

Dialogic Scholarship as the Praxis of Tenacious Hope: A Review of the Monographs of Ronald C. Arnett

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Abstract: This essay offers a reflection on Ronald C. Arnett’s scholarly career. Informed by our experiences working with him as graduate research assistants in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, we summarize the achievements in his curriculum vitae and review his six single-authored books published by Southern Illinois University Press. Our interpretive exploration of Arnett’s contributions to communication scholarship relies upon Calvin O. Schrag’s (1986) notion of communicative praxis to emphasize the *by*, *about*, and *for* of scholarly engagement. We texture Schrag’s appreciation of communicative praxis with the metaphors of narrative, dialogue, and tenacious hope evident in Arnett’s published work and pedagogical commitments. In this review, we offer a story of dialogic communication scholarship by Arnett, about ideas, and for others.

Keywords: communication scholarship; dialogic editing; praxis; Arnett, Ronald C.

“Dialogic ethics is a charge of responsibility for learning about difference, working with differences, and respecting those different from ourselves—protecting the differences of partiality that matter. The ethical prescription for today is tenacious hope, driven not by metaphysical ideology or strategic technique, but by honest admission of partiality and responsive attentiveness to the revelatory, the unexpected. The hope for this current hour resides in a dialogic ethics based on learning akin to a master of jazz who understands the confines of a given piece and then interacts creatively with what is present, transforming the given without dishonoring its proper importance and power.”
—Ronald C. Arnett (2018b, 280–81)

“Dialogic editing is a model of integrality in practice. It provides value for the individuals involved in the experience of active, ethical, and innovative thinkers together. It not only redefines the entire editing process by having an

inclusive process, but it also cultivates skills and tools for a lifetime of working with others. Dialogic editing can help to develop one's identity around shared understanding, shared responsibility, and shared experiences grounded in collective moral imaginaries."
— Annette M. Holba (2024, 49)

Recent issues of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* have celebrated the legacy of Ronald C. Arnett as a scholar, administrator, and teacher. This essay arises from our recollections as graduate assistants who worked with Arnett in the culminating years of his career at Duquesne University. As we drafted this article together, we both found ourselves drawn back to countless shared experiences of sitting in College Hall 340, the main office of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, waiting for our research meetings to begin. Students and faculty members would bustle in and out of the main office, picking up books, making copies, or getting coffee, forming relationships through the everyday work of the graduate program. This formative experience exposed us to the disciplined research practices of a prolific author who was named a Distinguished Scholar by the National Communication Association in 2017. Here, we seek to connect a survey of Arnett's monographs with observations about his unique way of nurturing a tenacious commitment to dialogic scholarship as professional praxis.

Introduction

Arnett's scholarly career reveals coordinates of dialogic ethical praxis in interpretive communication research. Communicative praxis, as described by Calvin O. Schrag (1986), highlights communication as *by* someone, *about* something, and *for* someone. Applying this work to scholarship requires researchers to consider their own situatedness within the world and its impact on inquiry (*by* someone), the theoretical content of research (*about* something), and its public implications (*for* someone). These directives demonstrate Schrag's commitment to understanding praxis as theory-informed action and guide our examination of praxis in communication scholarship.

We align the *by*, *about*, and *for* of communicative praxis with the three coordinates of a narrative, according to Arnett (2002): story, practices, and public support. Arnett conceptualized narrative as broader than story, involving an embodied action orientation that yields an understanding of past, present, and future shared among a community. Elsewhere, we have articulated Arnett's dialogic approach to research as an exemplar of philosophically grounded narrative engagement (Mancino and Kearney 2024). Here, we note how the tripartite nature of narrative can align with the coordinates of communicative praxis. Narrative's emphasis on story legitimizes the *by* of embedded, responsive agency. Its emphasis on practices reflects the significance of the *about* in a story-formed person (Arnett 2005a). Finally, narrative's commitment to the public sphere connects a communicative act to its implications *for* others.

This essay offers a glimpse into our experiences of the *by*, *about*, and *for* of Arnett's corpus as a narrative of dialogic scholarly engagement. Thus, it proceeds in three sections that follow the characteristic themes of communicative praxis and narrative. The first section, "By Arnett: A Story-Formed Scholarly Career," reviews Arnett's professional biography and curriculum vitae. The second section, "About Ideas: Practices of Dialogic Scholarship," identifies praxes of dialogic communication scholarship in each of Arnett's single-authored books. The third section, "For Others: Reflections and Implications," draws upon everyday practices of dialogic research to understand how they shape the engagement of this form of inquiry in communication studies. Throughout this account, we hope to emphasize the connections between communicative praxis and the significance of narrative for interpreting the legacy of Arnett's contributions to the fields of communication and dialogue. These connections also point toward public, action-oriented implications for engaging in the ongoing pursuit of dialogic communication research.

By Arnett: A Story-Formed Scholarly Career

At the time of his retirement in 2022, Arnett's scholarly biography in the archives of the Communication Ethics Institute read as follows:

Ronald C. Arnett (PhD, Ohio University, 1978) is Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, the Patricia Doherty Yoder and Ronald Wolfe Endowed Chair in Communication Ethics (2015–2022), and the Henry Koren, C.S.Sp., Endowed Chair for Scholarly Excellence (2010–2015) at Duquesne University. He has coedited seven books and authored/coauthored twelve books, most recently *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope: Contemporary Implications of the Scottish Enlightenment* (2022). He is the recipient of nine book awards, including the 2022 Top Book Award from the National Communication Association's Communication Ethics Division for *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope: Contemporary Implications of the Scottish Enlightenment*, the 2017 Top Book Award from the National Communication Association's Communication Ethics Division and 2017 Distinguished Book Award from the National Communication Association's Philosophy of Communication Division for his book *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics*, and the 2013 Top Book Award for *Communication Ethics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt's Rhetoric of Warning and Hope* from the National Communication Association's Communication Ethics Division. In 2017, he was named Distinguished Scholar by the National Communication Association. He is the recipient of the 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarship from Duquesne University and is the recipient of the 2005 Scholar of the Year Award from the Religious Communication Association. Arnett was named Centennial Scholar of Communication and Centennial Scholar of Philosophy of Communication by the Eastern Communication Association in 2009 and received its Distinguished Service Award in 2019. Arnett has completed three editorships for the *Journal of Communication and Religion* and is the former editor of the *Review of Communication*. He has also

served as the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Communication Association, Executive Director of the Eastern Communication Association, and President of the Semiotic Society of America.

This biography highlights central accomplishments that positioned Arnett as a leading scholar within the field of communication, particularly among the subfields of communication ethics, philosophy of communication, and dialogic ethics. A story-informed review of his curriculum vitae offers additional texture that provides insight into the *by* of Arnett's scholarly corpus. Our account is divided into three subsections that reveal points of meaning in the story of his career: "Mentoring," "Institutional Homes," and "Scholarly Shifts." Each subsection ends with summary insights that inform our understanding of Arnett's narrative engagement of communicative praxis.

Mentoring

Arnett attributed his interests in dialogue and philosophy of communication to the influence of his undergraduate and graduate mentors. Arnett graduated from Manchester College (now Manchester University) in 1974 with a BS in psychology. There, Arnett studied under Paul Keller, which led to a mentoring relationship that continued into Arnett's scholarly career. Keller's book *Monologue to Dialogue* (1973), coauthored with Charles T. Brown, was one of the earliest interpersonal communication textbooks as well as one of the first sources to advocate for dialogue as a communicative orientation. Arnett frequently referenced the mentorship of Keller. For instance, he provided a dedication to him in the *Manchester College Bulletin of the Peace Studies Institute* (Arnett 1983b).

Arnett also repeatedly expressed his admiration and gratitude for his undergraduate professor Paul Boase and his dissertation director Ray Wagner. Arnett offered three presentations in honor of Boase at Speech Communication Association (SCA)/National Communication Association (NCA) conferences in 1996, 2001, and 2003 (Arnett 1996; Arnett 2001b; Arnett and Arneson 2003). In 2016, Arnett received the Paul H. Boase Prize for Scholarship from the Ohio Communication Association. His address for that occasion acknowledged Boase and Wagner as teachers and friends: "I roomed with [Boase] at conferences for over twenty years often when I had no money and he assisted with payment. . . . My Masters [sic] thesis and dissertation director was Ray Wagner. I owe my scholarly engagement in the field of communication largely to Paul and Ray. I am thankful" (Arnett 2016, 45). Arnett received an MA from Ohio University in 1975, majoring in interpersonal communication with a minor in counseling, and a PhD from the same institution in 1978, majoring in interpersonal communication and minoring in philosophy. At Ohio University, Arnett also studied with Algis Mickunas, whom he credited as one of the three foundational scholars of philosophy of communication (Arnett 2017b). Mickunas (2017) wrote the foreword to Arnett's book on Emmanuel Levinas, signaling their ongoing relationship. Arnett's early works offer traces of his mentors' voices that have persisted throughout his corpus.

By the end of his writing career, Arnett also included the voices of those he was mentoring. For instance, a 2014 article coauthored with a former undergraduate teaching assistant, Sarah (Flinko) DeJuliis, references Arnett's experience as an undergraduate teaching assistant for Keller (Flinko and Arnett 2014). Arnett later coauthored a book on crisis communication leadership with DeJuliis and another graduate student, Matthew Corr (Arnett, DeJuliis, and Corr 2017). This was not the first book coauthored with graduate student mentees: Arnett had invited Leeanne Bell McManus into the writing of *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference* (2009) as a graduate student and later coauthored *Conflict between Persons: The Origins of Leadership* (2014) with McManus and a former student, Amanda McKendree. Following his retirement, Arnett invited two more graduate students to contribute in his place to new editions of these texts—Michael R. Kearney to the third edition of *Communication Ethics Literacy* (Fritz, McManus, and Kearney 2023) and Preston Carmack to the third edition of *Conflict between Persons*, which is currently underway.

Arnett also involved former students in dialogic scholarly engagement as they established their own communication careers. For instance, he wrote *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships* (1999) with Pat Arneson, a former student at St. Cloud State University who later taught alongside him at Duquesne, and *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (2012) with Annette M. Holba, a former Duquesne student. Notably, Holba assumed editorship of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* upon Arnett's retirement. These examples provide just a sample of a practice of scholarly invitation that is a characteristic aspect of Arnett's dialogic approach, presenting communicative praxis as an ongoing narrative engagement of mentoring and exploring ideas.

The practice of mentoring is notable, both as it informed Arnett's scholarly pursuits and as it relates to the story that shaped the narrative of his dialogic scholarly engagement. The dialogic nature of mentoring is evident throughout his writings, echoing the voices of those who mentored him and those he mentored. The practice of mentoring offers an invitation into dialogic scholarly engagement, the profession/vocation, and the importance of institutional homes.

Institutional Homes

Positionality, including one's institutional situatedness, matters in philosophical understandings of narrative and communicative praxis (Arnett and Arneson 1999; Fritz 2013). Arnett's career included positions in four institutional homes: (a) faculty member at St. Cloud State University from 1977 to 1984; (b) department chair and faculty member at Marquette University from 1984 to 1987; (c) vice president/dean and faculty member at Manchester College from 1987 to 1993; and (d) department chair and faculty member in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University from 1993 to 2022. Arnett's situatedness within these institutions provided meaningful context for his work. His curriculum vitae includes multiple contributions to Manchester College publications (Arnett 1983a, 1989a, 1989b) and to Duquesne University's *Spiritual*

Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Arnett 2011, 2014c, 2020). Arnett's inclination to publish in venues aligned with mission, not the field of communication alone, signaled his appreciation for local institutional homes in cultivating a dialogic ethic of education.

Endowed chairs, which recognize faculty excellence tied to the interests and values of a university and a donor, further illustrate the importance of institutional situatedness in Arnett's career. Arnett held two endowed chairs while working at Duquesne University. Arnett's position as the inaugural recipient of the Henry Koren, C.S.Sp., Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence was succeeded by the creation of a new chair, the Patricia Doherty Yoder and Ronald Wolfe Endowed Chair in Communication Ethics. Notably, the Koren chair was tailored to general scholarly influence, while the Yoder–Wolfe endowed chair signified institutional validation of communication ethics as a scholarly area of prominence.

Arnett involved himself in scholarship that nourished a sense of place, displaying a commitment that moved beyond the desire for career advancement alone. Arnett was acutely aware that institutions matter, providing the ground from which work occurs (Arnett 1992; Bellah et al. 1985, 1991). Just as the practice of mentoring shapes scholarly direction, institutional homes offer invitations for considering mission-oriented concerns that provide opportunities for contributing from the distinctiveness of one's story-informed perspective. Tracing Arnett's publication record offers insight into scholarly shifts that reflect these dialogic invitations.

Scholarly Shifts

Arnett's first monograph, *Dwell in Peace* (1980), presents the fruits of his dissertation research on nonviolence and dialogic communication. *Dwell in Peace* profoundly influenced Arnett's career and reflected indebtedness to his mentors. *Dwell in Peace* contended that doing violence to others can occur on an everyday level of communicative exchange. Drawing deeply upon the dialogic tradition, Arnett invoked the work of philosophers like Martin Buber, Maurice Friedman, and Viktor Frankl to stress both the difficulty and the value of a commitment to nonviolent peacemaking in everyday relationships. Selections from this book were later reprinted in the third and fourth editions of John Stewart's *Bridges Not Walls* and in an anthology published by the Church of the Brethren (Brumbaugh-Cayford 2017). The book was also adapted into a discussion guide by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (Knudsen-Hoffman, n.d.). In *Dwell in Peace*, Arnett laid a theoretical foundation for what he would later articulate as a dialogic communication ethic.

Arnett's research on dialogic approaches in the field of communication was consistently guided by Buber's unique perspective, which emerged as a recurring theme in his dissertation and subsequent writings. His 1981 article "Toward a Phenomenological Dialogue," published in the *Western Journal of Communication*, propelled a significant scholarly exchange with Rob Anderson regarding differing interpretations of Buber's dialogic approach (Anderson 1982; Arnett 1982). Arnett considered Anderson a colleague rather than an ideological opponent; they went

on to coedit a book with Kenneth N. Cissna that presented and explored major texts across the dialogic tradition (Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett 1994). Arnett's careful differentiation of his reading of Buber from Anderson's emphasized the vital importance of multiple perspectives on dialogue and paved the way for Arnett's 1986 text *Communication and Community: Implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue* published by Southern Illinois University Press, which provided institutional ground for the progression and development of Arnett's scholarship.

While Buber's influence on Arnett extended before and after his 1986 work, his commitment to learning from the unfamiliar kept him from developing a singular reputation as a Buberian scholar. Such learning, in turn, prompted him to revisit some of his early contentions about Buber. For instance, Arnett moved from a primarily negative view of monologue in 1986 to multiple journal articles acknowledging the necessity of monologue for dialogic engagement (Arnett 2012, 2014a, 2015). The rise of social polarization in the decades since the publication of *Communication and Community* demonstrates the continued timeliness of the book, yet Arnett resisted confusing the temporal nature of scholarship with monolithic unchanging assertions.

Arnett's interests in communication ethics and philosophy of communication forged a path through multiple and diverse regions of learning. At the point of publication of *Communication and Community*, Arnett had published at least fifteen academic articles and three book reviews and had given at least ten academic presentations, mostly dealing with themes of dialogue, ethics, and conflict. His 1987 essay "The Hurried Professor: What Is Our Disciplinary Responsibility?" published in the *Minnesota Speech Communication Journal* focused these interests by pointing toward a locally grounded, institutionally rooted ethic of participation in the project of higher education. The question "What is our disciplinary responsibility?" prefigured Arnett's 1992 work *Dialogic Education: Conversation about Ideas and between Persons*, reprinted in 1997.

Dialogic Education arises out of a moment of crisis, of questioning the continued value of the narrative of higher education and a teacher's ability to find meaningful vocational work within it. Arnett's vision of higher education as a troubled community builds upon his earlier work on Buber. This conception of communities of higher education emerges around common centers committed to ideas (for example, the significance of faculty research and the distinctiveness of education beyond information acquisition), people (for example, faculty-student dynamics and the protection and promotion of college stakeholder relationships), and places (for example, the physical and virtual spaces of a campus that provide ground for learning, connection, and deliberation). *Dialogic Education* articulates the ongoing relevance of these common centers under threat. Though situated in the early 1990s, Arnett's response to crises in higher education speaks to recurring questions today, from declining enrollments to questions of affordability, record-level student debt, college closures, an influx of short-term faculty contracts, the elimination of tenure, and the politicization of curriculum and content. *Dialogic Education* recommends practices that can continue to benefit communities of higher education.

In the years between *Dialogic Education* and *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility* (2005a), Arnett coauthored a work on dialogic civility with Pat Arneson (Arnett and Arneson 1999) and coedited two books on communication ethics and dialogue (Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett 1994; Makau and Arnett 1997). Arnett (2001a) also authored a major article for the international journal *Communication Theory* advancing dialogic civility as pragmatic ethical praxis, moving an interpersonal metaphor into the public domain. Surveying the development of his scholarship over the span of more than a decade, we note two broad shifts: a philosophically rich articulation of "metaphor" for the communication discipline and a growing emphasis on religious communication scholarship as dialogue emerging from monologic narrative ground.

These scholarly interests have an interdependent and reflexive connection to the development of the doctoral program in rhetoric in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University. Under Arnett's departmental leadership, the program emerged with a dual mission: "The Ethical Difference" and "Walking the Humanities into the Marketplace." In an essay detailing the latter motto, Arnett (2003c) called for a dialogic engagement between the humanities and the marketplace beyond capitalist exchange; the key was the public domain of issues and ideas in contention. Arnett's administrative experiences within the department and doctoral program informed the direction of his scholarship.

As Arnett's career progressed, he continued to seek out new thinkers, whom he read for the first time even as he revisited authors who had shaped his earlier works. The blending of authorial perspectives demonstrates Umberto Eco's (2005) notion of hypertextuality, emphasizing the creative potential of revisiting an old text from a new vantage point. For instance, Arnett's (1985a, 1985b) early writings on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's peacemaking and nonviolence laid a foundation for a book project two decades later that articulated communication ethics implications of Bonhoeffer's life and scholarship (Arnett 2005a). The metaphor that Arnett chose for the book title, *Dialogic Confession*, emerged only after long engagement with Bonhoeffer's ideas, highlighting the revelatory and temporal nature of scholarly insight.

Notably, Arnett did not turn to Bonhoeffer to uncover religious communication, but his engagement with Bonhoeffer led him in this direction. The dialogic confession of texts speaking reveals different insights to its readers. For instance, the writings of Buber or Levinas could have revealed religious communication insight. However, Arnett's engagement with these texts guided his research toward different implications. In this way, approaching texts with the revelatory spirit of dialogic communicative praxis produces a mode of inquiry that is distinct from an argument-oriented approach that turns to a book with the presupposition of prescribed implications. While each mode of research can produce meaningful insight, the former demonstrates a dialogic engagement of learning from others.

In the eight years between *Dialogic Confession* and *Communication Ethics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt's Rhetoric of Warning and Hope* (2013), Arnett's scholarly output generally accelerated, due in large part to his first endowed chair. His

publications showed an increasing turn toward philosophy of communication and its emphasis on historicity (e.g., Arnett 2010a). Along with Buber and Bonhoeffer, Arnett maintained longstanding regard for Hannah Arendt, presenting a conference paper on her as early as 2003 (Arnett 2003a) and publishing a book chapter on her thought in 2007 (Arnett 2007b). The Arendt book project demanded extensive historical context, above and beyond previous works. Arendt's situatedness at a juncture of modern and postmodern perspectives resonated with Arnett's understanding of the complexity of contending dialogic perspectives.

Arnett's next book, *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics* (2017), continued this exploration of dialogic perspectives and historicity. Emmanuel Levinas offered an acknowledged alternative position to Buber. Arnett's exploration of the divergent dialogic strands of Buber and Levinas occurred over decades: his first public presentation on Levinas occurred in 1999 as an NCA seminar, and his first publication on Levinas appeared in 2003 (Arnett 2003b). While both Levinas and Buber worked in a phenomenological tradition, they offered distinctive perceptions on the dialogic role of reciprocity. While this debate was not the sole focus of the text, Levinas's unending, nonreciprocal, and immemorial ethical demand of responsibility guided and extended Arnett's examination of dialogue. Arnett's dialogic research embraced nuanced differences and their distinctive revelatory insights in ways that foreshadowed his textured examination of the variations present within the movement commonly understood as the Scottish Enlightenment.

Arnett published two essays on the Scottish Enlightenment as well as encyclopedia entries on Hume, Reid, and Smith prior to *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope: Contemporary Implications of the Scottish Enlightenment* in 2022 (Arnett 2014a, 2014b, 2018a, 2018c, 2018d). His interest in the Scottish Enlightenment directed his research beyond the study of a single scholar toward a historical consideration of multiple strands of enlightenment thought. Arnett understood the Enlightenment as a herald of modernity, which he had critiqued in his Arendt book as a "secular trinity" of efficiency, progress, and individual autonomy (Arnett 2013, 4). However, Arnett also recognized the presence of tenacious hope in aspects of the Scottish Enlightenment that upheld narrative ground. For example, he valued Adam Ferguson's ability to navigate competing narratives through leadership at the juncture of Highland and Lowland cultures while simultaneously lamenting what he called the "dark side" of the Scottish Enlightenment, which espoused conjectural history, a universal conception of rationality, and European superiority. Similar to his reading of Levinas, Arnett's dialogic scholarly engagement with the Scottish Enlightenment employed a constructive hermeneutic without ideological adoption.

Shortly following the publication of *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope*, Arnett retired. This book leaves the field of communication with its central metaphor: tenacious hope. Unlike undiscerning optimism, tenacious hope engages dialogic communicative praxis in its persistent commitment to gaining literacy about a historical moment in order to understand the urgent issues of the twenty-first century. This dedication to an intellectual appetite was not guided by information acquisition but a desire to strengthen human communities in the

midst of narrative contention and “existential homelessness” (Arnett 1994). In this way, we see Arnett’s consistent concern with the interests of his earliest publications that nonetheless grew with the insights of all that he read and wrote throughout his career. The dialogic sense of his scholarship privileged “writ[ing] to learn” rather than writing to tell (Arnett 2007a, 65).

These scholarly shifts reveal meaningful insights into the story of Arnett’s scholarly career that reflect mentoring and institutional homes. Together, our focus on the practice of mentoring, the situatedness of institutional homes, and the shifts in Arnett’s publications construct a narrative-informed conception of his scholarship as a dialogic engagement of communicative praxis. His work engaged dialogue with others—those who taught him, those he taught, the institutions where he worked, and the texts he read. The next section of our article considers the *about* of communication praxis through closer examination of Arnett’s monographs.

About Ideas: Practices of Dialogic Scholarship

As noted in the previous section, Arnett recognized institutions as goods worthy of protection and promotion. He emphasized the ways in which institutions provide narrative ground under persons’ feet in the midst of communicative action. As we transition into an examination of Arnett’s single-authored scholarly books, we focus on the six texts published by Southern Illinois University Press, which provided a research home for Arnett throughout his various academic appointments. Our goal is not to offer a comprehensive summary of the texts or to present novel interpretive insights but rather to select a particular practice of dialogic scholarship evident in each one. While these practices are not unique to Arnett alone, they reveal practices of dialogic scholarly engagement as a form of communicative praxis.

1. Communication and Community: *Staying Close to the Text*

In *Communication and Community* (1986), Arnett examines Buber’s work on dialogue as it encourages constructive communities in response to intensifying polarization. As noted earlier, this work built upon Arnett’s interest in nonviolent peacemaking while simultaneously laying the foundation for his entrance into philosophy of communication and dialogic ethics. Here, Arnett initiated a custom of beginning each chapter with an epigraph from the author being studied—in this case, Buber. In later books, Arnett would juxtapose one quote from the philosopher under study with a quote from a communication scholar. These epigraphs emphasize the nature of interpretive scholarship as a dialogic entrance into an ongoing conversation about ideas.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Communication and Community* is the importance of staying close to a text. Presenting a significant quote at the head of each chapter expresses respect for the original text, reminding writers and readers not to equate a secondary author’s ideas with a pure representation of the source. In his introduction, Arnett

embraces Buber's description of utopia as a form of imagining that invites interpretive possibilities. This understanding of utopia contrasts with Arnett's critique of optimism or fantasy in later works (e.g., Arnett 2022). From Buber's perspective, utopias call forth imaginative action that builds off of the real rather than the abstract. Beginning scholarship with deference to a primary source opens up imaginative possibilities grounded in lived experience and the reality of what has already been written. *Communication and Community* offers a vision of community and dialogue that is utopian in this Buberian sense; Arnett ends without a universal solution to the communicative problems faced at that historical moment, but he stresses that we need to revisit the works and insights of primary texts. Phenomenological perspectives of dialogue, such as those offered by Buber and Arnett, remind us that the conversation began long before our entrance and requires attention to the voices of those who came before us. A researcher needs to be familiar with the scholarly conversation before speaking into it. This awareness is of principal significance as we keep the conversation going because dialogue is worth the risk.

2. Dialogic Education: *Meeting an Existential Question*

Dialogic Education (1992) reexamines the vocational value of education at a juncture of personal and professional scrutiny. Arnett (2005b) provides an exemplar of revelatory inquiry inspired by disappointment amid the "mud of everyday life" (350), rather than a scholastic interest in inventing questions for idle contemplation or career advancement through possession of ideas. *Dialogic Education* incorporates plentiful first-person accounts without moving into autoethnographic scholarship.¹ Arnett's insights and experiences in higher education and conflict resolution inform his work without lying at the center of the project. Instead, theoretical insights allow the researcher to be present in the research as the carrier of a narrative, the upholder of a theory. The book moves into a narrative-informed structure that decenters but does not discredit the self. The book uses dialogic theory to respond to systemic crises in a variety of educational communities.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Dialogic Education* is meeting an existential question posed by the historical moment. Historical moments are characterized by the shared encounter of questions that demand our attention and response. Arnett's encounter with the crises of higher education prompted this book; his response acknowledges his own experience without relying upon it or denying the communal questions posed by such a moment. Indeed, such moments of existential questioning enter the public sphere

¹ We consider this book a structural outlier among Arnett's monographs in that it is not focused around a given philosopher of communication like his monographs on Buber, Bonhoeffer, Arendt, and Levinas, nor does it offer chapters focused on a given philosopher of communication as seen in his most recent book on the Scottish Enlightenment (a structure that is also characteristic of *Dialogic Civility* and *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication*). Nonetheless, like Arnett's other monographs, *Dialogic Education* remains an exemplar of dialogic scholarly praxis.

through mission statements that guide organizations and communities in moments of crisis. In higher education, the mission of an institution guides “conversation about ideas” between and among faculty, students, administrators, and staff. These conversations inform the narrative ground of an institution that can fuel the creative impetus of teaching, learning, and research. Meeting an existential question engages a narrative approach by addressing issues that are shared among communities. While the particularity of vantage point matters and gives voice to a perspective, existential questions and historical moments offer points of application and insight that interact dialogically with others.

3. Dialogic Confession: *Acknowledging Others*

In *Dialogic Confession* (2005a), Arnett explored Bonhoeffer’s legacy as a person of faith tenaciously meeting a country and a world that diverged from his hopes and expectations. The “Acknowledgments” section of the book stands out from others by thanking “all those who work from a story of conviction with the courage to meet, listen to, and learn from stories contrary to their own” (xv). The distinctiveness of these acknowledgments reminds us of Michael Hyde’s (2006) description of the communicative act of acknowledgment as a “life-giving gift.” In the act of acknowledgement as a form of public confession, Arnett here particularly points to the interplay of conviction, monologue, and the yielding of dialogue without surrendering a position of conviction.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Dialogic Confession* is acknowledging others. The standard publishing practices of acknowledgements and references offer opportunity to recognize the contributions of others and their role in shaping a text. These dialogic practices hold narrative value in placing the story of a research project within the broader scope of scholarly communities. Acknowledgements and a works cited page or bibliography confess “this is how I got here,” while issues of plagiarism and self-plagiarism represent a failure to confess. Notably, these two scholarly acts of dialogic confession (acknowledging and referencing) routinely appear directly prior to a text’s introduction or foreword and immediately following its conclusion. These components of scholarly writing exist outside of a book’s message but are of particular importance in understanding how a text interacts with the ideas of others. Both components engage communicative praxis as an acknowledgment of the influence of others’ presence and/or ideas in the development of a work. The scholarly act of acknowledgment reflects story-centered experiences emplotted within the message of a text.

4. Communication Ethics in Dark Times: *The Revelatory Potential of Historical Attentiveness*

Communication Ethics in Dark Times (2013) continued Arnett’s focus on philosophers who wrestled with the possibilities for dialogic engagement in a fragmented world marked by Nazi domination, World War II, and the Holocaust. Arnett engaged Arendt’s critique of the modern era as intimately tied to historical

grounding. Arnett's emphasis on history as a public record situates communicative acts as derivative of the questions characterizing a larger historical moment and reiterates Arendt's commitment to public life as a primary sphere of the human condition. Recognizing that scholarship derives from a particular historical moment contends against an originative self promoting "me" and "my" ideas. Dialogic scholarly communicative praxis seeks the revelatory insights that derive from historical attentiveness; this mode of scholarly inquiry operates in search of "genuine light" rather than the "artificial light" that Arendt warned against, which denies a broader context beyond the researcher alone. Just as historical attentiveness illuminates meaningful scholarly insight, a commitment to editing over time encourages a revisiting of ideas that permits a lack of clarity to guide dialogic insight.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Communication Ethics in Dark Times* is the revelatory potential of historical attentiveness. Temporal engagement with writing and editing over time allows for this revelatory possibility. Even in the final stages of the book's production, discussions of historical attentiveness persisted in a manner that welcomed the emergence of new insights among the project's page proofs.

5. Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: *The Unending Interplay of Questions and Answers*

Levinas's Rhetorical Demand (2017a) wrestles with Levinas's critique of rhetoric, which pivoted on issues of alterity and responsibility. The foreword by Arnett's graduate mentor, Algis Mickunas, notes how Arnett often worked with figures on the margins of the communication field. Mickunas furthers an understanding of fuzzy margins in communication scholarship, with space for negotiating possibilities beyond narrow disciplinary adherence. Arnett's engagement with these figures began with questions that expanded communicative implications in the form of temporally grounded answers. This exchange of questions and answers, which occurs ad infinitum, carries what Levinas describes as a Saying energy preserved in the trace of a published Said. Within Levinas's philosophical project and within the engagement of dialogic scholarship, each Said houses the possibility of new revelatory Saying. Neither Saying nor Said is totally secure. Moving a Saying into a Said in the form of a submission to a journal is a form of courage, allowing one's ideas to assume public form with an invitation for response. In this way, dialogic scholarship demonstrates an unending communication ethics obligation.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand* is the constant interplay of questions and answers. Dialogic research begins with questions situated within the communicative praxis of a researcher, disciplinary community, institutional home, and historical moment. This situatedness informs both the research questions brought to texts and the temporal insights discerned in the form of answers. Reflecting the work of Levinas, this scholarly communicative praxis embraces the interplay of Saying and Said, ever attentive to traces that invite the revelatory nature of dialogue. Arnett's work

on Levinas revisits issues shared with the phenomenological tradition of Buber, yet Levinas offered different responses. This scholarly choice stands as a testament to the ongoing significance of these questions and to the value of revisiting them from a variety of perspectives/voices. *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand* illuminates dialogic ethical praxes of interpretive scholarship by engaging in an interplay of Saying and Said in the ongoing exchange between questions and answers. The dialogic nature of this scholarly approach respects the unending "enigma" of texts and ideas, which hold the promise of new revelatory insight.

6. Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope: *In Search of Implications*

Arnett framed *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope* (2022) as an examination of multiple intellectual currents comprising what came to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment. The title of the work emphasized two key points for consideration. The first is tenacious hope as the book's primary communication ethics metaphor, and the second is the subtitle's emphasis on implications, which echoes the subtitle of his book on Buber. The emphasis on implications attends to the rhetorical value of application without assuming that research provides final conclusions. The kaleidoscopic lens of this project opens up more points of dialogue and implications than would have been possible with singular adherence to a particular author. Throughout his engagement of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, Arnett respected the distinctive and situated perspective of each philosopher as they revealed the central questions of the historical moment. Arnett's reading of Scottish philosophers' work appreciated the validity of these questions without assuming the finality of their answers. Instead, Arnett emphasized the emergent implications that reflected a desire to learn rather than tell.

The primary dialogic scholarly practice that we discern from *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope* is the value of writing in search of implications rather than conclusions. This pursuit is closely tied to research driven by an impulse of questioning. In a recent essay on the centrality of narrative practices to interpretive scholarship, we wrote, "This approach insists that the purpose of research is not to get rid of the question but to gain temporal illumination and clarity that, in turn, propels further questioning" (Mancino and Kearney 2023). Implications provide dialogic responses to research questions with temporal clarity that invites response through additional questioning, keeping the conversation going. An emphasis on implications allows questions to remain with the potential to resurface in novel ways.

The lessons we discerned throughout this section reveal dialogic practices for engaging in scholarly communicative praxis. As we reviewed the content of each of Arnett's single-authored books published by Southern Illinois University Press, we recognized practices that are demonstrated in his works and consistent with the theoretical insights in the content of his scholarship. These insights announce scholarly practices in the narrative of dialogic research and guide our understanding of the *about* in Arnett's communicative praxis.

For Others: Reflections and Implications

Following the dialogic scholarly practice revealed from our reading of Arnett's final book, *Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope*, our essay also concludes with an emphasis on implications. The implications that we highlight focus on the *for* of communicative praxis, which provides insights about the audiences to whom these works were directed as well as the dialogic practices that accompanied the creation of these research projects.

As noted throughout this essay, Arnett stressed a difference between writing to learn and writing to tell. As he involved research assistants in his scholarly writing projects, we encountered his tenacious faith in the revelatory potential of the editing process. As he drafted book chapters, they became sites of dialogic exchange between the scholars that Arnett cited and his own thinking as he revisited and edited the work. Differences of interpretation or theoretical obscurities afforded invitations for further research and clarification. Arnett (2010b) often used the phrase "going nowhere correctly" to describe scholarship; the clarity of the project often did not appear right away. In fact, the last stages of a book would manifest in an "all of a sudden" kind of effect. Messy drafts would suddenly clear into a significant scholarly contribution. The dialogic nature of his scholarship continued into his exchanges with publishers, editors, and reviewers. Arnett would invite others to share their insights and perspectives for consideration. The title of a book was in constant flux, shifting from one round of revisions to the next and congealing often only after extensive discussions with others. Arnett used the title as a canvas on which to explore different foci of attention.

As part of our review of Arnett's monographs, the titles of these works provided dialogic direction when discerning scholarly practices. The titles reveal meaningful insight significant to the content of the research as well as the practices of dialogic scholarship. In our review, we noted an emphasis on implications in the subtitles of his 1986 book on Buber and his final monograph in 2022. We see this emphasis as a form of scholarly bookends, leading us to think about implications for our own developing careers in the communication discipline. As we conclude this reflective essay, we organize these implications into six broad categories tied to practices we discerned in each of Arnett's monographs.

1. *Dialogic scholarly praxis stays close to a text under consideration.* This scholarly practice explores the interconnections between and among the *by*, *about*, and *for* of a text. There is an interdependent connection between the situatedness of an author, the story-informed content of a work, and the audience for whom it is directed; together, these themes yield narrative insights that guide dialogic scholarly praxis. For this essay, our shared experience as research assistants for Arnett informed our interpretations of the ideas revealed in his texts and in the course of his professional work. Our reflections on this work yielded meaningful insights that directed the practices of our dialogic scholarly engagement.

2. *Dialogic scholarly praxis responds to existential questions.* These questions characterize shared historical moments. Situatedness within these historical

moments matters as it reveals insights that make communicative action meaningful and provide a sense of ground to understand another's standpoint. Communication praxis reminds us that elements of identity matter as embedded agents respond to existential questions that demand our attention and response. For this essay, attentiveness to the existential questions that directed Arnett's scholarly trajectory produced revelatory insights in shaping a story-formed conception of his dialogic scholarly practices.

3. *Dialogic scholarly praxis acknowledges the contributions of others.* In Arnett's educational background and throughout his professional career, we note his continual expressions of gratitude toward mentors and institutional homes. Such acknowledgments also issue a call of responsibility for the next generation of researchers to offer a recognition of who or what has contributed to their own development. For this essay, we are reminded of the significance of Arnett's contribution in the shaping of our dialogic scholarly practices in this essay and our larger research projects.

4. *Dialogic scholarly praxis attends to the revelatory potential of history.* The thoroughness of Arnett's historical attentiveness is apparent throughout his work. As his former research assistants, the expectations of this work taught us a great deal about the significance of historical attentiveness as a ground for dialogic inquiry. Telling the story of a given scholar or event demands textured engagement with historical situatedness to understand standpoint, urgent existential questions, and the evolution of thought. This attentiveness holds revelatory insights that infuse communicative praxis with meaning. For this essay, historical attentiveness revealed the urgent and recurring questions that directed Arnett's research situated as responses to others who informed his thinking; as part of the dialogic nature of scholarly pursuit, his responses continue to inform thinking about these concerns.

5. *Dialogic scholarly praxis participates in an unending interplay of questions and answers.* Arnett pursued an engagement with research that was intentionally piecemeal, inviting interruptions and contributions from others. Approaching texts with the revelatory spirit of dialogic communicative praxis produces a mode of inquiry that is distinct from an argument-oriented approach that turns to a book with the presupposition of prescribed implications. For this essay, the interplay of questions and responses shaped the scholarly shifts that guided our understanding of the story-formed conception of his work. Likewise, we noted Arnett's tendency to revisit lingering questions and find novel answers, temporally situated within the immediacy and particularity of response. This interplay serves as a reminder of the limits of scholarly answers and the persistence of questions that invite ongoing dialogic consideration.

6. *Dialogic scholarly praxis pursues implications for the human community.* To speak without the hypertextual acknowledgement of what others have already said voids phenomenological dialogue and limits insights to the researcher alone by individualistically centering the self. Dialogic approaches to scholarly communicative praxis, however, decenter the self and commit to public deliberation as a necessary and significant component of philosophical hermeneutic inquiry. For this essay, communicative praxis required personal

reflection directed toward public implications. At its best, the doing of dialogic scholarly praxis offers a performative sense of identity situated within guiding public narratives with implications for the human community.

Arnett's dialogic scholarly praxis offers a representative example of the implications of this research approach. Held within the story-formed account of his professional career, the dialogic practices demonstrated by his monographs, and the implications of his work are insights that can continue to direct those interested in this form of scholarly engagement. We are aware of the formative nature of our experience working as Arnett's research assistants; undoubtedly, this experience informed our scholarly communicative praxis in this essay and in our broader research agendas. For this reason, we conclude with gratitude for the undergraduate mentors and experiences that led us to Duquesne University, the profound influence of Arnett and our other graduate mentors, and the support of our present institutional homes. These living exemplars inspire us and call us to ever greater responsibility in the praxis of dialogic scholarly inquiry.

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