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ABSTRACT

No teaching method is more widely used and yet more strongly criticized than the lecture. Yet, an examination of more than 40 basic public speaking textbooks reveals that lecturing is seldom mentioned. There are, perhaps, several reasons for this omission. For example, authors of textbooks might feel that (1) material on lecturing duplicates their regular textbook content, (2) the topic is not the province of speech communication, or (3) lecturing is unrelated to undergraduate students. Other authors might omit it from their texts simply because they do not know what to say about it. In response to this last possibility, the literature shows that there are a number of options for improving the lecture. Textbooks, then, could concentrate on discussing these options, such as lecturer qualities, lecture construction techniques, lecturer-student interaction, feedback-lectures, small group work, and the so-called Doctor Fox Effect, in which the students are "seduced" by the lecturer into feeling that they are his or her associates. Textbook authors are overlooking an important body of literature, and should include material on lecturing in their basic public speaking works. In addition, speech communication professionals have an obligation to take lecturing under their collective wing--they can do much better with it then what has been done to date. (FL)

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Lecturing:

Omitted or Overlooked?

Some Options for a New Orientation

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2

Abstract

The lecture, as an important speech-communication process, has been omitted or overlooked in our literature. We address the question, "Why?" Based on the lecturing liferature, we provide options for a new orientation: topics authors might include if they choose to discuss it. We offer contentions regarding its proper relationship to our discipline.

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Lecturing: Omitted or Overlooked?

Some Options for a New Orientation

There is no teaching method that is more widely used and yet more strongly criticized than the lecture. The dominant instructional technique in American higher education. Clearly, it is also a speech-communication process. And yet, if one examines the speech-communication literature, one would hardly know that lecturing exists. In an examination of more than forty-five basic public-speaking textbooks, lecturing is seldom mentioned. If it is included at all, it is within one of three contexts: 1) as part of a section on group discussion—when the "lecture-forum" or "lecture-panel" is discussed, 2) as part of a section on "oral reports" or "technical reports," or 3) in a miscellaneous form when it is referred to negatively, such as "... dry, abstract lecture, full of high-sounding phrases and preachy advice, or more as an aside as in one textbook when it is mentioned in the context of "the lecture circuit."

The point here is neither to condemn nor to praise. The point is that lecturing, as a serious, often-used form of public speaking has been omitted or overlooked in basic public-speaking textbooks. In this article we will attempt to answer the question, "Why has it been left out?" Then, based on the literature of lecturing, we will provide several options for a new orientation—things authors might include if they choose to deal with the topic. We conclude with several specific contentions regarding lecturing.



Why has "lecturing" been left out?

The motives, if there are any, are not clear, but we have come up with a number of reasons that could account for the omission. These reasons are not arranged hierarchically. Nor are we proposing that any one of these items, by itself, accounts for the absence. It is likely to be a combination of reasons.

It might be that authors of public-speaking textbooks feel that material on lecturing duplicates their regular textbook content. After all, lecturing is public speaking. Many of the same principles and guidelines apply. Perhaps. But if you ask most people, they would tell you that public speaking and lecturing are, indeed, different. There seem to be "allowances" or "expectations" for lectures that do not exist for public speeches. The problem is that because of years of weak, ineffective models, many people believe a lecture must be boring passive, poorly organized, irrelevant, and generally unrelated to any single individual.

Another possible motive for excluding material on lecturing in our public-speaking textbooks might be that authors feel that the topic is not our province. It does not belong in our discipline. If it needs to be taught, they may believe, it can be part of educational methods courses. Indeed, that was the first contact one of the authors of this article had with lecturing methodology: "Speech Methods," University of Michigan, a course taught by Hayden Carruth.

When one examines the available material on lecturing in our scholarly journals, one could easily come to the conclusion that it is



not a concern of ours. And yet we are seldom reluctant to borrow liberally from psychology and sociology when it suits our needs. A brief examination of education journals or indicies will reveal a large number of available sources on the topic. These are sources seldom cited in our research.

Not enough space to include it could be another motive, although a weak one. Authors can-within limits-include almost any topic they choose. But where would they put it? --a related problem. Mention could be made throughout a textbook; however, it seems most appropriate when considering styles of presentation in chapters on delivery, as part of chapters on informative speaking, or as part of a chapter on different public-speaking situations. Many textbooks already contain sections on speeches for special occasions. We would prefer to see it as a separate and distinct section in chapters on informative communication.

Still another motive for omitting material on lecturing could be that authors feel such material is unrelated to undergraduates. Most people, unless they are going into education, do not have to give lectures—they might believe. First, lectures are given throughout society in many clubs, organizations, and associations as well as in business and industry. Occasionally, we see lectures on television—especially on public television. The popular lectures of Dr. Leo Buscaglia are noteworthy.

And second, lectures are not unrelated to undergraduates. They are, after all, the main method of teaching to which they are exposed



throughout their formal educational careers. It is the form of public speaking with which they are most familiar. In some cases, it may be their only public-speaking model or example.

We thought, too--as another reason for possible omission--that some authors might consider the topic too advanced for undergraduates. Lecturing requires skills that are dependent upon acquisition and use of the basics. We arrived at this idea when we examined Edward Rogge and James C. Ching's Advanced Public Speaking and discovered a full chapter on the topic. 11 A close examination of the chapter, however, indicates that their treatment is very basic and requires no "higher-order" understanding. The authors also included a sample lecture with analysis for a vivid example of the methods and techniques they describe. The treatment there could be contained in any basic textbook. We do not feel that consideration of the topic need be relegated to advanced textbooks. In our discipline, this would virtually relegate the topic to oblivion since few, if any, advanced textbooks exist.

There could be a variety of other motives for leaving it out as well. The topic of lecturing is outmoded, old-fashioned, and out-of-date. 12 And yet it continues to be the most-often-used teaching method. It is too pedestrian, could be another motive. We, in the speech profession, should not be caught using a motive such as this because our whole profession is based on the examination of that which is considered by many-but we know otherwise!--pedestrian, or commonplace. Lecturing is commonplace. It fits right in! Yet another motive could be that authors have not given the topic much consideration; they have not

thought about including it. A related motive could be that nobody else includes it in their books. Just a cursory examination of public-speaking textbooks will prove that authors tend to be great mimics. With respect to included (or excluded) topics, one public-speaking textbook imitates closely most every other one. There are few exceptions.

But the motive we intend to address in the remaining portion of this article is also a valid one. One author we spoke to said, "What would I say about it if I were to include it?" Some authors may exclude the topic simply because they have no specific information on it.

Some Options for a New Orientation

Just because it has been omitted or overlooked thus far does not mean that it has to be left out. An examination of lecturing literature reveals that there are numerous suggestions for improving lecture situations. They are practical and could be included in basic public-speaking textbooks. We have listed them as options. Some are included in basic textbooks already; we are recommending that emphasis be placed on these options specifically with reference to lectures and the process of lecturing. Options include: lecturer qualities, lecture-construction techniques, interaction, feedback-lectures, small-group work, and the Doctor Fox Effect.

Lecturer qualities include items that lecturers can improve in themselves. These items relate to their knowledge base, organizational scheme, ability to hold attention—one writer suggests a heavy emphasis on examples 13—finding interesting material, and enthusiasm. There



is no doubt that speaker expressiveness is a major component of lecturing effectiveness. 15 Lecturer pace, too, can make a significant difference. Pace, according to the research, is strongly associated with audience noise levels. 16

Interaction is another option which can be important to lecture effectiveness. Lecturers must encourage greater informality, incorporate questions and probes into the material, utilize the rhetorical question, and provide further support and reinforcement of lecture material in the form of outlines, fill-in-the-blank or short-answer questions, or other handouts that will increase lecturer-audience interaction 22 and result in a change of activity.

Change alone is a major factor in attention. Napell suggests that lecturers walk among the audience, ask for questions from audience members, provide quiet, thinking time, and divide students into small



study units. 23 In one study, it was discovered that the more study guidance students received, the better their achievement. 24 Interaction—inducing student involvement and practice—was one of three major suggestions for modifying the lecture made by West. 25 He says that it is unrealistic for lecturers to expect audience members to "'think along' with them." 26 Lecturers must learn to interrupt their own talk. "The amount of . . . talk prior to the pause," says West, "will be dependent on . . __audience members_7 abilities as well as the nature and difficulty of the material." 27

Feedback lectures are closely tied to interaction because that is precisely their purpose. The idea was originally proposed by Aiken, Thomas, and Shennum. 28 They labelled the concept a "spaced lecture" because they believed that a lecture should be broken down into segments. During the period of silence between segments, audience members would write down what they had learned. Lecturers could use any number of segments and silent periods. The researchers found that separating note taking from listening by means of a "spaced lecture" produced superior results. 29 In a follow-up study, Bentley found that "passive listening" to a lecture does not produce superior learning. She suggests that an "activity such as note taking while listening or looking at an outline while listening appears to be advantageous." 30 Do we dare include information on note taking or on how lecturers can facilitate effective note taking? If this is an option authors choose, Bentley suggests some of the variables involved: "the nature of the material to be learned, the type of information items, the intelligence and



attitude of the subjects, the presence or absence of a review, the nature of the retention test, and the length of the retention interval before testing."31

The idea of a feedback lecture has received support from other authors as well. Kelly and Holmes, in an article on "The Guided Lecture Procedure" (or GLP) advocate the method because: "The lecturer encourages . . . /audience members/ to engage in a form of visual thinking—a mental perusal of all information presented in order to see what categories of knowledge and what interrelationships can be formed." 32

Osterman and Coffey discuss this technique too. They provide background information on the feedback lecture, describe the guided design steps for creating it, and discuss the evaluation of it. They also provide a sample study guide from a feedback lecture and a case study of the feedback lecture in practice. 33

Perhaps the best defense of the feedback-lecture technique comes from McLeish in his chapter on "The Lecture Method" -- a fine review of research on lecturing. He concludes his chapter with the statement:

The 'middle sag' /referring to the period of a lecture following the initial high level of performance that results from boredom and fatigue/ in attention and recall points to the need for a diversification of activities during the lecture period so that it ceases to be an uninterrupted discourse by one person, performed face-to-face with a passive audience. The principles of programmed learning, and learning theory in general, suggest that the best way



to improve the lecture is to convert it into a step-by-step presentation with perhaps half-a-dozen intervals of recapitulation and informal testing of the . . . /audience members!7 assimilation and ability to apply the materials presented. 34

Small-group work is another option that relates to lecturing. This option further extends the feedback concept. It also underscores as well as allows for interaction by audience members—a common plea by many authors of lecture-related material. Bowman suggests that the final "ten or fifteen minutes . . . might be fruitfully used if . . . /audience members are broken up into small groups to discuss the . . . material." McFarland suggests that each group be given the responsibility to arrive at some question, position, or analysis of the lecture topic. 36 Stanton offers a detailed systematization for lecturers of Hills's structured-discussion method. 37 The lecture is the trigger for this method. His scheme begins with individuals, moves to pairs, progresses to small groups, then has the groups reporting back to the whole group. 38 All of this activity utilizes the lecture topic as the central focus.

The Doctor Fox Effect is the final option we will discuss. In 1959, Erving Goffman wrote, in The Presentation of Self in Everyday

Life, about "Communication Out of Character." Citing the work of Renee Claire Fox, 39 Goffman discussed doctor-patient relationships in which the line between doctor and patient was blunted as a result of crises.

Fox found that when the patients were suffering from metabolic disorders about which little was known and for which little could be done, doctors

would consult at length with their patients about symptoms. Patients began to think of themselves in part as research associates. The key, however, was not in the change in the doctor-patient relationship; the key was that when the crisis passed, the previous working consensus continued. 40

Goffman uses this example as a basis for discussing inconsistent communication like expressions that arise out of the context of what is occurring. Inconsistency occurs, according to Goffman, when the expression gets the attention, becomes the content, and the situation or substance which generated the expression is no longer of primary concern.

Actually, Goffman did not label it the "Doctor Fox Effect." And it may be that Renee Fox had no effect on the choice either. We mention Goffman because he is foctnoted in the work on this "Effect" and Fox because of her work in this area and the coincidence in names. The "Effect" came about in this way:

An actor was programmed to lecture on a topic. He was coached to make considerable use of double-talk, neologisms, nonsequiturs, and contradictory statements. All of this was placed in the context of seductive gestures, parenthetical humor, and meaning-less references to unrelated topics.

The actor was introduced as "Doctor Fox." After the lecture, attitudes toward it were measured on an eight-item questionnaire. According to the researchers, the results showed that the audience of psychiatrists, psychologists, medical educators, and educational administrators had been "seduced" into being impressed by the talk.



The Doctor Fox experiment received attention in the popular media.

Results were reported in the Los Angeles Times (August 14, 1973), the

Chronicle of Higher Education (October 15, 1973), Psychology Today

(October 1973), and Medical World News (November 25, 1973). When

the results were reported in these sources there was no critical analysis of the research design, and there were some major weaknesses in the original Doctor Fox experiment. 45

Ware and Williams conducted further research on the phenomenon. 46
They found that students gave higher ratings to seductive lectures.
High seduction behaviors included enthusiasm, humor, friendliness,
expressiveness, charisma, and personality. 47
They concluded that, "The
'Doctor Fox Effect' appears to be more than an illusion. Seductiveness
affects both student ratings of instruction and achievement." 48
In
another study they suggested the possibility that the Doctor Fox
Effect continues throughout a series of lectures to be a potent
variable in audience members' ratings. In speech classes most
students present a series of speeches, not just an isolated one: thus,
the "Effect" could have an immediate classroom analog--not just a
relationship to lecturers to whom students are repeatedly exposed. As
recently as 1980, researchers showed that expressiveness had a
"primary influence" and that audience members are unable to distinguish
levels of content between lectures. 50

Our purpose is neither to support nor deny the results or the influence of the Doctor Fox Effect. Rather, we need to use it as a stimulus or focal point. With it as a central focus, we can determine



topic, or we can test it with respect to the type of logic used by the lecturer. We might want to see if its effect varies with the channel through which the message is presented. Does it vary according to speaker-personality traits? For example, Bowers found that speakers are evaluated more favorably when acting as extroverts than when acting as introverts. 52

There may be more to research in this area than what may be suggested by the probes above. Ware and Williams suggest that faculty members "who master the 'Doctor Fox Effect' may receive favorable student ratings regardless of how well they know their subjects and regardless of how much their students learn." In other words, they tie the "Effect" to student ratings of faculty members. They state that the use of student ratings to make decisions regarding faculty retention, tenure, and promotion may be invalid. Perhaps, an analogy could be drawn to faculty ratings of students.

These include some of the options from the lecture literature that textbook authors could discuss when presenting their material on lecturing. Lecturing techniques also are discussed in numerous available textbooks, and these should not be overlooked as additional sources for options. 55

Conclusion

We feel that lecturing has been left out of speech-communication literature, that there are a number of reasons that could account for



this, and that if authors choose to include it in the future, numerous options exist for additional material on the topic. We would like to conclude this article, however, on a stronger note. We would like to leave readers with four contentions:

- 1. There is an important body of literature that is being overlooked.
 - 2. We (as speech-communication professionals) have an obligation to take "lecturing" under our collective wing--especially since it is an important, often-used speech-communication process.

Once we take responsibility for the area, research in it (or on it) will proceed from our perspective. Such research is likely to yield results that are far more valuable and relevant to our teaching—as well as to effectiveness in lecturing.

- 3. Material on lecturing should be included in our basic public-speaking textbooks because it is widely used, often serves as a public-speaking model, can serve as a basis for judgment and analysis, and can help remove the stigma attached to "lecturing" as a method.
- 4. Finally, we should give consideration to lecturing simply because we can do much better with it then what has already been done. From our analysis of the lecturing literature, what has been done in the area thus far has been pedestrian—unimaginative. It is performed by researchers from widely-scattered areas of expertise. Many have no oral-communication interests, backgrounds, or research base. This, alone, could serve as impetus for generating newer options and even a newer orientation.



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Lecture Is Obsolete," Improving College and University Teaching, 14

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for the Teacher," Clearing House, 43 (1968), 142.

²Kyle, p. 325. Also see Gerald W. McFarland, "Are Lecture Courses Necessary," <u>The Social Studies</u>, 60 (1969), 65; John McLeish, "The Lecture Method" in <u>The Psychology of Teaching Methods: The Seventy-Fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education</u>.

Part I, (ed.) N. L. Gage (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 252.

For the purposes of brevity, I have listed the authors last names only of the public-speaking books surveyed. They are listed alphabetically. Andersen, Nichols, and Booth; Andrews; Barrett; Bradley; Bormann and Bormann; Bryant and Wallace; Byrns; Capp, Capp, and Capp; Capps and



and O'Connor; Carlson and Meyers; Cohen; Cronkhite; DeVito; Ehninger, Monroe, and Gronbeck; Eisenberg and Gamble; Gronbeck; Hart, Friedrich, and Brooks; Hunt; Jabusch and Littlejohn; Jeffrey and Peterson; Koehler, Anatol, and Applbaum; Logue, Freshley, Gruner, and Huseman; Minnick; Morlan and Tuttle; Moulton and Held; Myers and Myers; Nelson and Pearson; Osborn; Pace, Peterson, and Burness; Patton, Giffin, and Linkugel; Reid; Rodman; Ross; Samovar and Mills; Shrope; Strain and Wysong; Taylor; Thompson; Vasile and Mintz; Verderber; Walter and Scott; Weaver; White; Wilson and Arnold; Zacharis and Bender; Zannes and Goldhaber.

4See Harold Barrett, Practical Uses of Speech Communication, 5th ed.

(New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), pp. 248-49; Larry A.

Samovar and Jack Mills, Oral Communication: Message and Response, 5th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1983), p. 264;

Albert J. Vasile and Harold K. Mintz, Speak with Confidence: A Practical Guide (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1977), pp. 189-190.

See Wayne C. Minnick, <u>Public Speaking</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), pp. 221-22; Richard L. Weaver, II, <u>Understanding Public Communication</u> (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), pp. 258-61. Weaver offers the most extensive treatment of lecturing found in basic public speaking textbooks examined.

Bruce E. Gronbeck, <u>The Articulate Person: A Guide to Everyday Public Speaking</u> (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983), p. 113.

This quotation is contained in a section labelled "Advice on Speeches of Definition" and a subsection labelled "Avoid Sounding Lecturish."

⁷Joseph A. DeVito, <u>The Elements of Public Speaking</u> (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), pp. 78-79.

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10 See Richard L. Weaver, II, and Thomas A. Michel, "Lecturing: A

¹⁰See Richard L. Weaver, II, and Thomas A. Michel, "Lecturing: A Selected Bibliography," ERIC document. ED 225 217.

11 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), Chapter 14, "The Speech of Exposition: Lecture," pp. 342-65.



¹² Thomas, pp. 4-5.

¹³ Robert J. Davis, "Secrets of Master Lecturers," Improving College and University Teaching, 13 (1965), 150.

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¹⁷ Davis, p. 150.

¹⁸ Davis, p. 151.

¹⁹ Marilyn Kourilsky, "The Anatomy of a Dead Lecture," Clearing House, 45 (1971), 20-26.

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³⁸Stanton, pp. 69-70.

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²⁵West, p. 143.

²⁶ West, p. 144.

²⁷West, p. 144.

³⁴ McLeish, p. 301.

³⁵ Bowman, p. 26.

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43Robert M. Kaplan, "Reflections on the Doctor Fox Paradigm,"

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⁴⁵ See Kaplan, pp. 310-12.

Ware and Williams, p. 149.

⁴⁷ Ware and Williams, p. 151.

⁴⁸ Ware and Williams, p. 149.

⁴⁹ Reed G. Williams and John E. Ware, Jr., "An Extended Visit with Dr. Fox: Validity of Student Satisfaction with Instruction Ratings After Repeated Exposures to a Lecturer," <u>American Educational Research Journal</u>, 14 (1977), 449-57.

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^{51&}lt;sub>Kaplan</sub>, p. 311.

⁵²John Waite Bowers, "The Influence of Delivery on Attitudes
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⁵³ Ware and Williams, "The Dr. Fox Effect," p. 155.

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⁵⁵ See (in alphabetical order) R. R. Allen and S. Clay Willmington, Speech Communication in the Secondary School (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972), pp. 126-42; Donald A. Bligh, What's the Use of Lectures? 3rd ed. (Hertfordshire, England: Penguin Books, 1972); George Brown, Lecturing and Explaining (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1978); Pamela J. Cooper. Speech Communication for the Classroom Teacher (Dubuque, Iowa: Gorsuch Scarisbrick Publishers, 1981), pp. 83-104; Kenneth E. Eble, The Craft of Teaching: A Guide to Mastering the Professor's Art (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1976), pp. 42-53; Erving Goffman. Forms of Talk (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 160-96; Guide to Effective Teaching (New York: Change Magazine Press, 1978), pp. 8-23; Donald W. Klopf and Ronald E. Cambra, Speaking Skills for Prospective Teachers (Englewood, Colorado: Morton Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 305-28; Wilbert J. McKeachie, Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher, 7th ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1978), pp. 22-34; Ohmer Milton and Associates, On College Teaching (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978), pp. 34-61.