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ABSTRACT

A study examined the research base for public speaking instruction. Persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis and adaptation in five introductory public speaking textbooks were examined. Four of the texts were selected because they have survived in the marketplace through multiple editions; the fifth book was selected because it was marketed as having a research foundation. Results indicated that: (1) many unsupported assertions were included in the texts; (2) the poorly-supported assertions in textbooks do not prepare students for public speaking; (3) the way authors write about public speaking should incorporate the same principles expected from students in their class papers, from colleagues submitting manuscripts for publication, and from the editorial boards of professional journals; (4) there is little, if any, documented support for the ways public speaking is taught; and (5) needed research in the basic public speaking course would not be difficult to conduct. (Contains 40 references.) (RS)

THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR INSTRUCTION IN THE BASIC PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE

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THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR INSTRUCTION IN THE BASIC PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE

The history of communication education in the basic communication course is relatively short. Yet, the tenants used to teach remain grounded in ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric. The writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Plato, Isocrates, and others continue to dominant instruction and practice in the beginning public speaking course. The shadows (or ghosts) of these ancient rhetoricians continue to determine specific pedagogical tactics and student learning in beginning public speaking courses. Yoder and Wallace (1995), in their Central States Communication Association Basic Course Committee award-winning paper, "What If Aristotle Had Never Lived," stressed the ongoing emphasis on Aristotle in teaching communication students. Frentz (1995), in his Southern States Communication Association Presidential Address, stated: "After 2500 years of fleeing our shadow, there are few places left to run. With nowhere to go and no time left to get there, we need to try something different. But what?"

Although referring to our discipline's image in the social and behavioral sciences, Frentz's lament is also applicable to what communication instructors do in beginning public speaking courses. The history and current status of the beginning or basic course in communication has been documented several times (see recent issues of *The Basic Communication Course Annual*). These

studies, along with a deliberate reading of our public speaking textbooks, show the typical basic communication course to be almost totally dependent on the teachings of classical rhetoric for teaching students ways to develop and improve their communication skills. In other articles in the *Basic Communication Course Annual*, authors bemoan the fact that research on our instructional content and practices needs to be reflected in our texts and our classrooms. However, no one has attempted to articulate what research base exists for our instructional practices.

The basic public speaking course remains the most popular basic communication course. The latest survey, reported in the *Basic Communication Course Annual* (Gibson, et al., 1990), indicated that over 56% of speech communication departments, the highest percentage reported in any of these studies, offer the public speaking course as its basic or introductory course. For decades communication educators, especially those teaching the basic course, assumed that skills, grounded in the classical tradition, transcend the varied communication contexts students will likely participate in (interpersonal, group, public speaking, etc.).

The assumptions, inherent in this approach, that the teachings of these classical scholars remain appropriate to contemporary classroom instruction are, in our opinion, at least suspect to scrutiny. Additionally, instructors' assumptions that the skills taught in the beginning public speaking course

increase student communication competence are also suspect. The reason for these doubts was articulated clearly by John Daly in his opening remarks to the participants of the Speech Communication Association 1994 Summer Conference on Communication Assessment. He indicated that the way communication instructors teach communication skills is not supported by research reported in our scholarly journals. He claimed this lack of research base creates major public relations nightmares for speech communication. This is especially true in light of the fact that for most students and many non-communication faculty on our campuses, the basic communication course is their *only* introduction to the communication discipline.

Additionally, Ivie and Lucaites (1995), responding to Frentz's concerns, stated "It [the communication discipline] thus concerns itself with the pragmatics of everyday discourse -- with the study of how we use verbal and nonverbal symbols to convey ideas and attitudes persuasively in order to manage differences of opinion on matters of import" (SPECTRA, p. 14). We agree with this fundamental description of communication instruction. During the 1995 Central States Communication Association Convention, a panel debated the issue of research support for our teaching practices. It promoted a lively discussion about the dated research reported in public speaking textbooks, the research reported from other disciplines in our textbooks, and/or the lack of research cited in our textbooks.

With all this in mind, the textbooks for the public speaking course seem a logical place to begin our review of the research base for public speaking instruction. We will examine the research base communication scholars claim supports how we teach students to "use verbal and nonverbal symbols to convey ideas and attitudes."

Taken collectively, these events led us to complete this research. We will assess the research foundations of instruction for three elements important in beginning public speaking courses. Our specific research questions are:

[R1] Is what we teach in the basic public speaking course about persuasive speaking supported by research findings?

[R2] Is what we teach in the basic public speaking course about informative speaking supported by research findings?

[R3] Is what we teach in the basic public speaking course about audience analysis and audience adaptation supported by research findings?

We focused on the following topics as explained in five popular public speaking textbooks. These topics included: persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis and adaptation. We selected these topics because they reflect the most common aspects of public speaking instruction and are

fundamental tenants incorporated in all public speaking textbooks.

The five textbooks included in this study were:

1. DeVito, J. A. (1997). The elements of public speaking, (6th ed.). New York: Longman.
2. Makay, J. J. (1995). Public speaking: Theory into practice, (2nd ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
3. Lucas, S. E. (1995). The art of public speaking. (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
4. Osborn, M., & Osborn, S. (1997). Public speaking, (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
5. Verderber, R. F. (1994). The challenge of effective speaking. (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Four of the texts were selected because they have survived in the marketplace through multiple editions (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, etc.). Makay's book is marketed as one with a research foundation for public speaking instruction. We thought including his book in our analysis appropriate for that reason.

We studied these texts in a two-step process. First, we examined the portions of the textbooks where the three topics were discussed by the authors. We used the glossaries in each book to guide our selection of data for review. Second, we examined the research base reported by the authors supporting

their claims about persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis and adaptation.

Persuasive Speaking

One common assignment for students in public speaking classes is the persuasive speech. Authors of public speaking texts offer students a plethora of "how-to" suggestions on how to design, prepare, and deliver the in-class public speech. This section of our paper discusses the sections in the five textbooks as the authors discuss the persuasive public speech.

The following is a list of claims related to teaching students how to give a persuasive speech. Except where noted, they are unsubstantiated claims with the authors offering little support for them.

Unsupported Claims

Makay. The following are claims advanced about persuasive speaking with no supporting material presented.

1. "The most effective speakers combine all three persuasive elements to meet a variety of audience needs" (Makay, p. 344).
2. "Once you establish your overall persuasive goals, you must then decide the type and direction of the change you seek" (Makay, p. 348).
3. "Propositions are necessary because persuasion always involves more than one point of view" (Makay, p. 348).
4. "Informative speakers become persuasive speakers when they cross the line from presenting facts to presenting facts within the context of a point of view" (Makay, p. 349).
5. "You must convince your audience that your evaluation is based on widely accepted standards" (Makay, p. 350).

6. "... convince listeners of the need for change. This step gives people reason to continue listening and in, the end, to agree with your position and to take action" (Makay, p. 353).
7. "The most effective needs statements are specific ... leaving no room for misunderstanding or boredom" (Makay, p. 354).
8. "... be the advocate for change and people will listen" (Makay, p. 354).
9. "For your proposal to be taken seriously, it should be practical ... no one will listen" (Makay, p. 354).
10. "To convince an audience to take action, you have to prove a proposition of value and establish a proposition of fact" (Makay, p. 356).
11. "The normal pattern of human thought [according to Monroe] ... attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action" (Makay, p. 357).
12. "Persuasion is impossible without attention" (Makay, p. 357).
13. "Explanations in the form of statistics (etc) ... ensure that your audience understands exactly what you mean" (Makay, p. 358).
14. "... to be effective, persuasive speeches must be motivational" (Makay, p. 360).
15. "Understanding the basis for Maslow's hierarchy is critical to your success as a persuasive speaker, for if you approach your listeners at an appropriate level of need, you will find them unable or unwilling to respond" (Makay, p. 361).

DeVito. The following are unsubstantiated claims in his discussion of persuasive speaking.

1. "You will be more persuasive if your listeners see you as credible" (DeVito, p. 343).
2. "If your listeners see you as competent, knowledgeable, of good character, and charismatic or dynamic, they will think you credible. As a result, you will be more effective in changing their attitudes or moving them to do something" (DeVito, p. 343).
3. "Listeners will actively seek out information that supports their opinions, beliefs, values, decisions, and behaviors" (DeVito, p. 343).
4. "Listeners will actively avoid information that contradicts their existing opinions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and beliefs" (DeVito, p. 343).
5. "Persuasion is greatest when the audience participates actively in your presentation" (DeVito, p. 345).
6. "People change gradually, in small degrees over a long period" (DeVito, p. 347).

7. "Speeches designed to change attitudes or beliefs are more difficult to construct. Most people resist change" (DeVito, p. 348).
8. "Give your audience good reasons for believing what you want them to believe. Give them hard evidence and argument" (DeVito, p. 350).
9. "As a general rule, never ask the audience to do what you have not done yourself. So, demonstrate your own willingness to do what you want the audience to do" (DeVito, p. 352).

Lucas. The following assertions are included in Lucas' discussion of persuasive speaking.

1. "Of all the kinds of public speaking, persuasion is the most complex and the most challenging" (Lucas, p. 337).
2. "How successful you are in any particular persuasive speech will depend above all on how well you tailor your message to the values, attitudes, and beliefs of your audience" (Lucas, p. 337).
3. "... the situation for a persuasive speech on a question of fact is partisan" (Lucas, p. 341).
4. "When you call for action in a persuasive speech, you should make your recommendations as specific as possible" (Lucas, p. 348).
5. "There is no point in arguing for a policy unless you can show a need for it" (Lucas, p. 348).
6. "The third basic issue of policy speeches is practicality. Once you have presented a plan, you must show that it will work" (Lucas, p. 349).
7. "Effective organization is crucial when you seek to persuade listeners on a question of policy" (Lucas, p. 351).
8. "It [the Motivated Sequence] follows the process of human thinking and leads the listener step by step to the desired action" (Lucas, p. 354).
9. "Good organization will improve your credibility. So will appropriate, clear, vivid language. So will fluent, dynamic delivery. So will strong evidence and cogent reasoning" (Lucas, p. 371).
10. "Another way to bolster your credibility is to establish common ground with your audience" (Lucas, p. 372).
11. "If you want others to believe and care about your ideas, you must believe and care about them yourself" (Lucas, p. 373).
12. "If you hope to be persuasive, you must support your views with evidence" (Lucas, p. 373).

13. "No matter what kind of evidence you employ -- statistics, examples, or testimony -- it will be more persuasive if you state it in specific rather than general terms" (Lucas, p. 376).
14. "Evidence is more likely to be persuasive if it is new to the audience" (Lucas, p. 376).
15. "As a public speaker, you have two major concerns with respect to reasoning. First, you must make sure your reasoning is sound. Second, you must try to get listeners to agree with your reasoning" (Lucas, p. 378).
16. "Since you can never give enough specific instances in a speech to make your conclusion irrefutable, you should supplement them with testimony or statistics demonstrating that the instances are in fact representative" (Lucas, p. 379).
17. "Effective persuasion often requires emotional appeals" (Lucas, p. 386).
18. "If you want to move your listeners, use moving language" (Lucas, p. 387).
19. "One key to using emotional appeal ethically is to make sure it is appropriate to the speech topic" (Lucas, p. 389).
20. "Even when trying to move listeners to action, you should never substitute emotional appeals for evidence and reasoning" (Lucas, p. 390).

Osborn & Osborn. The following pieces of advice for students working on persuasive speeches are not supported by Osborn and Osborn.

1. "The persuasive speaker justifies recommendations with good reasons for accepting them. Good reasons are based upon responsible knowledge and a sensitive consideration of the best interest of listeners" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 417).
2. "Persuasive speaking requires more audience commitment than informative speaking"(Osborn & Osborn, p. 418).
3. "Leadership in a more important issue in persuasive than informative speaking" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 418).
4. "Emotional language is often needed to help people see the human dimension of problems and move them to action" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 418).
5. "The ethical obligation for persuasive speakers is even greater than that for informative speakers" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 418).
6. "Persuasive speeches that threaten listener's values are not likely to be effective"(Osborn & Osborn, p. 427).

7. "Present vivid images of the need for action. Show your listeners how the quality of their lives -- how even their survival -- depends on prompt action" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 428).
8. "To get people to act, you must give them a clear plan" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 429).
9. "To be effective, speeches addressing attitudes must begin on common ground" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 430).
10. "The sequential design may be used to outline the steps in a plan of action" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 433).
11. "The comparative design works well for speeches of contention in which you contrast the weaknesses of opposing arguments with the strengths of your own" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 433).
12. "When you prepare a problem-solution speech, do not overwhelm your listeners with details" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 435).
13. "Therefore, it [the Motivated Sequence] is especially suited for speeches that have action as their goal" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 436).
14. "There are five steps in developing an effective refutation" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 438).

Verderber. These are the claims presented in the text, The Challenge of Effective Speaking, (9th ed.), about persuasive speaking. They are not supported with research results.

1. "... persuasive speakers must also understand where the audience stands on a specific goal so that they can develop speech strategies to adapt to audience attitudes" (Verderber, p. 295).
2. "You are more likely to persuade an audience when your specific goal, often called a proposition, is clearly defined" (Verderber, p. 296).
3. "Persuasion is more likely to take place when your audience is able to understand both your arguments and your information, so you need to assess whether they are likely to be understood" (Verderber, p. 302).
4. "Persuasion is more likely to take place when your audience has a positive attitude toward your goal, so it is crucial to assess the direction and strength of audience attitudes about your topic in general and specific goal in particular" (Verderber, p. 302).
5. "Choose the reasons that best prove the proposition .... Choose reasons that can be supported. ... Choose reasons that will have an impact on the intended audience" (Verderber, p. 308).
6. "You will be more likely to persuade an audience when you organize your reasons according to expected audience reactions" (Verderber, p. 310).

7. "You are more likely to persuade audience members when your language motivates them" (Verderber, p. 315).
8. "Effective persuasive speech development entails both logical and emotional elements that act interdependently" (Verderber, p. 316).
9. "Place special effort on building emotional appeal into the introduction and conclusion" (Verderber, p. 317).
10. "You are more likely to persuade an audience if you develop an effective oral presentation style" (Verderber, p. 319).
11. "You are more likely to be effective in persuasion if you can refute key positions taken by your opposition" (Verderber, p. 320).
12. "People are more likely to act when the speech goal presents incentives that create a favorable cost reward ratio" (Verderber, p. 349).
13. "People are more likely to act when the speech goal creates dissonance" (Verderber, p. 349).
14. "People are more likely to act when the proposition conforms with dominant audience values or motives" (Verderber, p. 349).
15. "People are more likely to act when the proposition satisfies a strong but unmet need (Verderber, p. 349).

Supported Claims

The following claims were included in each of the texts evaluated. Each of the claims were supported by the author with appropriate citation. We included the appropriate citation as evidence of the author's attempt to support each claim advanced in their text.

Makay. Each of the following claims were included to help students prepare and deliver a persuasive speech.

1. "Little consistency exists between attitudes and actions" (Makay, p. 347). Citation: A. W. Wicker, 1969.
2. "Attitude is likely to predict behavior when the attitude involves a specific intention to change behavior ..." (Makay, p. 347). Citation: P. G. Zimbardo, 1988.
3. "Firsthand experience is a powerful motivator" (Makay, p. 347). Citation: D. T. Regan & R. Fazio, 1977.
4. "Four persuasive aims define the nature of your overall persuasive goal" (Makay, p. 348). Citation: W. C. Fotheringham, 1966.

5. "Motivated sequence is rooted in traditional rhetoric and shaped by modern psychology" (Makay, p. 357). Citation: B. E. Gronbeck, K. German, D. Ehninger, & A. H. Monroe, 1992.

DeVito. No claims or assertions concerning persuasive speeches were supported with references to research.

Lucas. The following claims concerning persuasive speeches were supported with references.

1. "They have discovered that many things affect a speaker's credibility, including sociability, dynamism, physical attractiveness, and perceived similarity between speaker and audience" (Lucas, p. 369). Citation: S. Booth-Butterfield & C. Gutowski, 1993.
2. "There is a great deal of research to show that a speaker's credibility is strongly affected by his or her delivery" (Lucas, p. 372-373). Citation: R. M. Perloff, 1993.
3. "There is a good deal of research to show that listeners find evidence from competent, credible sources more persuasive than evidence from less qualified sources" (Lucas, p. 376). Citation: D. D. Morley & K. B. Walker, 1987.
4. "When using evidence, be sure listeners understand the point you are tying to make" (Lucas, p. 377). Citation: D. J. O'Keefe, 1990.

Osborn & Osborn. The following are assertions concerning persuasive speeches that are supported by references to research.

1. "It helps make those you persuade more resistant to later counterattacks, because you show them how to answer and resist such arguments. This is often called the inoculation effect" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 425). M. Allen, 1991a, 1991b; J. L. Hale, P. A. Mongeau, & R. M. Thomas, 1991; C. I. Hovland, A. A. Lumsdaine, & F. D. Sheffield, 1949; W. J. McGuire, 1964.
2. "Do not worry if the change that you want does not show up immediately. There often is a delayed reaction to persuasion, a sleeper effect, ... " (Osborn & Osborn, p. 426). Citation: M. Allen & J. B. Stiff, 1989; T. D. Cook, et al., 1979.

Verderber. The following are claims about persuasive speaking Verderber supports in his text.

1. "Since the 1980s, persuasive speech theory focused sharply on persuasion as a cognitive activity; that is. People form cognitive structures to create meaning for experiences" (Verderber, p. 307). Citation: K. Deaux, F. C. Dane, & L. S. Wrightsman, 1993.
2. "Almost all studies confirm that speaker credibility has a major effect on audience belief and attitude," (Verderber, p. 318). Citation: K. E. Anderson & T. Clevenger, Jr., 1963).
3. "Changes in people's attitudes often come as a result of 'a learning experience'" (Verderber, p. 332). Citation: K. Deaux, F. C. Dane, & L. S. Wrightsman, 1993.

Informative Speaking

In addition to the claims in each of the texts, authors also offer claims related to teaching students to prepare and deliver informative speeches. This section, like our presentation of persuasive speaking, is divided into two sections: unsupported claims and supported claims.

Unsupported Claims

In this section of our paper, we present claims used by the authors to explain the processes of preparing and delivering informative speeches the authors of the textbooks reviewed failed to support.

Makay. The following are claims advanced in Makay's explanation of informative speaking that he failed to support with any research results.

1. "To be effective, speeches of explanation must be connected to the real world" (Makay, p. 323).

2. "... you must anticipate [what] your listeners will probably want to know" (Makay, p. 324).
3. "Avoid telling your audience what it already knows ... they don't want to hear what they already know" (Makay, p. 324).
4. "When an audience experiences information overload, it stops listening" (Makay, p. 326).
5. "Tie key points to anecdotes and humor" (Makay, p. 327).
6. "You must first convince your audience in your introduction that your topic has relevance to them" (Makay, p. 327).
7. "Your audiences are also more likely to remember vivid language than dull language"(Makay, p. 328).
8. "Humorous stories are effective in helping the audience remember material" (Makay, p. 328).
9. "Asking your audience to absorb new information presented in a disorganized fashion is asking too much" (Makay, p. 333).

Verderber. The following assertions are part of Verderber's discussion on informative speaking. They, too, are unsupported by the author.

1. "... speakers achieve their informative goal by helping listeners learn" (Verderber, p. 224).
2. "Generate enough interest in the information to arouse the audience's attention" (Verderber, p. 225).
3. "Explain the information in ways that will enable the audience to understand it" (Verderber, p. 225).
4. "Discuss information in ways that will enable the audience to remember it" (Verderber, p. 225).
5. "Audiences are more likely to show interest in, understand, and remember information that is presented creatively" (Verderber, p. 226).
6. "The more you know, the more creative you can be" (Verderber, p. 226).
7. "Creativity of thought in public speaking is recognized through the development of alternative ideas" (Verderber, p. 227).
8. "... to increase the likelihood that your audience will listen to you, make sure that you are perceived as being credible" (Verderber, p. 230).
9. "... there are several things you can do to avoid damaging your credibility and perhaps even strengthen it during a speech or a series of speeches: Be well prepared. ... Emphasize your interest in the audience. ... Look and sound enthusiastic. ... Be ready to speak on time. ... Evaluate others' speeches thoughtfully" (Verderber, pp. 230-231).

10. "Audiences are more likely to listen to information they perceive to be intellectually stimulating" (Verderber, p. 231).
11. "All people have a deep-seated hunger for knowledge and insight. Part of the informative speaker's job is to feed this hunger" (Verderber, p. 232).
12. "Audiences are more likely to listen and understand information they perceive to be relevant" (Verderber, p. 233).
13. "Audiences are more likely to understand and remember information that is emphasized" (Verderber, p. 234).
14. "So the effective speaker constantly clarifies the framework of the speech to help listeners see where they are, where they have been, and where they are going" (Verderber, p. 235).
15. "Audiences are likely to remember the point of a humorous story" (Verderber, p. 237).

Osborn & Osborn. The following claims used by the authors to teach students about the processes involved in giving an informative speech.

1. "An informative speech gives to listeners rather than asks of them. The demands on the audience are relatively low"(Osborn & Osborn, p. 382).
2. "By sharing information, an informative speech reduces ignorance" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 382).
3. "In informative speaking, the speaker functions basically as a teacher" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 383).
4. "The power of informative speaking to influence our perceptions can serve a prepersuasive function, preparing us for later persuasive speaking" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 383).
5. "A responsible informative speech should cover all major positions on a topic and present all vital information" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 385).
6. "As an informative speaker you need to apply basic principles of learning to make your speeches effective" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 385).
7. "We are attracted to anything new or unusual" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 387).
8. "Things that are personally related to our needs or interests attract our attention" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 388).
9. "The more frequently we hear or see anything, the more likely we are to retain it" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 388).
10. "An effective speech of description relies heavily on the artful use of language" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 390).

11. "Categorical designs are most effective when you begin and end the body of the speech with the more important categories" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 398).
12. "If you believe that a combined design will work best for your material, be certain to plan it carefully so that you do not seem to ramble or jump helter-skelter from one design type to another" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 403).

Lucas. The following unsupported claim is included in Lucas' text to explain informative speaking.

1. "Another way is to follow the old maxim: 'Tell'em what you're going to say; say it; then tell 'em what you've said'" (Lucas, p. 320).

DeVito. This final section presents the unsupported claims DeVito uses to explain informative speaking.

1. "There is a limit to the amount of information a listener can take in at one time. Limit the amount of information you communicate, and instead, expand its presentation" (DeVito, p. 323).
2. "Listeners will remember your information best when they see it as relevant and useful to their own needs or goals" (DeVito, p. 324).
3. "If you want the audience to listen to your speech, be sure to relate your information to their needs, wants, or goals" (DeVito, p. 324).
4. "Listeners will learn information more easily and retain it longer when you relate it to what they already know" (DeVito, p. 325).
5. "Audio visual aids will help you describe almost anything" (DeVito, p. 328).
6. "When explaining a concept, it is helpful to define it in a number of ways" (DeVito, p. 330).

Supported Claims

This portion of our paper reports on the claims each of the authors supported with additional data. These claims or suggestions were included in the texts to explain the processes of informative speaking.

Makay. The following two assertions were the only ones Makay supported in his discussion of informative speaking.

1. "The best informative speakers apply the techniques ... that focus on delivering a speech that meets the audience 'needs'" (Makay, p. 324). Citation: C. R. Petrie, Jr., 1963.
2. "Using ... visual aids varies the speech, simplifies your presentation, and helps maintain audience interest" (Makay, p. 328). Citation: J. Sprague & D. Stewart, 1988.

Verderber. There were no claims or assertions in the material on informative speaking in this textbook.

Osborn & Osborn. The authors included no supported claims in their discussion of informative speaking.

DeVito. The author failed to support any claims related to informative speaking in his textbook.

Lucas. The following claim is the only one included in Lucas' discussion of informative speaking.

1. "Listeners want to be entertained as they are being enlightened" (Lucas, p. 327). Citation: J. Humes, 1976.

Audience Analysis

We located the following claims related to audience analysis, both unsupported and supported, in each of the textbooks reviewed for this research. As in the other sections, we will list the unsupported claims before the supported claims on audience analysis.

Unsupported Claims

The following lists of claims related to audience analysis were discovered in each of the textbooks.

Makay. Makay included the following claims, which are unsupported, in his discussion of audience analysis.

1. "... all audiences are self-centered" (Makay, p. 102).
2. "If you ... help them achieve their goals, they will listen" (Makay, p. 102).
3. "Avoid dating yourself through your references or language" (Makay, p. 104).
4. "By finding out the average age of your listeners, you can avoid being on one side of the age gap and having your audience on the other" (Makay, p. 104).
5. "Minimize attention to age differences" (Makay, p. 105).
6. "Make sure your appearance is appropriate for the group" (Makay, p.105).
7. "Gender role differences do exist and generalizations based on these differences are not necessarily wrong ... also a fact that more men than women are sports fans" (Makay, p. 106).
8. "Look at your listener's educational backgrounds...Use this information to gear the level of your remarks to listeners' knowledge" (Makay, p. 106).
9. "You can determine how much your listeners know about your topic by the nature of the occasion" (Makay, p. 107).
10. "... when speakers fail to realize that religious beliefs may also define moral attitudes about issues like abortion [etc.] ... they risk alienating their audience" (Makay, p. 107).
11. "You need to consider and address differences of opinion [such as racial or ethnic ties]" (Makay, p. 108).
12. "Because people often identify themselves in terms of their work, it is important to know the types of jobs or the nature of the work they do" (Makay, p. 108).
13. "To be an effective speaker, you must analyze the beliefs of your audience in the context of your message" (Makay, p. 111).
14. "Understanding your audience attitudes, beliefs, and values will help you put your message in terms most likely to succeed" (Makay, p. 111).
15. "Your reputation can affect your classroom speeches" (Makay, p. 117).

16. "The following suggestions will help you build the types of audience connection that defines the reciprocal nature of public speaking ... Get to the point quickly ... have confidence your audience wants to hear you speak" (Makay, p. 121).
17. "... hearing what your audience thought of your speech can help you give a better speech the next time around" (Makay, p. 125).

Verderber. The following are examples of unsupported claims from the discussion of audience analysis in this textbook.

1. "Now let us consider the specific areas in which it is most important to have accurate data [for audience analysis]: age, education, gender, occupation, income, race, religion, and nationality, geographic uniqueness, and group affiliations" (Verderber, p.64).
2. "For either informative or persuasive speeches, education level is an excellent predictor of audience interest and knowledge" (Verderber, p. 64).
3. "You are also likely to find a well-educated audience more open minded, more willing to at least listen to new proposals, and more accepting of social and technological changes than less well-educated audiences" (Verderber, pp. 64-65).
4. "All speakers must assess whether the audience is likely to have an immediate interest in a topic or whether they will need to elicit its interest" (Verderber, p. 66).
5. "Before choosing the information to present in a speech, you need to assess how much background information the audience already possesses" (Verderber, p. 67).
6. "An audience analysis can help us determine what our audience already knows about our topic" (Verderber, p.110).
7. "Your success with any topic depends on your audience having specific background information at the outset of a speech" (Verderber, p. 111).
8. "Next you need to determine how to present that information without insulting the intelligence of some or all of your audience" (Verderber, p. 111).
9. "This advice is based on a sound psychological principle: The more different kinds of explanation a speaker gives, the more listeners will understand" (Verderber, p. 113).
10. "... audiences react favorably to a speaker who acts friendly" (Verderber, p. 117).

Osborn & Osborn. The following unsupported claims were included by the authors in the chapter on informative speaking.

1. "People are motivated by what they don't have that they need, want, or value" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 103).
2. "Information about your audience's beliefs, attitudes, and values can be vital in planning your speech" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 108).
3. "You need to gather as much information as you can about these factors [demographics] as you plan and prepare your speech" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 110).
4. "You can better estimate your listeners' knowledge of and interest in a topic from their educational level than from their age or gender" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 113).
5. "Finally, better-educated audiences tend to be more open minded" (Osborn & Osborn, pp. 113-114).
6. "A well-educated audience will require that you supply evidence and examples that can stand up under close scrutiny" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 114).
7. "Knowing which social groups are represented in your audience and what they stand for is important for effective audience adaptation" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 115).
8. "... you must strive to reach the majority without ignoring or offending the minority" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 116).
9. "If you can appeal to the common values in your speeches to a diverse audience, you can often unite your listeners behind your ideas or suggestions" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 123).

Lucas. The following list of unsupported claims were included in Lucas' explanation of audience analysis.

1. "Unless you know what your listeners believe now, you cannot hope to change their beliefs" (Lucas, p. 91).
2. "Listeners typically approach speeches with one question uppermost in mind: 'Why is this important to me?'" (Lucas, p. 93).
3. "One of the ways speakers analyze audiences is by looking for observable traits such as age, gender, religious orientation, racial, ethnic, or cultural background, group membership, and the like" (Lucas, p. 94).
4. "... few things affect a person's outlook more than his or her age" (Lucas, 94).
5. "No matter who the speaker, no matter what the occasion, adapting one's message to people of diverse cultures is an increasingly important aspect of the art of public speaking" (Lucas, p. 98).
6. "Indeed, anything characteristic of a given audience is potentially important to a speaker addressing that audience" (Lucas, p. 99).
7. "The larger the audience, the more formal your presentation must be" (Lucas, p. 100).

8. "One of your tasks will be to assess their interest in advance and to adjust your speech accordingly. Most important, if your topic is not likely to generate great interest, you must take special steps to get your classmates involved" (Lucas, p. 101).
9. "People tend to be interested in what they know about" (Lucas, p. 102).
10. "At every point you must anticipate how your audience will respond" (Lucas, p. 109).
11. "To be an effective speaker, you should know something about the psychology of audiences" (Lucas, p. 111).

DeVito. The following unsupported claims were used to explain to the student-reader about audience analysis.

1. "A useful means for securing information about your audience is to use a questionnaire" (DeVito, p. 180).
2. "Use your knowledge of human behavior and human motivation to try to adopt the perspective of the audience" (DeVito, p. 181).
3. "Different age-groups have different attitudes and beliefs largely because they have had different experiences in different contexts" (DeVito, p. 183).
4. "Young people have strong needs to be evaluated positively by their peer group -- group identification is very important to the young" (DeVito, p. 185).
5. "Traditionally, men have been found to place greater importance on theoretical, economic, and political values" (DeVito, p. 187).
6. "... women are generally more relationally oriented than men are. Women express their feelings more readily than men do" (DeVito, p. 187).
7. "Generally, the more educated are more responsive to the needs of others" (DeVito, p. 188).
8. "The more educated will probably be less swayed by appeals to emotion and to authority" (DeVito, p. 189).
9. "Higher-status people are generally more future-oriented" (DeVito, p. 189).
10. "Higher-status, more financially secure people may be more likely to devote their time to social and political issues" (DeVito, p. 189).
11. "Generally, the larger the audience, the more formal the speech presentation should be" (p. 192).
12. "Generally, audiences are easier to persuade if they are sitting close together than if they are spread widely apart" (DeVito, p. 192).

Supported Claims

Although not all the authors did not support their claims about audience analysis, several did. The following is a listing of the supported claims discovered during a review of the text materials on audience analysis.

Makay. Makay offers support for each of the following claims included in his discussion of audience analysis.

1. "The information that emerges from this analysis is the raw material for a successful speaker-audience connection" (Makay, p. 104). Citation: C. Perelman & L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969 *[Content note]*.
2. "Avoid assumptions about the average age of your audience" (Makay, p. 105). Citation: The New York Times, 1989.
3. "... as confident and funny and comfortable the audience was hooked into the rest of the speech" (Makay, p. 105). Citation: E. Weiner, October 10, 1989 (interview).
4. "When Kushner talks to groups ... he learns in advance the group's socio-economic status" (Makay, p. 110). Citation: H. Kushner, October 13, 1989 (interview).
5. "If you put in 12 hour days at the office your career is probably more important to you than if you choose to work only part-time" (Makay, pp. 110-111). Citation: B. Rice, 1988; J. Atlas, 1984.
6. "Many topics do not guarantee the same degree of audience involvement" (Makay, p. 116). Citation: J. Clayton, 1989.
7. "I like to learn as much as I can about the audience" (Makay, p. 117). Citation: S. Leonard, October 3, 1989 (interview).
8. "What he [Robert Waterman, coauthor of In Search of Excellence) learns helps him address the specific concerns of the audience" (Makay, p. 118). Citation: W. Kiechel, III, 1987.
9. "Three basic questions are most helpful to public speakers: fixed-alternate questions, scale questions, and open-ended questions" (Makay, p. 118). Citation: G. Churchill, Jr., 1983.
10. "Be of the people, not above the people. No one wants to listen to speakers who consider themselves more accomplished smarter or more sophisticated than the audience" *[speech excerpt]* (Makay, p. 122). Citation: J. Griffin, 1989.

11. "Make personal connections with your listeners" (Makay, p. 124). Citation: E. Weiner, October 10, 1989 (interview).
12. "Speech communication professor Craig R. Smith thinks speakers can go too far in adapting to an audience" (Makay, p. 126). Citation: "Focus on Research" section.

Verderber. The following claim about the importance of audience analysis is supported by Verderber.

1. "Audience age has been used as a primary predictor of audience interests, knowledge, and attitudes for more than two thousand years" (Verderber, p. 64). Citation: Aristotle (W. R. Roberts, 1984, trans.).

Osborn & Osborn. The following materials were included by Osborn and Osborn in their chapter on audience analysis.

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Osborn & Osborn, pp. 103-107). Citation: A. H. Maslow, 1970.
2. "Most research also suggests that younger people are more flexible and open to new ideas, but older people tend to be more conservative and less receptive to change. Some recent research, however, suggests that older adults may be more willing to change than previously thought" (Osborn & Osborn, p. 111). Citation: J. A. Krosnick & D. F. Alwin, 1989; M. Rokeach, 1960; T. R. Tyler & R. A. Schuller, 1991.

DeVito. The following is the only claim DeVito supports with additional material in his discussion of audience analysis.

1. "One of the common beliefs about religious people is that they are more honest, more charitable, and more likely to reach out to those in need than the nonreligious are. A review of research, however, finds even this seemingly logical connection not true" (DeVito, p. 191). Citation: A. Kohn, 1989.

Lucas. We found no claims that Lucas supported in his discussion of audience analysis.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the research foundations of the authors' discussions of persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis? There are several conclusions we believe to be supported in each of these three areas.

Conclusion #1

Our first conclusion is based on our observation that there are many unsupported assertions included in these texts. Defenders of this approach to writing about speaking suggest that these are common sense ideas to the preparation and delivery of public speeches. They are, however, not necessarily common sense. They are claims that need support if they are to be believed and used by students. They are not tested in any research results offered by the authors of the five texts included in this analysis. The "common sense" rationale is not sufficient to warrant the boldness with which the authors make their claims.

Since these claims are not supported, it is inconceivable to us that they are advanced by the authors in their texts as if they were fact. They are not fact; they are mere conjecture on the part of each author seemingly based on tradition and historic practice. These conjectures need to be presented as just that -- mere conjectures. It would be better, rhetorically speaking, to admit that these ideas are simply pieces of advice based on the rich tradition of teaching public speaking for the student-reader to consider in preparing her or his speech. They are, however,

presented by each author as the way to think about persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis. For example, the discussions on audience analysis suggesting that less-educated, more educated, religious, younger, or older members of an audience respond in any particular fashion is simply not a useful claim to tell students studying public speaking.

In fact, the claims in each of the texts offer little practical advice to the student, soon-to-be-a-speaker, for a successful speech. Translating the claims from the text into public speaking practice is a difficult, if not impossible, task for the student-reader. For example, it might be a great idea to tell the student-reader to adapt to the audience; but there is no tested or specific advice for how the student-reader ought to do this. How is the student-speaker to translate the results of the surveys advocated in several of the texts reviewed into public speaking practice?

Conclusion #2

The overall concern of communication teachers in the beginning public speaking course is to teach students the theories, skills, and practices of public speaking. Offering students platitudes and poorly-supported assertions really do not prepare them for the public speaking situation. Authors of textbooks need to remember they are not writing bumper stickers

or sayings for the Hallmark Card Company, they are trying to instruct students in "The Art of Public Speaking."

Communication educators need to help students increase their communication competence as public speakers. The multiple unsupported claims offered in these texts offer the student no proven practice techniques or public speaking skills to help them improve their competence. Public speaking competence, as a goal of instruction in the beginning communication course, seems reasonable. There are little data or few claims included in any of the texts reviewed that offer the student-reader ways of being more competent communicators in public speaking situations. For example, will a student be a more competent persuasive speaker if he or she uses the Motivated Sequence? Or, will the use of more emotional forms of supporting material make the speaker more persuasive?

There is little information in any of the texts, even when the author offers some documentation, that test the authors' claims related to public speaking preparation and practice. There are few research results included by the authors that support any claims. Makay offers results of interviews with well-known people or public speaking practitioners as supporting material. Several authors cite Monroe, et al. as support for the Motivated Sequence. Others cite Maslow as the source for using the needs hierarchy in the speech preparation process; whether in persuasive speaking or audience analysis. Citing other authors who created an idea but failed to prove it or other testimonials

seems weak support for the broad generalizations suggested in the texts as the way to prepare and present public speeches.

Conclusion #3

In our opinion, if the adopters of these texts received such unsupported claims in a student paper, the evaluation of that paper would not be very favorable. Each author includes a major section or chapter on the use and importance of supporting materials in public speaking. If we held the authors' assertions in the areas of persuasive speaking, informative speaking, and audience analysis up to the scrutiny of their suggestions for using supporting materials, how would they measure up? It seems to us that the claims would not fare very well.

It is curious that authors, adopters, and reviewers conclude that offering unsubstantiated claims in the name of "teaching public speaking" is acceptable. Not only would these same people not accept this practice in papers from their students, editors of communication journals would not accept this practice from authors of manuscripts. It is almost unbelievable that this practice is acceptable in textbooks for the basic public speaking course. The ways authors write about public speaking should incorporate the same principles expected from students in their class papers, from colleagues submitting manuscripts for publication or presentation, and from the editorial boards of professional journals. To expect and accept less from authors of public speaking texts suggests that instruction in the basic

course is not nearly as important as some of these other activities or in need of any justification.

Conclusion #4

The claim advanced by John Daly during the 1994 SCA Summer Conference that little evidence exists is consistent with our analysis of the five public speaking texts. There is little, if any, documented support for the ways we teach and write about public speaking in the beginning public speaking textbooks we examined.

This should be an area of great concern for communication educators interested in the basic course. Research needs to be conducted to test some of the advice offered to students to improve their competence as public speakers. Communication researchers owe this to the students in the beginning public speaking course, the instructors teaching these courses, as well as to the communication discipline. The fact that these claims are not supported is an obvious gap in communication research. It causes us to pause and ask why does this gap exist. We have a simple speculation regarding this research gap: the basic communication course is not viewed as very important within the communication discipline.

Although this is speculation on our part, the evidence is clear that the basic communication course is not too important. First, most of these sections are taught by less experienced instructors -- graduate teaching assistants who receive little

consistent training and have to rely heavily on the textbook as an important source of instructional information. Second, full-service faculty seem to be uninterested in teaching the basic communication course. Third, there is a lack of scholarly research in communication journals studying the teaching of public speaking. Most of the research in our journals about the basic communication course is opinion-based, based on personal preferences or personal experiences, with little research conducted to support the public speaking strategies included in beginning texts.

Conclusion #5

The research we are calling for in the basic course is not difficult to conduct. Many of the unsupported assertions, as well as some of the supported assertions, can be tested easily. Here are a few research questions that could be tested rather easily:

1. Is the Motivated Sequence a useful tool for the speaker and the audience in a persuasive communication context?
2. Will the speaker be more successful if they adapt their speech to their listeners' demographics? Values? Attitudes?
3. Are listeners more likely to be involved in the public speaking situation if they "like" the topic?

4. Will the speaker be more successful if they use a conversational style when delivering a persuasive speech? An informative speech?
5. Is a more formal delivery style more effective when trying to persuade an audience? To inform an audience?

Some of these, and other, research questions have been researched. The problem is that the results are frequently ignored or are not cited by the authors. In seeking answers to these research questions and reporting the results, scholars would advance current understandings of only a few of the claims currently incorporated in beginning public speaking texts.

There may be two reasons why this kind of research is not conducted in the basic course. First, this research is viewed as less important by many scholars. There are instances when instructional research is viewed in promotion and tenure reviews as inferior to some of the other kinds of communication research. As a result, communication faculty will seek to conduct research that will help them be promoted and tenured. Second, there might be a fear that if these kinds of research questions are studied and reported, scholars might discover that the assertions advanced in the name of teaching public speaking will not be supported. They would be incongruent with the status quo; causing instructors to toss many of the current texts into the dumpster.

Authors of beginning public speaking textbooks should rise above their personal egos and the economics of the publishing

industry and heed the call for more scholarly writing and reporting. Authors should get involved with instructional research, provide the research results that support the claims they advance, and/or in the face of no or poor research qualify their claims as merely based on the traditions of the communication discipline or are the result of their own common sense. If these issues are addressed, students can learn and practice public speaking skills with confidence and we can hold our heads high as communication educators.

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