hero types in a single question: “Why?” The computer then proceeds to overheat and self-destruct and, in so doing, saves the day for humanity.

When I was asked to write about the influence Jerry Phillips has had on my computer-mediated communication research and academic career, I immediately thought of that movie clip. Although I cannot remember which movie or TV series it was from, the scenario was a common one used to profess the ultimate triumph of human over machine. Coming from an extremely technical background, my close relationship with Jerry Phillips, and my selection of him as my Ph.D. advisor, may have seemed strange. However, it was his way of poking through the details to get to the “why” of technology that intrigued and influenced me.

It is important to note that Jerry was a very close friend during the mere 11 years that I knew him (1984-1995). In addition to being his student and advisee, I became his poker buddy, computer guru, and social confidant. He and Nancy Phillips literally welcomed me into their family. So it would be fair to say that his influence on me was profound, as well as lasting, and went far beyond academic concerns.

Jerry was a sounding board for my conflicted views of the direction information technology seemed to be following in the early days of PCs and networks (BITNET, UUCP, and ARPAnet). It helped that we had similar backgrounds as poor city kids, but there the similarities ended. Jerry was grounded in the Arts and Humanities and was an expert on reticence. I was a master computer programmer with a strong CompSci/InfoSci background and a solid career as manager of microcomputer systems in the Penn State Computer Information Systems (CIS) Department.

Our first meeting in 1984 set part of the stage for our friendship. I was manager of a unit of CIS called the Microcomputer Information and

Support Center. Jerry walked into my office and proudly declared that he had a computer problem that he did not think I could solve. He said this with a theatrical flair that made it clear that he was hoping I would rise to the challenge.

I found a solution. It had to do with interfacing an early IBM PC and an IBM DisplayWriter Word Processing System. In short order, we were discussing my interest in pursuing a Ph.D. degree. Having just earned my MSIS at Pitt in the Interdisciplinary Department of Information Science, I was unhappy that Penn State had no Information Sciences Department. Jerry and I discussed my interests, and at this point, he hit me with what he considered to be the fundamental question in my interest area—“Why?” Not “why” as in the purpose of life. Rather, “why,” as in the purpose of information technologies or for that matter, technologies at all. Why systems? Why electronic mail and chat? Why do these things exist, and why are they in the form that they are? Of course, these are somewhat rhetorical questions—which was not surprising, since Jerry Phillips was a master of rhetoric in all of its forms.

My academic problem was more basic. There was no Department of Information Sciences at Penn State at that time. What I actually wanted to do would require petitioning the Graduate School for an interdisciplinary program combining Speech Communication and Computer Science. If I wanted to do this right, I had to reconcile an area of study that spanned the Liberal Arts and the Computational Sciences. My reasoning had to make sense to both areas. Therefore, the value of “why.” The answer was as obvious as it was sensitive. Technology exists for the people who use it. People are the answer to why. So an understanding of people was crucial to an understanding of the “why” of information technologies. My program would combine the study of human communication with a focus on leading edge programming and systems (artificial intelligence, networking, etc.).

Although Jerry wanted me to continue the AI focus of my MSIS these into Ph.D. work in speech development expert systems (eventually done by Bradley Erlwein), I instead wanted to study the emerging area of computer-mediated communication. This was the beginning of a new trend in human interaction as a worldwide communications network (the Internet) emerged—aided and constrained by technology and systems design.

I wanted my exploration of the “why” of technology to focus on human use and abuse of information/communication technologies. I wanted to examine how the design of technologies influences the way people use them. I was intrigued by the fact that technology designers kept missing the mark here. For example, the many DVD and VCR players flashing

“12:00” is a reflection of the complexity of setting the date/time in their user interface. How is it that designers could miss this? Is it possible to design technologies that are difficult to misuse?

My specific focus became even more limited—to the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in higher education. This, of course, was a marriage of convenience. Universities were among the few places where wide-scale access to CMC was available. It was also lucky timing, as the field of Distance Education had just started to form, so the topic was certainly pertinent. More importantly, my appointment as a manager in the computer center allowed me access to resources that were beyond the reach of other graduate students.

During this time (1985-1987), the Internet was in existence, but very few people knew about it or had any use for it. The World Wide Web had not yet been developed, and PCs were still rather complicated in running either DOS or some early version of the Mac Operating System. Other computer networks, primarily BITNET and UUCP, were handling academic traffic, but they only linked certain units at some schools. Although we had created a number of PC labs throughout the Penn State system, most computing still occurred via the 3 large IBM VM/CMS mainframe computers. These systems were capable of handling as many as 1800 simultaneous users through direct terminal or PC dial-up connection (at a whopping 1200 baud).

Some early work was going on in the field of Distance Education at this time, as those concerned sought to find a way to make the traditional correspondence course more interactive with the aid of electronic mail, message boards, and such. Early efforts focused on defining the systems and functions required and developing the software to support them. A number of problems emerged. Two of the greatest ones included the lack of a common user-client interface and general deficiencies in computer skills. Both of these problems would later be addressed by the development of the World Wide Web.

A more fundamental problem was with the basic notion of the use of CMC in teaching and learning. Many, if not most, faculty were having trouble understanding the “why” behind applying CMC to their classes. Indeed, a few embraced the emerging technology, but most either ran from it in fear or tried to ignore it as inconsequential. Some of this animus clearly resulted from the fact that subject experts suddenly felt like novices, but masked the sense of inadequacy by posing such questions as, “Why should an expert on English Literature learn to use technology in a class he or she has been teaching successfully for years?” Some of the resistance also resulted from feelings that since teaching/learning is a communicative process involving

humans, the use of technology would surely serve to dehumanize it to the detriment of all. Finally, there were the practical issues. Who would help us when the technology breaks down? Who would train the students and assist them in learning how to use the technology?

The bottom line was that faculty were not convinced that there was any significant advantage to be gained from all of the work necessary to integrate CMC technology effectively into a class. Some still are not convinced. At the same time, those who saw the potential value understood that any effort in this direction would have to be scalable to be genuinely effective. The use of technology would be a boondoggle if students were required to learn different designs and approaches for every class. Today, this has been addressed by adopting a single course management system (Angel) for all Penn State courses. This standardization allows for economy of development, as well as considerable peer-support among students and faculty. However, in the mid-1980s this was far from fruition. The immediate problem was demonstrating that an advantage was possible.

As I began formulating my dissertation proposal, I also came to understand something about Jerry's own path of discovery with technology. Although I had known of him during the 1970s, I did not know him personally, nor had I taken any classes with him. It came as quite a revelation when I was told that in those days Jerry was very anti-technology. One story was that he would refuse papers printed from a computer (very rudimentary typesetting was available on the mainframe) because he found them "distasteful." I once asked him directly what happened to cause him to change his position so dramatically. His matter-of-fact reply was, "I was wrong." Of course, I was surprised and delighted by his candor, but I was more impressed by how he smiled when he said it. His smile conveyed a genuine delight at learning, even when that might challenge his beliefs. Here was someone who was actually proud of being wrong because it meant that he was now closer to being "right."

This attitude, when applied to research, had a major impact on me. Like many young scholars, I had deeply held beliefs, and I wanted to find the evidence to support them. Jerry showed me that it is important for researchers to question their assumptions and leave any compromising baggage behind. The goal was not to achieve particular results, but clear results that would help to advance current levels of knowledge. If such results served to contradict my beliefs, then I should view that as a victory. This lesson has helped me many times as I sought to develop an understanding of user cognitive and social demographics and their implications for system design.

Related to this was Jerry's emphasis on ethics in research. He felt strongly about the rights of participants in studies and the obligation of researchers always to respect them. Indeed, it would become clear that much more interesting, and perhaps more accurate, results could be gained from studies that violated participants' privacy or that used scenarios to fool them. However, his sense of ethics required that such approaches be avoided at all costs. As dedicated as Jerry was to finding truth, he was even more committed to ethical behavior. He was extremely clear that he expected this in his students and his colleagues.

I experienced this directly in the running of the Speech Communication 350 groupware that formed the basis for my dissertation. Our idea was to demonstrate the potential advantage from use of CMC in a class focusing on group problem-solving and group process. More specifically, and taking a measured approach, we sought to show that there was no measurable disadvantage to using CMC in such a course, so that the potential advantages could then be explored.

Because of my programming skill, I was able to create groupware functions from the existing mainframe CMC tools, including electronic mail, message boards, and chat rooms. My modified system allowed for retaining information about transactions and the creation of chat transcripts. Ethical considerations demanded that the students be alerted to the fact that such transcripts would also be kept. They had to acknowledge this as part of an informed consent agreement. They were also reminded of the transcripts as the class began.

When data started coming in, it became clear to me that many of the students were either forgetting about the transcripts or did not appear to care. Chat transcripts contained messages about other people in the class that could be hurtful or, at least, could violate privacy. Consequently, I made a decision to eliminate the chat transcripts and proceeded to erase the ones that existed to that point. I did not even want to be tempted to read them myself, and so I perhaps acted in haste. I was worried about how I would explain this to Jerry. Surely, some of that information would be useful, but how could we acquire it without crossing the ethics line?

It turned out that Jerry was delighted with my decision and completely supported it. We had a long discussion concerning how one may sometimes have to make a hard choice to preserve academic integrity. I was impressed with this and determined that part of my future study of CMC would involve the technical, social, and psychological factors that result in misuse of technology. (The SPCOM-350 project would later receive an EDUCOM Joe Wyatt Award for Innovation in Academic Technology.)

Jerry was never one to shy away from controversy when he felt there was something positive to be gained. This was good because his own interest in exploring applications of CMC sometimes evoked hostility among his peers. For some, technology was a harbinger of an Orwellian dystopia. Rather than back down, Jerry reveled in a good argument if he thought that he, as well as others, could learn something in the process. As an example, Jerry arranged a debate concerning Artificial Intelligence for an Eastern Communication Association Convention in Boston. The issue was the potential for the application of AI to Speech Education. Aside from Jerry and me (the pro-AI side), the other participants were James Chesebro from Queens College and James McCroskey from the University of West Virginia.

I was understandably nervous about the prospect having to debate against two senior scholars in communication. However, the evening before, Professor McCroskey admitted to me over a few shots of bourbon that his son (an AI researcher) had told him he would lose the debate. I later found that Professor Chesebro was also sympathetic to my side. The idea of the debate, it turned out, was not to resolve the issue, but rather to stimulate discussion among other communication professionals. Jerry felt that the problem was not with those who opposed technology, but with those who knew nothing about technology and who opposed it on philosophical or emotional grounds. Perhaps this debate would lead such people to learn about technology, despite their beliefs.

This was the counterpart to “why”/“why not”—in this case, why scholars would be content to criticize new technique (technology) out of hand while often being proud of their lack of understanding of it. Why not do the learning and research to affirm or disconfirm their view? Indeed, they may be right, but, if so, they did not really know why. To Jerry, such resistance to discovery was a real shame, an opportunity lost.

Jerry was not reluctant to utilize emerging network applications as I introduced them to him. Occasionally, he made mistakes, some quite funny, but to him, this was all in the quest for learning. One memorable episode occurred in 1986 when I acquainted Jerry with the UUCP Netnews bulletin-board system. I specifically showed him the newsgroup sci.astro because of the news of the upcoming passage of Halley’s Comet. A few nights later, I discovered that Jerry had, as a joke, posted a minor adult-themed limerick about the Comet on the newsgroup and was flamed dozens of times! (He never posted there again.)

Jerry also became the unintentional leader of a “virtual community” that emerged from a Listserv conference on liberal politics (QC-L). Within

a short time, the conference had dozens of members from academic, government, and business communities worldwide. By 1994, when it became clear to the members that Jerry's health was fragile, they decided to honor him by flying from all over the world to State College to visit him. Normally, I would have thought that he would be delighted, and in a sense, he was, but he was more worried.

We often talked about the abuse of technology or, in the case of CMC, the use of technology by people to abuse each other. We also were intrigued by the possibility of computer-supported codependency, which later acquired the label "Internet Addiction Syndrome." In short, Jerry was not looking forward to having 20-30 people suddenly go from the comfort of Cyberspace to the immediacy of face-to-face contact. As a result, the gatherings were at my home so that Jerry could retreat to a safe haven when he felt overwhelmed.

Jerry only experienced the very beginnings of the World Wide Web, which I was working (in my day job at CIS) to promote throughout the University. Many people would be surprised to hear that his initial reaction to the Web was one of skepticism. He felt that there would be an explosion of "garbage" and that the promise would be reduced to a cyber-analog of the Jerry Springer show. In part, he was right, but he was also wrong, and I am sure he would have been delighted by that.

Although Jerry has been gone for 10 years now, his words and methods continue to influence my study of technology. Properly critiquing the usability of any technology or system requires an understanding of the why behind its design, development, and deployment. Often, the issue of "why" must be examined to formulate effective technology policy, or at least two understand who the stakeholders are and the reasons that policy evolves as it does.

He also influenced me to believe that, at a fundamental level, the design of information technology is a reflection of our own biological communication processes. This is, in part, perhaps, because these processes define the world as we know it and how we can relate to it. (This is similar to the "hard" argument that AI, as a creation of the human brain, must mimic human mental processes and can, therefore, aid in understanding them—i.e., the systems theory of mind.) This view is becoming more widely accepted as the term "ICT" (Information/Communication Technology) gradually comes to replace "IT" (Information Technology) in academic journals.

No discussion of Jerry's influence would be complete without mentioning the influence he had on me as a teacher. Jerry's classes were inform-

ative, fascinating, and entertaining. They were often relaxed, with many of his seminars being held in the living room of his home. They were often punctuated with his anecdotes or jokes, with a dramatic quality (accents and all) that served to keep student interest focused. As I approach my first real teaching assignment, Jerry showed me his secret.

He believed that teaching/learning is a rhetorical process. The purpose of any lecture is not so much to impart knowledge, but rather to stimulate the audience to care about that knowledge. As long as the course material was pedagogically sound, to Jerry, there was nothing wrong with also making it fun. Whereas I had found many small seminar classes to be nothing more than mini-lecture formats, Jerry's were true seminars. He wanted discussion and thought. In at least one graduate seminar, he declared on the first day that all students would receive an A, so we could feel free to work and accept critique without being focused on a grade.

Jerry told me that he hated the notion of being a "mentor" and preferred instead to view students as "young colleagues." He worries about the "cult of personality" and how good teachers could allow their egos to interfere in ways that are detrimental to students. Even so, I know for a fact that Jerry was a mentor to scores of individuals, many of whom I have met at conferences or through online discussions. We were so proud of our association with Jerry that we referred to ourselves as the "Phillipsonians."

Jerry made it clear to us that he wanted honest discussion and thought. We were not required to agree with him, but we did have to support our constant self-esteem strokes. Rather, he sought "adults" who were not afraid to rise to his level and do the work necessary to operate there. He was not averse to looking his students in the eye and telling us that he believed in us and that he was confident of our ability to succeed if we wanted to. That, more than anything else, enabled me to move through graduate school. I have tried to follow Jerry's example in my own classes. The result has been multiple teaching awards, great relations with my students, and a career for which I am more grateful.

I miss Jerry and often wonder where his interests would have taken him if he were still alive. Perhaps he would be heavily into Blogging; perhaps Wiki's would be more his taste, or a home CAVE (computer-aided virtual environment), such as I prototyped at my home last winter. I am certain that he would always be looking through the details of various CMC technologies to the bottom line issues of "why." I hope I can carry on that task.



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- *Offering outstanding disciplinary and interdisciplinary degrees at the graduate level and undergraduate levels all focused on educating today's communications professionals.*

**DOCTOR OF SCIENCE
INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

- *A 3-year executive style doctorate, emphasizing the confluence of communications studies with complex information systems.*

**MASTER OF SCIENCE
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

- *30 Credit interdisciplinary masters combining traditional rhetorical theory, communication students with a technology emphasis.*

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNET INFORMATION SYSTEMS
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT**

- *Both degrees emphasizing the study of Information Sciences from a systems perspective.*

BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN:

Information Sciences (ABET/CAC_)
Information Systems Management Communications (ABET/CAC)
Media Management
Advertising

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Graduate Programs

Assoc Dean Fred Kohun
412-262-8395
kohun@rmu.edu

Communications Programs

Dr. Rex L. Crawley
412-262-8593
crawley@rmu.edu

Computer & Information Systems Programs

Dr. David Wood
412-262-8393
Wood@rmu.edu

General info on all Programs: Dean David Jamison, 412-262-8393 or jamison@rmu.edu

PENNS^TATE.

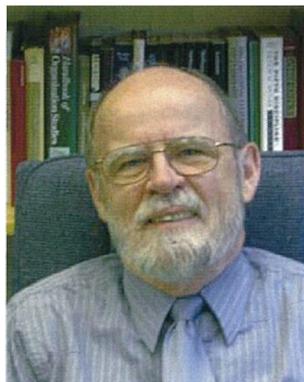


**The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences
at The Pennsylvania State University**

thanks

Professor Dennis S. Gouran

*for his generous service to the
Pennsylvania Communication Association,
his influential contributions to research, and
his leadership in the discipline.*



This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity
And the diversity of its workforce.

U.Ed. LBA 06-85