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ABSTRACT

This volume of an annual collection of essays presents seven essays relating to instruction in the basic communication course. The essays are: "Gerald M. Phillips' Devotion to Basic Communication Skills" (Julia T. Wood); "The Basic Course in Organizational Communication: A National Survey" (Donald Treadwell and Ronald L. Applbaum); "Improving Oral Communication Competency: An Interactive Approach to Basic Public Speaking Instruction" (Mary Mino and Marilynn N. Butler); "TA Training Beyond the First Week: A Leadership Perspective" (Glen Williams); "Context vs. Process: Revising the Structure of the Basic Course" (Donald D. Yoder and Samuel P. Wallace); "Creating and Teaching Special Sections of a Public Speaking Course for Apprehensive Students: A Multi-Case Study" (Karen Kangas Dwyer); and "Predictors of Behavioral Competence and Self-Esteem: A Study Assessing Impact in a Basic Public Speaking Course" (Sherwyn P. Morreale, Michael Z. Hackman, and Michael R. Neer). (RS)

# Basic Communication Course Annual

*Craig Newburger*
*Editor*

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# BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL

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**November 1995**

**EDITOR**
***Craig Newburger***

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# Editorial Board

# Contents



*The passing of Gerald M. Phillips in April 1995 left a void only partially filled by his students and communication scholars familiar with his work. His commitment to basic communication instruction spanned a lifetime of research and service (including Jerry's serving on the editorial board of the Annual over the last two years).*

*Julia Wood, long-time colleague, co-author, student and friend, remembers Jerry for his substantial contributions to basic communication instruction and the speech communication field.*



*This article presents a study describing the current status and characteristics of the basic organizational communication course reported by 285 college or university departments offering this course in North America. This survey is compared with surveys conducted in 1979 and 1988. The results indicate that the course is most typically taught by one faculty member in lecture/discussion format and emphasizes organizational and communication theory over skills. Students are most typically upper-level undergraduates. The course appears to be facing increasing demand. Changes are occurring in the content and structure of the course with the topics of gender differences, organizational culture, communication technology,*

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# Gerald M. Phillips' Devotion to Basic Communication Skills

*Julia T. Wood*

Most members of the communication field recognize Gerald M. Phillips as among our most prolific writers and dedicated teachers. My knowledge of Gerald Phillips goes beyond familiarity with his published work and many awards. He was, first my teacher and, later, my colleague and friend.

In April of 1995 Jerry died after a long struggle he and his wife Nancy had waged with his debilitating heart disease. Although he is no longer here to make further contributions to our field, his work endures and continues to inform our understandings of the importance of communication skills in personal, social, and professional life. In this essay I wish to pay tribute to Gerald M. Phillips and especially his commitment to basic communication skills.

I am tempted to offer a personal tribute to a man who was my mentor, a trusted colleague, and a steadfast friend; a man whom I respected and loved. His death is still too recent for me to render a wholly distanced commentary as is conventional in academic writing. Even while Jerry was alive, it was impossible for me and others who knew him well to separate the teacher and scholar from the endearing, frustrating, provocative, and always engaging person that he was. To represent fairly Jerry's commitment and contributions to basic communication skills, I must write not only about his writing and teaching, but also about the passion and vision that was so much a part of the man behind the ideas.

In this article, I will try not to lapse into excessive sentimentality, although I will share some personal stories about Jerry. One of my goals is to highlight and honor his enduring commitment to basic communication skills; but first, and as a foundation to that, I want to remember the mind and heart and history of a man who never ran dry of ideas and never ran short of the passion to argue for them. Knowing about Jerry's background and identity will enhance insight into his views of and enthusiasm for teaching basic communication skills. I ask readers to grant me the indulgence of writing about "Jerry," not "Professor Phillips" or "Gerald M. Phillips." I knew him too long and too well to think of him or speak of him in formal terms.

## THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK

I first met Gerald M. Phillips when, at the age of 23, I began my doctoral studies. In the first week of our acquaintance he gave me two pieces of advice: (1) No department and no faculty member can survive without secretaries — show them you respect what they do. (2) Basic communication skills are the heart of our discipline — the most important thing we do is to teach people how to communicate better. In the two decades since Jerry issued those dicta, I've realized the wisdom of both of them. The advice that Jerry offered me as a beginning doctoral student reflects his devotion to teaching the fundamentals of communication and his respect for individuals who do not enjoy positions of status and privilege. These loyalties are at the heart of whom Jerry was.

Even many who are familiar with Jerry's life-long commitment to basic communication skills do not realize how his personal circumstances shaped his academic involvements. Understanding his history and some of his experiences will enrich appreciation of the reasons for and depth of his allegiance to basic communication skills.

When speaking to friends, Jerry frequently referred to himself as a "hunky Jew street kid" by which he meant that he was born into a Hungarian, Jewish family and grew up in the rough-and-tumble streets of working class Cleveland. This seemingly self-derisive way of labeling himself sheds light on the basis of Jerry's commitment to teaching basic communication skills. In the first half of this century, anti-Semitism and xenophophia were more pronounced and less constrained by laws and policies than they are today.

Jerry experienced first-hand the cruelties of discrimination based on ethnicity and class. His social location jeopardized his ability to survive, much less succeed in the America of the 1940s and 1950s. He was dismissed from more than one job because "we have met our quota for Jews," and he was refused membership in various social groups because of his ethnic and class heritage. Reflecting on his social location and the constraints it imposed, Jerry often remarked that whatever success and stature he had achieved were due in no small measure to his communication skills — ones he honed and practiced throughout his life. His ability to enter and excel in mainstream U.S. culture was earned by teaching himself to communicate with wit, incisiveness, and impact. In his teaching and writing, he sought to help others develop the communication skills that would allow them to participate in social life.

Jerry's personal experience with intemperate discrimination fueled his passion for teaching basic communication skills. He believed — and he taught his students to believe — that lack of basic communication skills relegates people to the margins of society. Conversely, he believed that mastering basic communication skills empowered individuals to have a voice in democratic life, regardless of their race, class, sex, or other facets of identity. Although Jerry thought everyone needed education in basic communication, he was especially passionate about educating people who were not in the comfortable social mainstream and who might encounter obstacles that do not encumber those who are advantaged by their race, ethnicity, class, sex, and sexual preference.

Jerry referred to basic communication skills as "the great equalizer of opportunity in America." Many times he remarked that teaching a working class person how to communicate effectively materially altered that individual's chances in life. Jerry's passion for improving communication proficiency is evident in his many skill-based books, such as *Communication and Human Relationships* (with Wood, 1983), *Support Your Cause and Win* (1984), *Making it in any Organization* (with Goodall, 1984), *Group Discussion: Practical Guide for Participants and Leaders* (with Wood & Pedersen, 1986), and *Communicating in the Workplace* (with Kelly & Lederman, 1988). Jerry taught skills that have been long recognized in the communication field, but he also did more. He identified new skills and ways of teaching them to meet the needs of students who did not respond well to traditional pedagogy. For instance, with Jerry Zolten (1976), he developed structuring as an alternative to outlining as a method of organizing public speeches.

Jerry's unwavering conviction that basic communication competence is a survival skill informed his writing and teaching in diverse areas. Early in his career Jerry focused on teaching and writing about public speaking and group discussion (e.g., Phillips, 1966; Phillips & Brubaker, 1970; Phillips & Murray, 1969). During the middle years of his career, Jerry turned his attention toward empowering reticent individuals with basic communication skills. The reticence program he developed for teaching disturbed communicators, now nearly 30 years old, continues to succeed with students who would otherwise fall through the cracks in the ivory tower (e.g., Phillips, 1977, 1991; Kelly, Phillips, & McKinney, 1982; Phillips, 1981). During his later years, Jerry taught and wrote about communication skills related to medical conditions (Jones & Phillips, 1988; Werman & Phillips, 1995) and computer mediated (Santoro & Phillips, 1994). Linking these different content areas was Jerry's continuous focus on fundamental communication skills and his especial devotion to individuals who were most likely to have encountered and to continue to encounter barriers because of their class, ethnicity, sex, or race.

Animating Jerry's efforts to empower individuals was his deep regard for a democratic way of life in which freedom of speech is never abridged by politics or circumstances. Reflective of this commitment is the fact that Jerry was a member of the ACLU for four decades and, as his vita states, he was denied tenure at two institutions because of this membership. For Jerry, free and effective communication was the cornerstone of personal success and a healthy society. His views are well captured in his assertion (1983) that, "The goal of teaching is the same as in Aristotle's day: to teach, impel, motivate, facilitate, or train individuals to talk as they want to or must in ways that do not jeopardize the general welfare" (p. 25).

## GERALD PHILLIPS' COMMITMENT TO BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The man about whose life I have written was also a scholar whose name is familiar to many who teach basic communication courses. That is not surprising since Jerry published many articles, chapters, and books on communication skills. For a sampling of these, see the references at the end of this article.

Spanning many content areas in communication, Jerry maintained a consistent focus on the importance of basic communication skills to personal effectiveness and, no less, to the health of a multicultural, democratic society. I will highlight four contexts of basic communication skills that commanded much of Jerry's teaching and writing energies throughout his career. Following this, I will describe how

Jerry and his wife Nancy ensured that his commitment to basic communication skills would survive his physical life.

## *Public Speaking*

"Everyone should know how to give a speech," was one of Jerry's most common pronouncements. Throughout his career, he taught and wrote about teaching of public speaking, which he regarded as among the most basic of skills for active participation in a democratic society. Whereas many academics seek to avoid teaching basic courses once they have attained some seniority, Jerry volunteered to teach the basic courses as well as to teach the teaching assistants how to teach them. He relished working with students at the introductory level for doing so engaged him in what he regarded as the arena for the most important instruction in our field — that of teaching individuals to improve their personal competence (e.g., Phillips, Kougl, & Kelly, 1985).

Jerry did not emphasize frills and fripperies in his teaching of or writing about public speaking. Instead, he stressed the basics: audience analysis, organization, evidence, clarity, and credibility. His students learned to sculpt their ideas to the perspectives of listeners, to structure speeches clearly and coherently, to support them with convincing evidence, and to present them with conviction and clarity. Most of his students did not achieve extraordinary eloquence; few of them failed to become competent; none of them left a course with him without appreciating the importance of communication.

## *Group Discussion*

Another of Jerry's pedagogical interests was group discussion and leadership. In this area I was privileged to work with him (Wood, Phillips and Pedersen, 1986). His textbooks and classroom teaching about group communication emphasized basic communication skills. He insisted that students learn to use the standard agenda to organize group deliberations, to conduct research relevant to solving collective problems, and to think critically and participate constructively in group problem solving. Because Jerry realized that the lone individual is seldom effective, he regarded the ability to participate effectively in group discussion as essential to personal, professional, and social progress.

## *Reticence*

Many people regard Jerry's name as synonymous with reticence because he initiated a pedagogical program specifically tailored to the needs and constraints of apprehensive speakers. The most comprehensive description of reticence pedagogy is Jerry's 1991 book, *Communication Incompetencies: A Theory of Training Oral Performance Behavior.* Jerry's interest in reticence arose from his life-long commitment to helping those who were somehow disadvantaged in society. For years the Pennsylvania State University where Jerry taught for more than 20 years required a course in basic communication as a condition of graduation. Jerry noticed that a number of students were not graduating because they were so fearful of speaking that they couldn't face taking a basic communication course. Others also realized that some students were forgoing their degrees in preference to taking a basic communication course. Unlike others, however, Jerry did something about the problem.

With no models to guide him and with initially more skepticism than support from colleagues, Jerry developed and over the years refined what has become known as the Reticence Program, which includes not only theoretically grounded and pragmatically tested pedagogical content, but also screening and diagnostic measures to distinguish truly fearful communicators from those students who might simply wish to avoid the regular basic course. As a result of the Reticence Program students who in years past sacrificed their degrees learned how to communicate effectively not only in the classroom, but also in the "real world." The stunning success of Jerry's work with students others disregarded and dismissed led Jerry's colleague and friend, Tony Lenze (1995, np), to assert that Jerry's "greatest legacy is the continuing operation of the Reticence Program."

## *Computer-Mediated Communication*

I suspect I am not alone in being someone who kicked and screamed and fought against communication technologies and resisted participation in them. I was computer challenged and technologically reticent, but with Jerry as a friend and colleague, I was not allowed to stay that way! When in 1985 Jerry tried to persuade me I should get a modem so that I could converse with folks on the Internet (especially with him), I tried to avoid the challenge by claiming I couldn't afford to buy a modem. Three days after I advanced that fabrication, I received in the mail a modem from Jerry with this terse note: "No more excuses. It's time you learned the skills you need to communicate in this era." Jerry insisted that I become competent with new communication technologies, although, I confess, I continued to disappoint him with my lack of enthusiasm for ever-newer chapters in this project.

Jerry's insistence on the importance of basic skills in computer-mediated communication was not restricted to me and his other friends and colleagues (see, for example, Werman & Phillips, 1995). He recognized, long before many of us, that as teachers we have a responsibility to teach our students to use new technologies of communication. He was among the first in our field to assert that a basic communication competence in the world of today and tomorrow is computer-mediated communication. Jerry foresaw that individuals without skills in technological communication would be as disadvantaged and silenced as those without public, group and interpersonal communication skills have historically been. In this area, as in others, Jerry not only recognized the significance of skill in technological forms of communication, but he modeled ways to teach them to undergraduates. His 1994 essay, co-authored with Jerry Santoro, about which I will say more later, is an example of his ceaseless commitment to teaching basic communication skills that enable people to be effective in personal and public life.

## *Applied Communication*

The range of topics that Jerry taught and studied, only some of which I have noted in this article, should not obscure a consistency of purpose that marked his work. Regardless of whether he was writing or teaching about public speaking, group discussion, computer-mediated communication, or training in reticence, Jerry invariably regarded communication as an applied field. Against the tide of high-level theorizing and specialized scholarship, Jerry loudly and tirelessly championed the importance of communication as an applied field whose heart is and has always been basic skills. In 19834, for instance, he argued that "a commitment to our own tradition may be just what the discipline needs, and the competence/skill quest may be just the way to get it" (p. 343).

Jerry's undefensive defense of communication as an applied art and science was not due to his inability to engage in theoretical thought and writing. Indeed, he could (and did) dance at higher levels of theoretical abstraction than most who define themselves primarily as theorists. Jerry had read and could discuss extensively Freud (in the original), Hegel, Jung, Marx, Aristotle and Plato (their complete works), Foucault, and other major established and emergent theorists. He knew their work well, and it informed his own thinking, teaching, and scholarship.

Yet, Jerry was ever mindful of the premier social scientist Kurt Lewin's dictum that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory." For Jerry, as for me (Wood, 1995), theory is not removed from praxis. Instead, theories are always informed, tacitly or overtly, by practice and, conversely, practice is always guided, consciously or not, by theoretical assumptions. For Jerry, the bottom line was practical — some change or effect as a result of communication skill.

Consider a few examples of the pragmatic ways in which Jerry applied theory in his teaching and writing about pedagogy. During the 1970s and early 1980s he developed and supervised a novel program designed to teach reticent students to communicate competently. This was a pioneering venture in which Jerry combined his knowledge of rhetorical and psychoanalytic theories to craft a training program in which understanding of neurosis and self-concept informed techniques for fostering the development of basic communication skills in apprehensive speakers.

In more recent years Jerry taught himself about computer technologies, or infomatics as he often called it. Unlike many of us who aim only to become competent in the software and communication techniques we need to do our work, Jerry was determined to understand theories of computer intelligence and computer operations. He was more than successful in this venture, as evident by his guest editorship of the April 1994 issue of *Communication Education,* which was devoted to uses of the National Information Infrastructure in the field of communication. Equally convincing testimony of his understanding of theories of computer technologies is his appointment as an adjunct Professor of Infomatics at the Pennsylvania State University. But, again, Jerry did not linger too long with theory qua theory. He insisted on putting theory to the service of practical ends. A good example of this is his essay titled "Computer-Mediated Communication in the Basic Communication Course," which he co-authored with Jerry Santoro for the *Basic Communication Course Annual for 1994*. The course which he and Santoro described in that chapter won one of only 101 EDUCOM Joe Wyatt Challenge Awards for successfully applying computer technology to basic instruction. Developing that course and sharing his experiences with others illustrate his dedication to teaching basic communication skills that can be applied in the context of everyday life.

## *A Lasting Monument to Applied Communication*

Not content only to be an applied theorist himself, Jerry wanted to highlight the importance of applied communication, and he wanted to do this in a way that would survive his own life.

With his wife Nancy, Jerry founded and provided initial funding for a major SCA award to honor and reward impressive work in applied communication. The Gerald M. Phillips Award for Applied Communication was first given in 1994. As a member of the Gerald M. Phillips Award Committee for 1994 and 1995, I can testify to the quality of nominees for the award. Further, without violating the confidentiality of committee documents, I can state that no small portion of the nominees are former students of Jerry. His commitment to basic communication skills lives on in his students and in the award that provides national recognition to applied communication.

# GERALD M. PHILLIPS' LEGACY TO THE FIELD

Jerry was an unusual academic — one not easily placed in conventional cubbyholes. On the one hand, he was a staunch traditionalist in his abiding commitment to basic communication skills, so often abandoned by accomplished professors. On the other hand, he was a radical pioneer who led the field forward to embrace and teach about new communication competencies that our students (and we) need if we are to be effective in an era dominated by information and technology. He was a man who understood the critical importance of communication skills for effective living, and he was a teacher who savored empowering students through instructing them in those skills.

Jerry's continuing and substantial contributions to the basic communication course reflect his impressive intellect. No less, they reflect his equally extraordinary heart and passionate commitment to empowering those who are not born into privilege. In his teaching of basic skills Jerry was steadfastly rigorous, often stern, and never willing to compromise standards. His rigor, however, was never mean spirited nor used to belittle students; instead, it sprang from a devotion to his students and from his knowledge that they needed to become proficient in basic communication skills in order to be successful.

Now, only a few months after Jerry's death, I still find it difficult to endure the personal or professional loss. He was a dedicated teacher, a tireless advocate of basic communication skills, a loving husband, father, and grandfather, and an uncommonly loyal friend. It would be easier to accept Jerry's death if during his life he had given less to our field and to those who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. Yet, it was not Jerry's way to give less than he was capable of giving, and he was capable of giving very much, as his record demonstrates.

The field of communication was greatly enriched by Jerry Phillip's vigorous participation in it. His lifetime of contributions make the discipline more vibrant and consequential than it would have been had he not been among us. Jerry's absence now reminds us of his strong presence and the difference it has made and will continue to make.

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# The Basic Course in Organizational Communication: A National Survey

*Donald Treadwell*
*Ronald L. Applbaum*

## BACKGROUND

Springston (1992) suggests that "organizational communication is an increasingly popular subject of study on university campuses" (p.93). Chesebro (1990) observes that the number of departments offering organizational communication coursework is increasing and more students are attracted to this area of study.

Since 1974, a number of articles have reported research on the status of organizational communication and the basic organizational communication course in communication and business departments (Downs & Larimer, 1974; Lewis, 1975; Carney, 1979; Pace & Ross, 1983; Pace, Michal-Johnson & Mills, 1990). In business, as well as the communication disciplines, recent research has reported on the structure and content of the basic or introductory business communication course (Nelson, Luse & DuFrene, 1992; Johnson & DuFrene, 1992; Pace, Michal-Johnson & Mills, 1990). Pace, Michal-Johnson & Mills (1990) suggest that the basic organizational communication course (hereafter referred to as the BOCC) has emerged as "an important vehicle for reflecting the status of our knowledge of the field" (p. 49).

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted for three reasons. First, two previous major surveys of the BOCC had a relatively low number of respondents (100 in 1979; 98 in 1988). This number of respondents might not be representative of the population of institutional programs offering the BOCC. Second, over the past ten years there has been an emergence of a number of new approaches and topics focusing on organizational behavior and organizational communication. Third, there have been a number of new texts and readings published specifically for the basic organizational communication course since the last major survey conducted in 1988. The last two reasons suggest the possibility of major changes in the content and structure of the basic course in organizational communication.

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the current status and characteristics of the basic organizational communication course (BOCC) taught in colleges and universities in North America (Canada, United States and Puerto Rico). Results of the survey are compared with the 1988 survey (Pace, Michal-Johnson & Mills, 1990).

## METHOD

### *Questionnaire*

Questionnaire items replicated the data categories of the two earlier BOCC surveys (Pace & Ross, 1983; Pace, Michal-Johnson & Mills, 1990). Additional questions assessed demand for the course, goals for the course, nature and weight of course assignments and the most frequently encountered instructional problems.

A forty-two (42) fixed-format item questionnaire was developed around seven categories of data: school and department information, faculty information, course information, textbook information, instructional techniques and goals, course assignments and grading criteria and course-related problems. Only the items dealing with instructionally-related problems and course-text selection were open-ended.

## *Participants*

Between October of 1993 and January of 1994, questionnaires were mailed to 720 colleges and universities in North American that are members of the Speech Communication Association. Three separate mailings were conducted. A total of 383 unduplicated school responses or 53.1 percent of the institutions surveyed responded.

Although an institution might have more than one department as member of the Speech Communication Association, the first mailing to 1,136 departments in the 720 institutions enabled the researchers to identify the appropriate "organizational communication-oriented" department and limit the final response count to only one questionnaire from any particular institution.

The data for this article are based on the 383 usable questionnaires. Although on occasion, a response to a single item on a questionnaire was missing, none of the questionnaires had to be eliminated from the data analysis. Ninety-five (95) respondents indicated by a specific statement or lack of response that their department did not offer a BOCC. One indicated that a graduate-level course only was offered, and two indicated that a BOCC was planned but not yet offered. This total of 98 questionnaires was analyzed only in regard to institutional demographics. The remaining 285 participant questionnaires were analyzed across the 42 items. Percentages reported in this paper are based on these 285 responses unless otherwise indicated

# RESULTS

## *School and Department Information*

Of the 285 respondents offering a BOCC, 60.7 percent (173) were from public institutions and 37.9 percent (108) from private institutions. Over half (61.4%) of the responses were from institutions of 11,000 or fewer students. Most institutions had 2,5016,000 students (24.6%) or fewer than 2,500 (21.4%). Most departments (83.2%) were on a semester system with 10.2 percent on a quarter system. Of the 280 departments reporting degrees offered, 16.1 percent (45) offered a bachelors degree, 45 percent (126) offered a masters degree and 38.9 percent (109) offered a doctorate as the highest degree.

Of the 98 respondents not offering a BOCC, 38.8 percent (38) were from public schools and 60.2 percent (59) were from private schools. Just over forty (40.8) percent of responses were from schools of fewer than 2,500 students; 31.6 percent were from schools of 2,5016,000 students. Most departments (84.7 percent) were on a semester system. Of the 94 respondents reporting this, 25.5 percent offered a bachelors as the highest institutional degree; 47.9 offered a masters, and 26.6 percent offered a doctorate.

The BOCC is taught predominantly in departments of communication, communication arts or communication studies (69.5%) and speech communication or speech/theatre (17.9%). Other departments included, for example, Human Communication Studies, Rhetoric and Communication, and Language, Literature and Communication.

Twelve departments (4.2%) offered a BOCC at the associates level; 279 (97.9%) at the bachelors level; 119 (41.8%) at the masters level; and 25 (8.8%) at the doctoral level. (Totals exceed 100 percent as departments may offer organizational communication courses at more than one level.) Over half (51.9%) offered no undergraduate curricular program in organizational communication; 38.6 percent (110) offered a major track, sequence or concentration; 11.9 percent (34) offered a major; 11.9 percent (34) offered a minor.

Most departments had under 100 majors (50.2%) or 101 - 250 majors (36.5%).

## *Faculty*

Approximately one-third of departments (29.5%) had 0-5 faculty or 6-10 faculty (34.4%); one quarter (25.3%) had 11-20 faculty.

Over half of the departments (55.8%) reported having two to three faculty prepared to teach the BOCC; 30.4 percent had one, and 10.2 percent reported having 4-5 such faculty. Nearly 80 percent (78.2%) had one faculty member teaching the BOCC in any given semester; 14.0 percent of departments had two.

The BOCC is taught most frequently by a single faculty member (91.9%). Only four respondents (1.4%) reported team-teaching the course.

Respondents were asked to provide information on qualifications, experience and tenure for up to five faculty who most often teach organizational communication. Respondents provided information typically on two faculty members. Based on this, 23.8 percent of faculty were full professors, 27.4 percent were associates, 36.2 percent were assistants, and 10.9 percent were adjuncts. Doctorates were held by 77.3 percent, and masters degrees by 22.5 percent. One bachelors degree was reported.

Over half the faculty teaching the BOCC were tenured (51.22%), 32.45 percent were untenured but on tenure track, and 16.32 percent were not on tenure track. One quarter (25.9%) had been teaching 0-3 years, 28.9 percent 4-6 years, 15.2 percent for 7-9 years, and 29.9 percent for nine or more years. Over half (54.3%) had 0-3 years non-academic professional experience in organizations, 23.3 percent had 4-6 years professional experience, 7.4 percent had 7-9 years, and 14.8 percent had nine or more years of nonacademic professional experience.

## *Course Information*

Most departments (69.8%) offer one section of the BOCC per semester; 12.6 percent offer two sections. Class size is predominantly 11-25 students (51.9%) or 26-50 (36.5%). Most courses (80.4%) are offered for three credits; 14.7 percent are offered for four credits.

Only eight departments (2.8%) reported that the BOCC was an institutional core curriculum requirement; 43.5 percent reported that the BOCC was an institutional elective. The course is a departmental requirement for majors in 28.4 percent of the departments. For 4.9 percent of respondents, the BOCC is a requirement for majors in other departments. For 56.8 percent of departments, the BOCC is a track requirement.

The BOCC is taught at the lower division undergraduate level by 22.1 percent of departments, at the upper division undergraduate level by 80.7 percent, and at the graduate level by 27.4 percent. Students taking the course are most typically upper-level undergraduates (71.9%) or lower-level undergraduates (12.6%).

For 45.6 percent of departments, the BOCC has no prerequisites; for 37.2 percent there is one prerequisite; and for 13.3 percent two prerequisites.

Demand for the BOCC appears to be increasing; 52.3 percent of respondents said demand from majors over the last five years was increasing, and 44.6 percent reported similarly for non-majors. Only 4.6 percent said demand from majors was decreasing (3.5% for non-majors).

## *Course Objectives*

The two most frequently cited objectives for the BOCC were to "provide an overview of the theories about organizations" (83.5%) and to "help students analyze problems in organizations" (81.4%). "Provide basic communication skills" was cited by only 28.8 percent, and "Help students effectively manage personnel" by 31.2 percent. Consonant with this, nearly 75 percent (74.7%) of respondents reported a 60:40 ratio or better of theory over skills in terms of class time devoted to the course.

Other objectives cited for the course included "messages and media for internal communication", "communication as an organizing process", "understanding their future relationship to the organization", "provide them work experience", "learn research tools, including audits", "apply basic principles", "provide overview of human communication in organizations", "small group dynamics", "develop critical thinking competencies", "provide a large applied project", "study of organizational culture", "basics of consulting", "conduct training workshops", and "current cutting edge trends".

## *Course Content*

Table I shows the time devoted to major organizational communication topics and departmental assessments of changes in emphasis for each topic. To allow comparison with previous surveys a weighting was established for each topic

## Table I
## Emphasis on Topics in the BOCC

| Topic | Total Periods | | Mean Periods | Reported Change [1] Less | Same | More | Rank [2] Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theories of Org. Comm. | 912 | (237) | 3.85 | 6.4 | 60.3 | 33.3 | ++ |
| Organizational Theory | 777 | (242) | 3.21 | 12.1 | 65.7 | 22.2 | + |
| Examinations | 635.5 | (240) | 2.65 | 8.1 | 82.5 | 9.5 | - |
| Organizational Culture | 532.5 | (241) | 2.21 | 6.4 | 49.5 | 44.1 | + |
| Comm. theory/models | 510 | (239) | 2.13 | 14.0 | 71.0 | 15.0 | + |
| Leadership | 428.5 | (238) | 1.80 | 13.0 | 64.5 | 22.5 | - |
| Decision Making | 400.5 | (237) | 1.69 | 13.1 | 67.2 | 19.7 | + |
| Interpersonal sup/sub comm | 399.5 | (237) | 1.69 | 11.2 | 72.6 | 16.2 | + |
| Management Styles | 397 | (237) | 1.68 | 11.0 | 76.0 | 13.0 | - |
| Small Groups | 372 | (235) | 1.58 | 21.1 | 67.5 | 11.3 | + |
| Conflict/conflict management | 368.5 | (238) | 1.55 | 8.6 | 72.7 | 18.7 | -- |
| Managerial Communication | 357.5 | (235) | 1.52 | 12.2 | 74.5 | 13.3 | + |
| Communication Networks | 355.5 | (238) | 1.49 | 12.3 | 74.9 | 12.8 | +++ |
| Problem Solving | 348 | (237) | 1.47 | 12.3 | 74.4 | 13.3 | +++ |
| Organizational Change | 346.5 | (238) | 1.46 | 7.1 | 64.3 | 28.6 | - |
| Communication Climate | 339 | (238) | 1.42 | 8.4 | 73.3 | 18.3 | - |
| Ethics | 331.5 | (237) | 1.40 | 3.5 | 62.1 | 34.3 | +++ |
| Gender Differences | 294.5 | (237) | 1.24 | 4.5 | 48.0 | 47.5 | +++ |
| Power Dynamics | 285.5 | (234) | 1.22 | 7.6 | 62.9 | 29.4 | + |
| Communication Audit/analysis | 282.5 | (234) | 1.21 | 19.5 | 66.7 | 13.8 | = |
| Organizational Climate | 266.0 | (236) | 1.13 | 8.2 | 78.1 | 13.8 | - |
| Organizational Politics | 258.5 | (234) | 1.11 | 8.9 | 63.9 | 27.2 | NA |
| Organizational Effectiveness | 250.0 | (235) | 1.06 | 6.6 | 82.7 | 10.7 | + |
| Motivation Theory | 248.0 | (235) | 1.06 | 15.3 | 77.9 | 6.8 | --- |
| Non-verbal Behavior | 243 | (240) | 1.01 | 14.8 | 75.5 | 9.7 | - |
| Network Analysis | 242 | (235) | 1.03 | 12.6 | 78.4 | 9.0 | --- |
| Communication Technology | 240 | (237) | 1.01 | 9.1 | 51.5 | 39.4 | ++ |
| Informal/Grapevine Comm. | 238 | (239) | 1.00 | 9.5 | 81.4 | 9.0 | --- |
| Language/Symbols | 234 | (237) | 0.99 | 6.7 | 79.9 | 13.4 | ++ |
| Intergroup Relations | 227 | (235) | 0.97 | 8.3 | 76.6 | 15.1 | -- |
| Instruments for Diagnose Org Comm | 215 | (237) | 0.91 | 14.4 | 72.7 | 12.9 | - |
| Writing in Organizations | 212 | (237) | 0.90 | 16.8 | 72.6 | 10.7 | NA |
| International e.g. Japanese Mgmt | 211 | (236) | 0.89 | 9.7 | 61.0 | 29.2 | - |
| Orientation /Review syllabus | 208.5 | (244) | 0.86 | 4.2 | 88.8 | 7.0 | - |
| External comm./ public relations | 205 | (233) | 0.88 | 14.2 | 65.8 | 20.0 | + |
| Intervention techniques | 203.5 | (235) | 0.87 | 12.5 | 71.9 | 15.6 | - |
| History of Org. Comm. | 202.5 | (236) | 0.86 | 12.5 | 79.2 | 8.3 | --- |
| Interviewing | 198 | (236) | 0.84 | 21.1 | 70.5 | 8.4 | + |
| Consulting &/or training | 194.5 | (234) | 0.83 | 16.5 | 66.0 | 17.5 | --- |
| Listening | 176.5 | (237) | 0.75 | 18.0 | 70.6 | 11:3 | + |
| Communication Rules | 176 | (232) | 0.76 | 13.4 | 79.0 | 7.5 | --- |
| Public Speaking | 173.5 | (233) | 0.75 | 16.4 | 77.2 | 6.3 | = |
| Message Fidelity / Distortion | 173 | (236) | 0.73 | 13.2 | 81.1 | 5.8 | -- |
| Communication Satisfaction | 155.5 | (233) | 0.67 | 12.7 | 81.5 | 5.8 | --- |
| Org. Comm. as a Career | 135.5 | (235) | 0.58 | 5.9 | 82.9 | 11.2 | NA |
| Communication Load | 135.0 | (234) | 0.58 | 10.9 | 85.4 | 3.6 | --- |
| Design/Type of Org Media | 73.0 | (235) | 0.31 | 9.7 | 81.6 | 8.6 | NA |
| Communication Costs | 65.0 | (235) | 0.28 | 9.7 | 85.9 | 4.3 | + |

[1] Valid percent of respondents reporting change in emphasis over last five years. (Excludes missing data.)

[2] Change in rank since 1988 survey.

+ - Plus or minus 0-5

++ -- Plus or minus 6 - 10

+++ --- Plus or minus greater than 10

NA Not asked in 1988

= No change

by summing the total number of periods reported for each (See also Pace, Michal-Johnson, & Mills, 1990). Table I shows the topics ranked by total periods spent on each, together with mean number of periods spent on each, the change in emphasis over the last five years reported by departments, and the relative change in ranking with respect to the 1988 survey.

With the exception of four new topics (organizational politics, writing in organizations, organizational communication as a career, and design and development of organizational media) the same topics as in earlier surveys were used.

There is a heavy emphasis on theory in that theoretical topics account for three of the top five; the other two areas are organizational culture and examinations.

Over the last five years, at least one-third of respondents report increased emphasis on the topics of gender differences, organizational culture, technology of communication, ethics, and theories of organizational communication. Almost half (47.5%) of those responding to the question report an increased emphasis on gender differences as a topic. Topics with increased but slightly less emphasis include power dynamics, organizational change, organizational politics, and international communication. Respondents do not report the same level of de-emphasis, but over 20 percent report less emphasis on small group communication and interviewing, and slightly fewer report less emphasis on communication audit and listening.

In terms of ranking by classroom time, the following topics have particularly increased in importance since 1988: communication networks, problem solving, ethics, and gender differences. The following have dropped substantially in rank: network analysis, informal/ grapevine communication, history of organizational communication, consulting/training, communication rules, communication satisfaction and communication load.

Table II
Texts for the Basic Organizational Communication Course
(rank-ordered by use as primary text

| Text Author(s) | Primary[1] | | Secondary[2] | | Primary and Secondary[3] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Goldhaber | 22.1 | 63 | 8.8 | 25 | | |
| Frank & Bownell | 21.4 | 61 | 0.7 | 2 | 0.7 | 2 |
| Shockley-Zalaback | 21.1 | 60 | 3.5 | 10 | 1.1 | 3 |
| Daniels & Spiker | 17.9 | 51 | 4.6 | 13 | | |
| Kreps | 14.7 | 42 | 4.9 | 14 | | |
| Conrad | 14.7 | 42 | 2.1 | 6 | | |
| Other | 11.9 | 34 | 8.1 | 23 | 0.4 | 1 |
| Faculty-provided readings | 9.1 | 26 | 20.4 | 58 | 1.8 | 5 |
| Eisenberg & Goodall | 8.4 | 24 | 4.6 | 13 | 0.4 | 1 |
| Sypher | 3.5 | 10 | 9.5 | 27 | | |
| Gibson | 3.2 | 9 | 0.7 | 2 | | |
| Pace & Faules | 2.8 | 8 | 4.2 | 12 | | |
| Hutchinson | 2.5 | 7 | | | | |
| Corman et al | 2.1 | 6 | 7.0 | 20 | | |
| Richmond & McCroskey | 1.8 | 5 | | | | |
| Cummings, Long & Lewis | 1.4 | 4 | 1.4 | 4 | | |
| Koehler, Anatol & Applbaum | 1.4 | 4 | 2.8 | 8 | | |
| Morgan | 1.4 | 4 | 0.7 | 2 | | |
| Farace, Monge & Russell | 0.7 | 2 | 2.5 | 7 | | |
| Hall | 0.4 | 1 | 1.1 | 3 | 1.1 | 3 |

[1]Primary — Respondents indicating use of the text as a primary resource.
[2]Secondary — Respondents indicating use of the text as a secondary resource.
[3]Primary & Secondary — Respondents indicating both primary and secondary use of the text.

## *The Text*

For 90.9 percent of departments answering this question, the textbook decision is made by individual faculty; 8.4 percent say the decision is made collectively by the faculty who teach organizational communication. Table II shows the percent and number of departments reporting primary and secondary (or both) use for 19 commonly available texts. The three most frequently cited texts were Goldhaber's *Organizational Comnunication,* Frank & Brownell's *Organizational Communication and Behavior,* and Shockley-Zalaback's *Fundamentals of Organizational Communication,* followed by Daniels & Spiker's *Perspectives on Organizational Comnunication,* Kreps' *Organizational Communication,* and Conrad's *Strategic Organizational Communication.*

Other texts cited by respondents include: Frost, et al. *Organizational Reality,* Van de Berg and Trujillo *Organizational Life on Television,* Haslett, et al. *Organizational Women: Power & Paradox,* Hackman and Johnson *Leadership: A Communication Perspective,* Pascale and Athos *Art of Japanese Management,* Fournies *Coaching for Improved Work Performance,* O'Hair and Friedrich *Strategic Communication in Business and the Professions,* Bovee and Thill *Business Communication Today,* Deal and Kennedy *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life,* and Borisoff and Merrill *Power to Communicate: Gender Differences as Barriers.*

Only 9.5 percent responding to the text coverage question reported that the primary text of choice provided 100 percent coverage of the BOCC, but overall 62 percent reported that the text covered the course 80 percent or better. On satisfaction with the text as it relates to the BOCC, 10.4 percent of the responses were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the text; 19.8 percent were neutral; 52.2 percent were satisfied and 17.5 percent were very satisfied with the primary text.

## *Instructional Methods*

Table III shows the relative use of instructional methods cited by respondents. Faculty lectures and instructor-led discussion predominate. Case studies and group projects are used by about three quarters of departments; individual projects, guest lectures, role-playing, simulations, transparencies and films/pre-recorded videos arc cited by over half of the departments.

Table III
Basic Organizational Communication Course Teaching Methods by Rank

| | Percent | (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Faculty Lectures | 93.0 | 265 |
| Instructor-led class discussions | 81.4 | 232 |
| Case studies | 78.2 | 223 |
| Group project assignments | 70.9 | 202 |
| Individual project assignments | 64.9 | 185 |
| Guest Lectures | 56.8 | 162 |
| Films/pre-recorded video | 53.7 | 153 |
| Transparancies | 53.3 | 152 |
| Role-playing | 51.6 | 147 |
| Simulations | 51.2 | 146 |
| Video Recording | 36.5 | 104 |
| Models | 28.1 | 80 |
| Coaching | 13.0 | 37 |
| Slides | 9.8 | 28 |
| Flip Charts | 9.8 | 28 |
| In-basket exercises | 8.1 | 23 |
| E-mail, bulletin boards, computer conferencing | 7.7 | 22 |
| Labs | 5.6 | 16 |
| Computer-aided instruction | 5.3 | 15 |

## *Weighting and Number of Assignments*

Table IV shows the relative weighting given to assignments in terms of the final grade. Most frequently, written exams account for 51 percent or more of the final grade (22.1 % of respondents) or 21 to 30 percent of the final grade (22.4% of respondents). For 12.6 percent of departments, written assignments account for over 51 percent of the final grade. Group projects and oral examinations /presentations most frequently account for less than 10 percent of the final grade (35.8% and 45.8% of departments respectively).

Table V shows the number of assignments typically given. Typically there are one or two written papers and one oral presentation. About two thirds assign multiple choice tests. Most departments (86.8%) assign essay-type examinations, most typically two (Table V).

Table IV
Basic Organizational Communication Course:
Percent of Respondents Reporting Weighting of Final Grade

| Percent of Final Grade | Group Project | Written Assignment | Oral Presents | Written Exams |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-10 | 35.8 | 7.4 | 45.8 | 5.9 |
| 11-20 | 27.6 | 19.0 | 28.4 | 10.7 |
| 21-30 | 25.0 | 28.6 | 15.1 | 22.4 |
| 31-40 | 4.9 | 20.4 | 7.0 | 21.3 |
| 41-50 | 6.0 | 11.9 | 2.6 | 17.6 |
| >51 | 0.7 | 12.6 | 1.1 | 22.1 |

Table V
Basic Organizational Communication Course:
Percent of Respondents Reporting Number of Assignments

| Number of Assignments | Written Papers | Oral Prstns | Multiple Choice Tests | Essay Exams | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zero | 3.7 | 17.9 | 36.6 | 13.2 | 64.4 |
| One | 30.1 | 41.8 | 10.9 | 24.5 | 15.7 |
| Two | 29.4 | 24.3 | 29.8 | 34.7 | 9.6 |
| Three | 18.2 | 7.8 | 16.6 | 21.1 | 4.6 |
| > Three | 18.6 | 8.2 | 6.0 | 6.4 | 5.7 |

Approximately half the respondents (45.3%) required papers of 0-6 pages; 49.4 percent required papers of 7-15 pages; only 5.2 percent required papers of 16 or more pages. Nearly three-quarters (73.0%) required oral presentations of 15 minutes or less; 13 percent required 20-minute presentations, and 9.1 percent required 30-minute presentations.

Two thirds (63.4%) required first hand research into an organization as part of the course.

## *Common Instructional Problems*

Table VI shows the major instructional problems identified in teaching the BOCC. The most frequently identified problem was "Time to cover the course content" (61.8%). This was the only problem identified by more than half of the departments. The three next-most cited problems were students' lack of organizational experience" (40.7%); "determining the instructional balance between theory and practice" (31.2%) and the textbook (30.2%).

Table VI
Problems in Teaching the Basic Organizational Communication Course by Rank

| Problem | % | (n) |
|---|---|---|
| Time to cover course content | 61.8 | 176 |
| Students' lack of organizational experience | 40.7 | 116 |
| Determining balance between theory & practice | 31.2 | 89 |
| Textbook | 30.2 | 86 |
| Class Size | 25.3 | 72 |
| Students' lack of communication knowledge | 25.3 | 72 |
| Lack of understanding of BOCC by students | 24.9 | 71 |
| Time to cover textbook or readings | 23.5 | 67 |
| Lack of understanding of BOCC by other faculty | 20.0 | 57 |
| Students' lack of communication skills | 14.7 | 42 |
| Lack of media equipmemt | 12.3 | 35 |
| Relationship of course to other courses | 9.1 | 26 |
| Period length | 8.1 | 23 |
| Acquiring qualified faculty | 6.7 | 19 |
| Other | 6.3 | 18 |
| Developing an adequate grading procedure | 4.9 | 14 |

Other instructional problems cited by respondents included students' lack of critical perspective, lack of writing/reading skills, students' general lack of knowledge, disparity in background knowledge and skills, diversity of student course expectations, confusion of business and professional communication with organizational communication, too much material for basic course (course needs to be split into two or three), some students not college-ready, students' work schedules, limited local organizations to serve as sites or instructors, lack of materials that demonstrate relationship between theory and practice, keeping up with the field, adult students wish instructor had more of a 'business' background — i.e. some distrust of academic perspective, lack of management theory, lack of organization theory, other faculty teaching business and professional communication as basic organizational communication course creates feeder pre-requisite problems, lack of good discussible cases

## DISCUSSION

The departments most likely to offer the BOCC remain Communication, Communication Arts, or Communication Studies. Data from the three surveys (1979, 1988, 1994) indicate a steady decline in the percentage of speech communication departments and an increase in the percentage of communication departments offering the BOCC. The survey offers no reason for this, but we speculate that students in such applied fields as public relations and business communication are finding organizational communication an increasingly relevant topic, and that such students are more likely to be found in communication programs than in speech/theatre programs.

There is a major difference between institutions that offer the BOCC and those who do not. Whereas 60.7 percent of those schools offering a BOCC were public, 60.2 percent of those *not* offering a BOCC were private. There is also some difference in institutional size. "Fewer than 2,500 students" and "2,501-6,000 students" are the two most frequent sizes for both groups but the non-BOCC group has 72.4 percent of respondents in these two categories where the BOCC group has 46.0 percent.

Schools offering a BOCC are thus more likely to be public, larger, and somewhat more likely to offer a doctorate as the highest degree.

The BOCC is now offered more widely in that 69.8 percent of respondents report offering at least one section per semester whereas Pace, Michal-Johnson and Mills (1990) found 56 percent of schools offering one section.

Pace, et. al. (1990) report that the percentage of schools requiring the BOCC increased from 34 in 1979 to 51 in 1988. We found that only 2.8 percent of respondents had the BOCC as a required part of their institution's core curriculum. When we look at departmental requirements, Pace, et. al. (1990) found the percentage of schools requiring the BOCC for a departmental minor increased from 21 to 29 percent. We find that 56.8 percent of respondents required the course for one or more tracks, and 28.4 percent required it for a major. This increase in the tracks or concentrations requiring the BOCC may again reflect increasing perceptions of the relevance of the course to such related areas as business management and public relations.

There appears to be no significant change since 1988 in the type of student taking the course in that upper-division students still predominate. The fact that over half the responding departments have at least one prerequisite and some have up to three suggests that most departments have an expectation that their students will be upper-division students with some previous exposure to communication theory and/or practice.

Faculty educational qualifications were not reported in previous studies; we found that over three quarters of organizational communication faculty (77.3%) held doctorates. We found that 51.1 percent of faculty had associate or full professor status compared with 70 percent in 1988; 47.2 percent had assistant or adjunct status suggesting that the BOCC is now more likely to be taught by a younger generation of faculty.

Of the top ten texts reported from 1988, only five appear in the top ten in this study. A number of new texts were published since the last study — Frank & Brownell, Shockley-Zalaback, Eisenberg & Goodall, and Sypher. There is some dissatisfaction with primary texts; 30 percent are neutral to "very dissatisfied" with the text. That faculty are looking for additional text support is evident from the fact that almost every text is used as a secondary text, that "other" readings (noted earlier) account for 1 1.9 percent of responses, and that faculty-provided readings are the eighth most popular primary source for the classroom. We suspect that these figures may not suggest dissatisfaction with the texts, but rather a search for materials to support a course which is becoming broader rather than narrower in focus. Organizational communication topic priorities also are changing, and it may be that established texts have been less successful in keeping up with shifts in faculty topic preferences.

The top ten course topics include three new topics — decision-making, interpersonal/superior-subordinate and small groups, which replace network analysis, conflict/conflict resolution and communication climate. There also has been a number of changes in the bottom ten topics. Since the 1988 survey, gender differences, ethics, interviewing, problem solving, language/symbols, external communication/public relations, and intervention techniques have all moved up from the bottom ten. New to the bottom ten are consulting/raining, communication rules, message fidelity/distortion, communication satisfaction, organizational communication as a career, communication load, and design and development of organizational media.

Topics that have moved up in ranking since 1988 include communication networks, problem solving, ethics and gender differences. Topics that have moved down in their ranking include network analysis, informal/grapevine communication, history of organizational communication, consulting/training, communication rules, communication satisfaction, and communication load. It is difficult to generalize about these trends although the current top ten together show an emphasis on theory and on relationships within the organization, and the only topics that receive more than three classroom periods on average are theory topics.

The topic changes discussed above also may suggest an increasing focus on issues of equity and problem solving within both the formal and informal organization. Topics that have "dropped" tend to be those with a mechanistic or positivistic approach to organizations. It is interesting that whereas communication networks has become a more favored topic, network analysis has dropped in favor. Also what might be a marker course for the maturity of a discipline — organizational communication history — has dropped from a medium-ranked topic (19/44 in 1988) to 37/48 in ranking.

This survey of the BOCC in North American colleges and universities did include a larger and more representative number of respondents than the previous surveys. The survey found, as expected, that the BOCC continues to change to reflect the new approaches and topics in organizational communication.

We suspect that the younger generation of instructors suggested by our demographic data may be introducing and emphasizing more contemporary topics informed by such areas as critical theory and women's studies. As more topics enter the BOCC and as tutors struggle with a theory: practice balance, it is not surprising that time to cover the course is the major instructional problem. We suspect that departments may increasingly face some difficult decisions as to what topics will be included/excluded, and perhaps whether the BOCC may at some point break into an upper- and lower-level sequence or perhaps even split along mass/group/interpersonal lines in order to cover all topics adequately.

Additional research on the BOCC needs to be undertaken. This study did not explore the content of the primary and secondary BOCC texts. We do not know whether the BOCC texts reflect the changes occurring in the field. We also do not know the type of formal education background or practical experience in organizational communication possessed by faculty teaching the BOCC. We do not know whether the BOCC faculty are self-taught or have gone through a formal organizational communication education program. We did not explore the type of course prerequisites required of BOCC students and whether the students' background education and/or training influence the content or structure of the BOCC. Finally, the influence of institutional attributes on the BOCC needs further exploration. For example, we found that schools offering the BOCC are more likely to be public and larger, but we have not explored the specific reasons for this.

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# Improving Oral Communication Competency: An Interactive Approach to Basic Public Speaking Instruction

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Oral communication skills training is an integral component of undergraduate education (Friedrich, 1985; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleson, 1985; Hugenberg, Gray, & Trank, 1993). Yet, Cronin and Glenn (1991) contend that:

> Except for students majoring in communication, most undergraduates take *at most* one course emphasizing oral communication skills; therefore, most non-speech majors have little or no opportunity for structured practice with competent evaluation to refine and reinforce their oral communication skills. (p. 356)

Moreover, data suggest that the basic courses that undergraduate students do take fail to meet their oral communication needs (DiSalvo, 1980; Johnson & Szczupakiewicz, 1987; Mino, 1988; Pearson, Nelson, & Sorenson, 1981; Trank, 1990). Specifically, few basic course instructors spend adequate class time on oral communication skills practice (Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleson, 1985) or effectively illustrate how the oral communication skills presented in the course relate to students' personal, academic, or professional lives (Ford & Wolvin, 1993).

This essay shares an interactive approach to basic public speaking course instruction that allows instructors not only to present theory but also spend a majority of their class sessions helping students better understand and more effectively apply oral communication concepts. Thus, the essay describes undergraduate students' oral communication needs, explains an interactive approach, discusses audiotaped lectures, and outlines course requirements. This approach enables undergraduate students to integrate knowledge of basic oral communication concepts into their personal and professional lives.

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ORAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

The need for effective oral communication is paramount for managing and manipulating information, for communicating effectively to exist within our information society, and for understanding the oral communication skills to effectively respond in culturally diverse environments (*Pathways,* 1993). Clearly, oral communication skills development is an essential prerequisite to prepare students to communicate orally outside the classroom. Unfortunately, primary and secondary school educators de-emphasize the importance of formal oral communication training. Many are guided by the misleading belief that children naturally learn effective oral communication skills as part of their developmental process. Thus, a majority of K-12 students do not master effective oral communication skills and are not competent oral communicators (*Guidelines,* 1991).

The Speech Communication Association (SCA) is committed to establishing standards for comprehensive and developmental programs for K-12 students. However, these programs will not occur overnight. At present, SCA reports that "only two state departments of education require that students complete oral communications courses" (*Guidelines,* 1991, p. 1). Under such circumstances, the basic course instructor at the college and university assumes the primary responsibility for introducing undergraduate students to and training them in oral communication skills. Obviously, these instructors cannot include all types of oral communication in a term or semester. For the most part, basic course instructors focus their efforts on training students in public speaking skills. In fact, Morlan (1993) notes "the primary classroom product that we have consistently offered to our varied constituencies across the academy has been, and still is, public speaking" (p. 7).

Gibson's, Hanna's, and Huddleson's (1985) survey indicates that when teaching the basic course, instructors combine "theory," which consists of "lecture, discussion, lecture-discussion, films, etc., exams and their discussion," and "performance," which is defined as "students overtly involved in giving speeches, debating, dialogue, etc." (p. 284). These authors report:

> Of the 515 respondents . . . , slightly more than half indicate that their instruction consists of 30-40% theory. Another 19% reported a 50:50 ratio of theory and practice. This distribution suggests that a majority of basic course directors prefer a balanced course with moderate emphasis on performance assignments. It may be reasonable to describe the course as primarily a skills course; only 14% of the respondents report a 20:80 ratio of theory and practice. (p. 285)

Johnson and Szczupakiewitz (1987) observe that "within many university and college communication curricula, 'Introduction to Public Speaking' is typically one of the fundamental courses. This course reaches students with diverse academic backgrounds and career goals" (p. 131). Their data indicate that basic course instruction focuses primarily on informative and persuasive speaking with a strong emphasis on speech-related tasks, such as selecting a topic, analyzing an audience, gathering supporting materials and using visual aids, outlining, listening, organizing the introduction, body, and conclusion, and delivering the speech.

Although Gibson, Hanna, and Huddleson (1985) find that basic course instructors are generally satisfied with course content and approach, these instructors list inadequate time to cover course content as one of their primary concerns. Moreover, surveys of alumni suggest that basic course instructors may not be fully aware of students' needs (DiSalvo, 1980; Johnson & Szczupakiewitz, 1987; Pearson, Nelson, & Sorenson, 1981; Trank, 1990). For example, a Pennsylvania State University survey of a representative population of 7,000 undergraduate public speaking students revealed that students want to learn public speaking skills that are directly applicable to "real life situations" (Mino, 1988). Because communication educators need to help students transfer basic course concepts to real life contexts, Ford and Wolvin (1993) recommend "continuing efforts to provide speech communication for undergraduate college students" and determining "how to better deliver that education so that it impacts on students' personal, academic, and professional lives" (p. 223).

Even though public speaking theory presents a rationale for the mechanics of effectively communicating with an audience, few students see the connection between learning public speaking skills and applying them beyond the classroom (Ford & Wolvin, 1993). It seems more practical for basic public speaking course instructors to emphasize the need for effective oral communication skills training in general. Thus, to emphasize the importance of the course, public speaking can be presented as one type of oral communication that employs the basic oral communication concepts inherent in *all* communication situations. In other words, creating various speeches is simply one means by which to practice oral communication skills and evaluate the level of mastery of these skills.

Furthermore, because the basic course is reasonably described as a "skills course" (Duran & Zakahi, 1987; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleson, 1985), its primary objective must center on student skills development. To develop oral communication skills, students need to communicate orally at every opportunity. Because basic course instructors have limited class time to spend on theory and performance, and both are essential, alternative approaches to designing the basic course are needed.

## THE RATIONALE FOR AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH

According to Laird and House (1984), interactive classroom instruction: (1) creates a classroom setting conducive to learning; (2) arouses and directs students' interests, experience, and energy; (3) helps the instructor lead discussions that stay on track and involve all students; and (4) improves oral communication skills. Thus, an interactive classroom environment emphasizes open communication by primarily focusing on student participation. This approach creates a climate that encourages proactive learning (Bedwell, Hunt, Touzel, & Wiseman, 1984; Cooper, 1986; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Jones, 1987; Powers, 1992; Rothwell & Sredl, 1992; Walklin, 1982). For example, Seaman and Felleny (1989) report that:

> Interaction strategies promote depth in the learners' mental processing. The challenge of applying new knowledge to problems raised by peers or of interpreting it in terms of one's own experiences promotes deep processing of information, which in turn, leads to improved retention and recall of information. (pp. 119-120)

Even though the basic course is generally described as a skills training course, inadequate time is devoted to interactive learning. In fact, as Hanna, Gibson, and Huddleson (1985) report, in most basic courses, major emphasis is placed on presenting theory while moderate emphasis is placed on performance assignments which require students to overtly demonstrate their oral communication skills. Presenting theory through lecture, lecture-discussion, exams and their discussion, and film or videotape may allow instructors to model the material they are teaching; to provide some immediate assessment of student learning and assimilation of the material; to add or delete examples that are necessary for audience adaptation; and to create a classroom culture that is warm and accepting, thus reducing speaker fear and apprehension. However, ultimately, this class environment creates a climate where students expect to observe rather than participate. Moreover, an instructor's lengthy in-class explanations and demonstrations of various styles of delivery, different methods of organization, and effective use of speaker notes, for example, illustrate for students that the instructor is prepared, understands, and can apply the material but allows limited time and opportunity for students to apply course concepts, to demonstrate their mastery of these concepts, to articulate clearly their performance strengths and weaknesses, and to evaluate their oral communication skills development.

Laird and House (1984) share a systematic method of developing and implementing a classroom environment that encourages learning through a closer student-instructor relationship. This type of environment requires interaction. Like Carl Rogers (1969), Laird and House contend that a positive learning environment depends on the qualities that exist in the relationship between student and instructor. These qualities are at the heart of the classroom climate. Thus, students' growth is stunted in "dismal climates," in which they are *talked to* rather than encouraged *to talk* (p. 7). In fact, Walklin (1992) explains that no learning can take place without active response from the learner. He believes:

> A [learning] situation can be said to have been successful if the instructor's actions result in a desired change in [student] behavior. Throughout the [learning] session the instructor's role is that of [facilitator]. [She or he] should

> provide a framework within which the desired responses are made to occur. (p. 19)

Walklin's philosophy supports the implementation of an interactive approach to classroom instruction as a more effective way for the student to understand learning goals. Furthermore, he implies that by creating an environment in which the learner is encouraged to respond and interact with others, the potential for achieving the desired learning objectives is substantially increased.

Moreover, Powers (1992) contends that instructors will perform with excellence if they create abundant participation in the classroom; the excellent instructor creates abundant participation. This participation results in the learner investing him or herself in the learning process and, as a result, the learner will "have a high success rate in meeting course objectives" (p. 68). Similarly, Rothwell and Sredl (1993) suggest demonstrating knowledge of concepts through class activities as "an appropriate method of delivery . . . when the topic or skill lends itself to observation, there is a need to show a process in action, and there is value in providing step-by-step guidance in performing a task using a skill" (pp. 358-360). Moreover, these authors observe that "demonstrations can help reduce the gap between theory and practice" (p. 360).

An interactive approach incorporates teaching techniques that rely heavily on discussing and sharing among participants. This approach allows students to clarify their own thoughts and share these ideas with other participants (Seaman & Felleny, 1989). Interactive classroom instruction is a viable approach when designing, developing, and delivering the basic public speaking course. Because students must demonstrate skills in basic oral communication, particularly in public speaking, this approach provides a most appropriate method for helping students attain oral communication skills competency. Following is a description of a specific application of the interactive approach that has been implemented at one campus of a large research university.

## ELEMENTS OF AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH

Implementing this approach requires that instructors reduce their excessive reliance on presenting theory during class sessions and, instead, focus on methods that encourage cooperative, active learning. Developing and recording audiotaped lectures and creating an audiotaped lecture guide allow instructors to present theory and, at the same time, spend a majority of their class sessions helping students practice, develop, and evaluate their oral communication skills.

### *Audiotaped Lectures*

The need for understanding theory is an essential part of the public speaking process. To help students become competent public speakers, instructors devise methods for presenting theory. Many instructors strongly rely on the lecture approach (Mino, 1991a; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). However, because instructors list inadequate time to cover course content as a primary concern (Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleson, 1985), using limited class time to present theory through lecturing makes it difficult to save time for activities that help students develop and practice oral communication. Cronin and Glenn (1991) believe that "although oral communication activities represent a fundamental mode of learning, they are underutilized in lecture-oriented college courses" (p. 356).

Ideally, a combination of audiotape, film, videotape, and interactive multimedia provides the best basis for class instruction and even "interactive" instruction outside the classroom (Cronin, 1994; Cronin & Kennan, 1994). However, much of this technology may be unavailable to instructors.

Because audiotapes and recording and dubbing equipment are, in most cases, easily available, using audiotape provides an accessible, effective alternative to presenting theory during class sessions.

The instructor can use the class time typically devoted to lecturing to focus solely on helping students practice and improve oral communication skills. Moreover, because students' thoughts and expressions are "increasingly shaped by electronic media" (Haynes, 1990, p. 89), using audiotapes links "a specific [medium]. . . to particular modes of understanding" (Chesebro, 1984, p. 119). Students effectively use audiotapes for processing information, such as foreign languages, book content, and music. Therefore, audiotaped lectures have the potential to improve students' understanding of oral communication concepts. In fact, Terenzini and Pascarella (1994) report that audio-tutorial "showed statistically significant learning advantages of 6-10 percentile points over traditional approaches" (p. 30).[1]

Audiotaped lectures prepare students to participate actively during class sessions. Thus, students use out-of-class time to review each audiotaped lecture and listen to these lectures as often as necessary to understand course concepts. Reading assignments reinforce and supplement the audiotaped lecture material.[2] Because students review audiotaped

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[1] From 1985 to 1990, these authors reviewed some 2,600 books, book, chapters, monographs, journal articles, technical reports, conference papers, and research reports produced over the past two decades describing the effects of college on students. These findingss are published in their 1991 book, *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[2] Harford's (1993) essay, "Approaches to the Selection of Course Materials," published in Hugenberg's, Gray's, & Trank's *Teaching and Directing the Basic Communication Course*, recommends textbook selection based on (1) appropriateness, (2) organization, (3) readability, and (4) inclusion of additional materials, such as videotapes and computerized test banks. Through various

lectures on their own, adequate time is available during class sessions for oral communication activities that reinforce theory and for focusing students' attention on effectively applying it. Class sessions also are used for instructor-student discussion that centers on organizing and developing individual speech topics. Thus, the interactive approach reduces the need for students to spend all of their time preparing assignments outside the classroom. Moreover, since some students avoid office conferences, and this avoidance often negatively affects their class performance, instructor-student preparation and discussion of assignments during class help students to complete these assignments more effectively.

## *Locating Adequate Facilities*

Before devoting time to audiotaping lectures, one must determine if the institution provides a listening learning center, an area in the library, or an academic development center where audiotapes can be placed on reserve for students. Most institutions provide ample resources to accommodate both small and large sections of students. Because audiotaped lectures are an essential prerequisite to class interactions, students must listen to the assigned audiotape before the class session when the material is discussed. Completing audiotaped lectures in a timely manner positively affects students' class participation, skills development, and final course grade. Primarily, the instructor determines if and when students listen to each audiotaped lecture. However,

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publishers, instructors can customize their reading assignments to suit specific course needs. Benchmark and Brown, for example, provide a Master List that describes the chapters and sample speeches found in four public speaking texts. Instructors also can create a personalized text by combining any of these chapters, selecting sample speeches, and incorporating their own instructional materials.

staff members distribute audiotaped lectures and help monitor student listening patterns.

Providing staff with a loosely bound folder or notebook that contains the audiotape titles and a list of students enrolled in the course is one method of tracking student listening patterns. For verification, students provide the date and time they listen to each audiotape and their signature. The instructor determines whether or not students are prepared for class interactions by checking these entries and assessing the quality of class participation.

## *Developing and Recording Lectures*

Public speaking course instructors select the topic and length of each lecture. However, instructors, while developing each lecture topic, should illustrate how the public speaking concept specifically relates to students' personal and professional lives. Instructors should structure, develop, adapt, and vocally deliver the lecture in the same manner they expect students to organize, develop, adapt, and deliver their presentations (see, for example, Frederick, 1986; Mino, 1991a; Weaver, 1982; Wills and Hammons, 1991). The lecture should include references to effective oral communication strategies, demonstrate ineffective oral communication strategies, and explain their impact on a variety of communication outcomes.

Recording the lecture does not require professional equipment. A good quality cassette recorder, one high quality tape per lecture, and a quiet room produce a set of good quality master recordings. Lecture audiotapes are dubbed to reproduce additional sets. Communication Series audiotapes used for foreign language tapes work best for quality, multiple recordings of each lecture. Ten sets of lecture tapes easily accommodate four to six sections of 25 students per term or semester.

## *Creating An Audiotaped Lecture Guide*

An audiotaped lecture guide directs students while they listen. Supplementary materials, such as handouts and assignment descriptions, can be included and organized to correspond to each oral communication concept. Worksheets provide visual cues that outline instructors' main ideas. Instructor-designed worksheets correspond to each audio-taped lecture. Structured worksheet guides help students more easily determine lecturers' major ideas and prevent them from misinterpreting major points or imposing a different structure than the one lecturers intend (Mino, 1991b; Phillips & Zolten, 1976). Students are also encouraged to include their questions (see Figure 1).

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Successful basic public speaking instruction consists of clearly presenting theory and then allowing students to apply this theory through performance. The interactive approach relies primarily on incorporating class activities to consistently reinforce how knowledge of public speaking theory is practical and important beyond the public speaking setting. This method of combining theory and performance results in the "integration of learning" (Wright, 1993, p. 25).

## *Class Activities*

After the instructor answers student questions concerning lecture audiotapes, worksheet guides, and reading assignments, public speaking concepts are reinforced through oral communication activities. Instructors should develop a repertoire of activities that adapt both to their teaching style and

## LISTENING WORKSHEET

Time Spent Listening:

Hearing:

Listening:

### Four Listening Operations

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

### Six Listening Problems and Solutions

| Problems | Solutions |
|---|---|
| (1) | (1) |
| (2) | (2) |
| (3) | (3) |
| (4) | (4) |
| (5) | (5) |
| (6) | (6) |

### Ten Tips to Improve Listening

| | |
|---|---|
| (1) | (6) |
| (2) | (7) |
| (3) | (8) |
| (4) | (9) |
| (5) | (10) |

Your Questions:



**Figure 1**

to student needs. These activities correspond to each audiotaped lecture assignment.

There are many sources for carefully designed oral communication activities. For example, the Speech Communication Association's five volume *SCA K-12 Oral Communication Teacher Training Workshop Manual* (1990), Arlie V. Daniel's (1992) *Activities Integrating Oral Communication Skills for Students Grades K-8,* Pamela Cooper's (1985) *Activities for Teaching Speaking and Listening: Grades 7-12,* and *The Speech Communication Teacher* include many excellent activities. Stephen E. Lucas has compiled some of the best exercises and activities in his *Selections from the Speech Communication Teacher 1986-1991* (1992) and its companion, *Selections from the Speech Communication Teacher 1991-1994* (1995). Ellen A. Hay's (1992) *Speech Resources: Exercises and Activities* presents exercises that are correlated with nine most commonly used texts in basic communication studies. Suzanne McCorkle's (1988) *Public Speaking Instructor's Resources Manual* for Osborn's and Osborn's *Public Speaking* (1994) also contains activities that effectively demonstrate oral communication concepts. Further, the annual Speech Communication Association's convention offers two programs that center on teaching activities: the Basic Course Commission's poster session and, the forerunner of the poster session, the Great Ideas for Teaching Speech (GIFTS) program. These programs showcase 5 to 18 instructors from across the nation who share their innovative ideas for speech instruction. Moreover, Raymond B. Zeuschner's (1995) book, *GIFTS: Great Ideas for Teaching Speech,* currently in its third edition, is a cumulative text. That is, this edition also includes essays appearing in the two previous editions. The book describes a variety of effective teaching ideas. Exercises can be used as designed, combined, or modified to achieve instructional outcomes.

Cronin and Glenn (1991) observe that "carefully designed assignments and activities provide students with multiple opportunities to improve speaking and listening skills in a variety of content areas" (p. 356). Because the ultimate objective of the public speaking course is to train students to prepare and present speeches effectively, activities must clarify individual concepts and demonstrate how they are integrated during the speech-making process. Clarifying individual concepts prepares students to deliver their speeches and provides an excellent opportunity to illustrate how each public speaking concept applies to their personal, professional, and academic lives. Thus, they discover the relevance of course concepts in a variety of contexts.

The Radford University Oral Communication Program has shown that students benefit from oral communication activities. Cronin and Glenn (1991) elicited student opinion on the effectiveness of oral communication activities incorporated into their classes. The data revealed that "students feel that the active learning required by oral communication activities is preferable to the more passive learning in lecture-oriented courses" (pp. 361-362). In fact, "[s]tudents feel that oral communication activities place greater emphasis on sharing their ideas" (p. 362). Further, 73% of the students involved "indicated that the course was better due to the inclusion of oral communication activities" (p. 361). Similarly, faculty expressed positive reactions to oral communication activities. Specifically, "faculty feel that oral communication activities in their classes are a fundamental mode of learning because they promote cognitive structuring and higher levels of conceptualization for students" (p. 362).

The instructor's primary tasks during each class session include introducing the activity, acting as facilitator, observing and evaluating students' oral communication skills development, and debriefing students once the activity is completed. Moreover, because class sessions center on student performance, instructors can increase the number of public speaking experiences and more effectively integrate basic public speaking concepts into personal and professional contexts. For example, students present three graded speeches (informative, persuasive, informative or persuasive) and several ungraded talks that may include impromptu, personal object, visual aid, introductory, application speeches, and oral self-evaluations.

Introductory and application speeches are particularly useful for connecting public speaking concepts to personal and professional contexts. For example, students discover how a speech of introduction not only serves to acquaint students with their public speaking classmates but can also be applied during an employment interview, first date, or in other settings when they are asked to share something about their backgrounds, interests, or goals. Similarly, application speeches allow each student to describe the utility or value of a course concept or concepts in "real life" situations. For example, a nursing student might illustrate how effective listening skills are crucial for attaining correct patient information and following physician instructions.

Oral self-evaluations are speeches where students provide a self-analysis that describes both their public speaking strengths and weaknesses. Students discuss why they are successful with certain aspects of public speaking, where and why they experience weaknesses, and how the weaknesses might be improved. Students then incorporate their suggestions for self-improvement while preparing and presenting their next speech (Mino & Butler, 1995).

The approach also allows adequate time to review course concepts to improve students' understanding of theory and performance. A comprehensive exam that tests students' understanding of theory and performance is given after all oral communication concepts are presented and illustrated through oral communication activities. During the exam review, students are asked to explain clearly why they selected a particular response. Justifying responses not only helps students "think on their feet" but also provides review for and interaction with classmates who can learn from these explanations by accepting or questioning them.

Graded speeches are presented during the latter part of the semester. Further, since students have delivered several ungraded speeches and have participated in a variety of class activities, they appear to be more comfortable communicating with their audience during graded presentations. Moreover, because the interactive approach gives instructors adequate time to focus on theory and performance, students are able to discuss and share regularly their attitudes and needs concerning both during class sessions. This information can then be used to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the lecture audiotapes, worksheet guides, and oral communication activities.

## USE PATTERN AND PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

The specific implementation of the interactive approach described herein has been under development for several years and, as of this writing, is being evaluated for its effectiveness. However, a preliminary examination of some data, which include audiotaped lecture verification records and freshmen and sophomore student responses to some questions appearing on a fifteen-item questionnaire support the viability of this approach.

Audiotape verification records indicate that approximately 92% of the 200 students enrolled in the course completed the audiotaped lectures in a timely manner. The 8% who failed to listen to the audiotapes before the concepts were discussed in class reviewed the material at a later time or dropped the course. Responses to some student questionnaire items suggest that, generally, students ranked the course as the best college course or compared it to the best course they have taken. Approximately 86% of the students reacted positively to the audiotaped lectures. Many of these students appreciated the opportunity to review course concepts as often as they needed to improve their understanding of these concepts. Further, the audiotaped lecture guide helped them to identify and better understand the structure and content of the lecture. Students also reacted positively to class activities which, many indicated, encouraged discussion, application, and evaluation of their oral communication skills. Some students reported that their anxiety concerning public speaking decreased because they felt more comfortable speaking with the audience after consistently communicating orally during class activities.

Although these preliminary findings appear positive, additional data collection and analysis are necessary to evaluate this approach's impact on achievement of expected outcomes. Hence, it is offered here as a resource for course development and an alternative instructional mode for those who are concerned about how to achieve cognitive goals and still have adequate time for the development of related performance skills.

## CONCLUSION

Ineffective oral communication skills training in K-12 has resulted in college and university students who are inadequately prepared to compete in our information society (Guidelines, 1991). Although basic public speaking course instructors are primarily responsible for training undergraduate students in public speaking skills, not enough time is spent focusing on students' oral performance. Thus an interactive approach, where students are introduced to public speaking theory outside the classroom through audiotaped lectures and reading assignments, and spend a majority of class time engaging in oral communication activities, provides instructors with adequate time to cover course content. This approach also gives students the opportunity to practice, develop, and evaluate their oral communication skills.

Because the basic public speaking course remains a vital course for helping students understand the value of effective oral communication and because this course is most students' only exposure to oral communication skills training, an interactive approach provides communication educators with the opportunity not only to meet undergraduate students' oral communication needs and produce more competent oral communicators but also to create an exciting and relevant educational experience.

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# TA Training Beyond the First Week: A Leadership Perspective

*Glen Williams*

Incoming Teaching Assistants (TAs) have a lot to absorb. They attend departmental training sessions as well as a campus-wide orientation. In addition, most of them have recently moved and are adjusting to an unfamiliar community. Given the bombardment of information and various preoccupations, much of the content covered during initial training sessions for TAs often will require a refresher. Despite the best efforts of the basic course director to secure the full attention of incoming TAs, he or she cannot cover everything during the initial meetings and probably should not even attempt to do so. As Nyquist and Sprague (1992) have noted , "there are some things TAs are not ready to learn prior to teaching" (p. 107); they do not have the knowledge base and experience which will allow reflection.

Clearly, there is a need for ongoing training and dialogue. More than common sense suggests this; drawing upon educational theory and numerous studies, Nancy Chism (1993) contends that ongoing training and support are "just as important" for TA development as any initial training. Chism concludes that research which informs ongoing training should be "the main direction for the future" (p. 34).

However we prioritize our research goals, ongoing training and development should constitute a major area of inquiry and investigation. Some scholars have taken impressive steps in this direction and have explored the developmental processes of TAs (Nyquist & Sprague, 1992; Sprague & Nyquist, 1991). In addition to understanding more about the development of novice instructors, we need to understand more about the repertoire of those who are to work with them, an area some scholars are beginning to probe (Allen, 1991; Boehrer & Chevrier, 1991; Hinck & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993; Sprague & Nyquist, 1989).

As we reassess our methods for training and development, we can broaden our understanding by incorporating studies of leadership. These studies suggest that effective direction of the basic course requires a variety of leadership styles in order to facilitate growth, garner support and ensure the quality of the course. The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for assisting inexperienced instructors of the basic course while simultaneously utilizing and encouraging the insights of experienced staff. In delineating this framework, this paper explores theories and studies of leadership and their implications for ongoing efforts to train TAs and to assist with their development. Then, the paper juxtaposes this area of scholarship with literature pertaining to basic course directorship. Finally, the paper presents strategies for effective leadership in the basic course which are grounded in theory and research. While this manuscript primarily addresses concerns the novice course director might have about supervising TAs, it may also yield insights for more experienced course directors.

## DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SAVVY

Leadership studies describe effective communication and how to assist with improved subordinate performance. One particular leadership perspective, *life-cycle theory* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982) seems applicable to the course director-TA relationship. "Derived from empirical studies" and widely implemented (Bass, 1990, p. 464), this "popular" theory (Barge, 1994, p. 48) suggests that supervisors alter their style based on the maturity level of the staff member. Maturity refers both to *job maturity-* — an individual's ability to perform a certain task — as well as *psychological maturity* — the individual's confidence and motivation to perform the task.

Four profiles of maturity levels are identified. A mature individual has both the knowledge and skill required to perform a task as well as the confidence and motivation. Some individuals possess job maturity (i.e., have ability) but lack psychological maturity (e.g., confidence or motivation). Other individuals lack job maturity but have psychological maturity. Finally, some individuals have neither job maturity nor psychological maturity. In addition, maturity may vary with the task (e.g., the individual may lecture well but falter with classroom activities). On the basis of these four profiles, life-cycle theory identifies four leadership styles that correspond to the maturity level of the subordinate (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

## *Styles of Leadership*

The *telling style,* defines the roles as well as the tasks for an individual and provides close supervision and specific directions. This style is most appropriate for a subordinate with low job maturity and/or low psychological maturity. Failure to monitor and oversee the performance of an individual with low maturity (in either realm) would reinforce unproductive behaviors (Vecchio, 1987). In addition, individuals who perceive themselves as lacking competence "may prefer a great deal of direction, guidance, and attention . . . until they have mastered the job," especially if they have faith in and are satisfied with their supervisor (Bass, 1990, p. 446, 453).

The *selling style* identifies goals and problems and specifies a strategy to seek a subordinate's agreement with the supervisor's suggestions. For example, the director might perceive that the TA has moderate job maturity and would benefit from assistance. At the same time, the director senses the individual's capability to appreciate goals and to execute a recommended course of action as well as to understand a problem and to see the merit of a proposed solution. By analyzing the situation and recommending a course of action, the director guides the individual through a pedagogical problem, hopefully to increase the person's job maturity as well as to boost his or her psychological maturity.

A *participating style* is less directive. For example, the director might offer suggestions but listen carefully and in a supportive manner, allowing a TA to participate in decision-making and to share in the responsibility for those decisions. This style recognizes and rewards moderate to high levels of maturity. It communicates confidence and trust in the individual. Close monitoring and supervision might produce resentment from those who perceive themselves (rightly or wrongly) to have adequate ability and motivation for the task (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982, p. 165).

When a director employs a *delegating style*, she or he provides minimal direction or support. The director might identify a task but has the individual devise and execute a plan to accomplish it. The director would be available for assistance and would watch from a distance, keeping communication channels open, commending progress and praising success. Employing this style conveys that the director has complete faith in the ability and motivation of the individual and recognizes that person has high maturity. In addition, delegating can provide a learning opportunity, thus further enhancing the individual's job maturity. Delegating should also boost psychological maturity by instilling a sense of collegiality — unless the director overloads the individual, fails to clarify the task, fails to empower the person for the task, or if the supervisor seems to shirk her or his own responsibility by dumping "undesirable assignments" on the TA (Bass, 1990, pp. 437-438, 454). Such incidents sap motivation and damage the relationship.

Obviously, as these examples illustrate, an individual's maturity level is not static. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) observe that change occurs. For example, as a novice learns and gains experience, job maturity *ideally* increases as does psychological maturity. Decreases also may occur, particularly in regard to psychological maturity. Troubles in an individual's personal life or a sense of overload or burnout, for instance, may reduce one's motivation. Hence, the basic course director must be sensitive to change, reassess each individual and adapt accordingly, all with an eye toward nurturing maturation levels. To make these adaptations in style and to understand the implications of each, the director can benefit from the literature that profiles types of leaders, the power they employ, and the response engendered by a particular approach.

## *Types of Leaders:*

Recent studies of *transactional* and *transformational* leadership provide additional insights for course directors that illuminate the dynamics of life cycle theory. Transactional leaders — following the social exchange model — "typically rely on their formal position within a . . . hierarchy to provide rewards and punishments and to motivate followers" (Barge, 1994, p. 52). They reward subordinates who perform well, and they intervene when performance is inadequate. Studies reveal that subordinates associate images of "disciplinarian" and "autocrat" with the transactional leader (Barge, 1994, p. 176). Such perceptions seem to reflect life cycle theory's premise that subordinates may resent a director they perceive as too prescriptive or watchful.

In contrast, the transformational leader relies on communication skills and modeling. Transformational leaders utilize their rhetorical skills to "create a compelling vision of the future, which prompts shifts in follower beliefs, needs, and values" (Barge, 1994, p. 52). Transformational leaders inspire their subordinates because of their vision and because of the faith and respect that they give to them. The transformational leader motivates subordinates by articulating goals in an eloquent, understandable fashion. In addition, the transformational leader is supportive and considerate of individual subordinates (Barge, 1994). Such a leader also stimulates thinking and reflection among subordinates by offering and facilitating careful, insightful analysis and critique of the status quo. Subordinates often describe the transformational leader as "charismatic, visionary, and farsighted" (Barge, 1994, p. 176).

In view of life cycle theory, course directors could employ both transformational and transactional leadership, depending on the individual and the situation. Ideally, the course director will rely upon transformational leadership. Doing so will nurture both the job maturity as well as the psychological maturity of the staff and will yield higher levels of satisfaction. Transformational leadership is more effective in producing high levels of empowerment, commitment, satisfaction, motivation, and effort among followers. This, in turn, facilitates organizational performance (Barge,1994). Nonetheless, the course director may have to revert to a transactional mode, should a staff member not respond to transformational leadership. In this event, the director would closely monitor and react to the individual's performance.

Studies of *power bases* offer similar advice to leaders. To utilize transactional leadership, directors would employ what French and Raven (1959) identified as coercive power (i.e., ability to punish), legitimate power (authority of office), and reward power (ability to reward). A person with transformational leadership would employ what French and Raven identify as expert power (i.e., perceived level of expertise) and referent power (i.e., the degree to which one likes, admires, or identifies with another). In an early study exploring compliance and satisfaction associated with power bases, Bachman, Bowers, and Marcus (1968) found that within a Liberal Arts College, expert power most strongly motivated compliance and produced satisfaction, followed by legitimate power — although it had little influence upon satisfaction, referent power as third and producing satisfaction, and reward power as fourth — though not strongly related to satisfaction. People consistently expressed dissatisfaction with coercive power.

Studies characterize the effective leader as a person who respects power and understands how people react to it. The leader knows that individuals with maturity generally favor *participative* leadership, a style of leadership where the leader shares power by empowering subordinates. Participative leadership actively involves subordinates in the problem solving and decision making process and allows individual freedom and access to information (Bass, 1990). The participative style can enhance understanding, motivate compliance, and bolster morale (Hersey & Stinson, 1980).

The basic course director who uses a participative style generally benefits from improving the quality of decisions. The staff has instructional experiences that the director has not had as well as insights about what can and should be done in the classroom or with some aspect of the course. A director who restricts the upward flow of information or ideas via an overly-directive style stifles the staff and potentially squelches useful insights and information (Guest, Hersey, & Blanchard, 1986; see also Bass, 1990).

The effective leader also knows when to award less power to subordinates. The leader understands that individuals who perceive themselves as possessing insufficient competence favor *directive* styles of leadership from the course director — a style in which a decision is made and then announced and explained to the group. Individuals with a low level of maturity may prefer directive guidance until they have gained job maturity (Bass, 1990). For these individuals directive leadership produces greater satisfaction. In addition, a directive style may result in higher productivity and better decisions if the leader has more expertise on a particular matter. In such instances it may be counterproductive for the leader to employ a participative style (Bass, 1990).

In some situations, a directive style is appropriate even with a mature staff. Assuming that they are satisfied with the leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982), mature individuals respect and even favor directive leadership when used for decisions which require swift action or which are of little consequence to them. In the case of the latter, they would rather not be bothered with the mundane (Bass, 1990).

Eventually though, as prescribed by life cycle theory, the course director should nudge the staff forward via a participative style, even if they prefer a directive style. Professionalism entails responsibility, and to develop responsibility the director must involve the staff in decisions and problem solving (Bass, 1990). To do otherwise may engender dependence, resentment, or both.

Perhaps the most effective style for the basic course director is combining the directive and the participative styles with a primary utilization of the latter. As Barge (1994) has noted, the effective leader "facilitates peoples' understanding of . . . goals and problems . . . and coordinates their joint activity to meet those challenges" (p. 28). To foster an understanding of goals and problems which face the staff, basic course directors can draw upon the insights of staff, other colleagues, and the relevant literature in order to identify actual and potential problems and to devise solutions.

Each of these theories of leadership provides insights about approaches for directing the basic course. When combined, these theories construct a profile of an effective course director as one who is sensitive to the staff, who is able to discern individual maturity levels, and who tailors messages to equip, inspire, and motivate each individual to perform effectively. Course directors who employ transformational, transactional, participative, and directive styles appropriately will help their staff perform better and be more satisfied (Bass, 1990). Effective directors respect power; they can function effectively in both a participative and directive mode and know which style is appropriate given the situation or the individual. These directors empower the staff through competence, confidence, and professionalism. In short, as with any effective manager, the successful course director will develop, hone, and employ a "variety of styles" (Bass, 1990, p. 442).

## ENLISTING EXPERIENCE AND RELEVANT THEORY

Complementing the research on leadership, recent scholarship regarding directorship of the basic course and TA training offers suggestions for the ongoing training and development of TAs. In studying the development of novice instructors, Sprague and Nyquist (1992) echo life cycle theory when they observe that we must design a training program for TAs that meets their specific needs as they move through various "developmental phases" (p. 103). Nyquist and Sprague (1991) emphasize that the successful director will be able to "identify individual needs" and to "match training programs to those needs" (p. 295). They note that "direct instruction may be appropriate at the early stages of . . . development" but that direct instruction is "antithetical" to the "later goals of developing autonomy, confidence and a strong sense of one's own professional judgment" (p. 305). Ultimately, they observe (1992), directors want TAs to become "independent, autonomous, reflective problem solvers able to handle the unique situations that will confront them throughout their careers as teachers" (p. 103).

In terms of the early stages of development, Nyquist and Sprague (1991) identify TAs as "colleagues in training" whom we have placed in charge of their own section of a "carefully designed and structured course." At this stage, the director supervises the instructor closely, discusses and clarifies content issues, and emphasizes "practice of specific instructional skills such as lecturing, leading discussions, criticizing speeches, and constructing examinations" (p. 105). As with life cycle theory, Nyquist and Sprague suggest that at this early stage of development close involvement is necessary. In addition, as Fleuriet (1993) observes, this degree of involvement with first-time instructors gives the TAs "more confidence" (p. 158), an observation which likewise supports life cycle theory.

Ideally, the director has a course at her or his disposal to assign readings and to orchestrate reflection in a manner akin to Allen's (1991) suggestions. In a seminar for new TAs, Allen provides information about teaching followed by "guided practice" and then "guided reflection" upon their own teaching as well as that of their peers. Midway through the semester TAs submit a paper which reflects upon their own teaching endeavors with regard to the various concepts covered in class. Reflection, educational theorists note, allows job maturation as well as psychological maturation, although, Allen cautions, in order to facilitate quality reflection the director must expose TAs to relevant "theory and research-based knowledge" as well as recognize their need for experience (p. 313). Allen's seminar emphasizes reflection. His syllabus features three observations of teaching followed by individual debriefing sessions. At semester's end Allen reviews the student evaluations of each instructor and meets with individual instructors to discuss their evaluations and reflect upon their performance.

Observations of teaching can be especially instructive in that they require thoughtful reflection. Directors might structure the observation to facilitate reflection, before, during, and after the visit, in a manner akin to the model outlined by Andrews (1983) which provides insights on how to conduct an nonthreatening, effective observation of teaching that will enable growth. In addition, directors could employ a participative style by encouraging each instructor to help evaluate his or her own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. Instructors might visit one another's classes and observe other classes to reflect on teaching.

Observation of teaching serves another important function; it conveys appreciation. As Boehrer and Chevrier (1991) observe: "Spending as little as one class period a semester observing an actual teaching performance, and devoting some additional time to debriefing it, can communicate a powerful message about the value of the teaching assistant's contribution to the course" (p. 329). If done in a supportive manner, this interaction facilitates positive relational development and encourages an ongoing dialogue about teaching.

Consistent with life cycle theory, the director should allow TAs to test out their mastery of what has been reviewed and discussed. The amount of space needed varies across TAs but generally increases with maturity. Nyquist and Sprague (1992) acknowledge that TAs need some room to grow, observing that at some point they "must make the break away from their mentors to experience autonomy and separateness" (p. 109). Recognizing and respecting the need for independence and experimentation in their own instructional pursuits allows TAs to grow. To facilitate a break that is not disruptive, the director could provide autonomy from the very start. At the same time, the director should help TAs realize that autonomy is not complete, rather they should recognize and accept interdependency. They must view themselves as part of a larger community whose members share training, goals, and ethics (Nyquist & Sprague, 1992). They must view their director as a colleague and should assist the director's efforts to ensure quality and consistency.

Interdependency underlies the participative style and is shaped by dialogue and discussion. Boehrer and Chevrier (1991) underscore the importance of interdependency, suggesting that directors facilitate an ongoing dialogue "based on inquiry" (p. 326). Boehrer and Chevrier recommend that course directors involve their staff in defining teaching objectives and in discussing how to achieve those objectives. To employ this participative style, they observe, enhances effectiveness in the course (p. 327). In addition, Fleuriet (1993) notes, this type of participation allows greater efficiency and consistency among recitation sections.

Course directors might help TAs recognize that they need to develop and refine their skills. Even after they reach a level of effective teaching, they can "benefit from discussions, workshops, or practicum experiences, addressing more advanced issues" (Nyquist & Sprague, 1992, p. 107). Directors set an example by pursuing such endeavors themselves as well as by providing such opportunities for their staff.

In addition to providing formal instruction, conducting workshops, and facilitating an ongoing dialogue about pedagogical matters, the director might employ "small talk." Small talk maintains open channels of communication. By encouraging honesty and openness so that TAs let the director know how they feel and what they are thinking, the director can discern needs as well as level of development (Nyquist & Sprague, 1992). In addition, small talk enables the TA and director to identify with one another's experiences and goals. In this manner, small talk functions to perpetuate the relationship and to ensure its stability (Duck & Pond, 1989; Duck, 1990) as well as to reinforce the value of participation and involvement that is sought in more formal processes.

As the TA matures, the relationship with the director changes and, as life cycle theory suggests, the director should adjust appropriately. Nyquist and Sprague (1992) emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy "relationship" with individual instructors and have noted that to do so requires time and effort as the supervisor attempts to discern and attend to the individual's particular needs. According to these authors, "a corollary to the kind of close, highly personalized mentoring that goes into directing a dissertation should be part of the advanced training of our next generation of professors" (pp. 102-103).

Mentoring also comes from many sources other than the director. TAs identify with other professors or TAs, and directors can encourage these relationships by nurturing collegiality. As Nyquist and Sprague (1992) observe: "It is at the earliest phase of development that we want TAs to form the habit of talking about teaching communication with colleagues" (p. 107). Such talk assists their mastery of the subject and their development as instructors as they discuss and compare methods of instruction, an especially useful activity, and ways to motivate student performance.

Involving veteran TAs in the orientation of new instructors and in ongoing training promotes camaraderie and reflection. By involving veteran TAs, directors display faith in their staff and open the channels of communication to a support group. Not only will the new TAs benefit from the dialogue, but seasoned TAs will benefit as well in that they must provide reasons for using particular strategies in teaching (Sprague & Nyquist, 1992).

Veteran TAs should become familiar with productive leadership styles that sensitize them to an individual's needs. This approach safeguards novices against would-be mentors who become too supervisory or overbearing. Veteran TAs need to understand that resentment likely will arise among individuals who feel both capable and motivated to do a particular task if their efforts are curtailed. They also need to understand that novices can benefit from being given latitude to experiment on their own. The course director may have to caution a veteran TA who provides inadvisable leadership.

Some directors have found that "second year TAs . . . may not be the best mentors for new TAs" because at that stage of their growth they may feel "cynical toward students and challenging toward authority" (Sprague & Nyquist, 1991, p. 310). Given this possibility, the basic course director may want to encourage mentoring from those who would best nurture skills and productive attitudes. The director may wish to hold discussion meetings to surface and diffuse any cynicism.

The literature pertaining to directorship of the basic course and to TA training and development corroborates theories of leadership. To provide effective direction requires creative leadership calibrated to the individual and aimed at immediate needs. The director helps the staff develop into competent and confident colleagues who can assist in building and operationalizing a better course. At the same time, the director must oversee the basic course in its present state.

To achieve such leadership certain conditions must exist. Leadership styles, in order to be enacted, require that the leader be able to operate from the appropriate power base. For example, transactional leaders must have the ability to reward or punish. Another condition is a supportive environment. The supportive environment will require ample opportunities for interaction among peers and with the director. Not only must the opportunity exist, but interactants will have to be available and to expend the time. In addition, the director will also need time to devise materials and to update them regularly. Hence, there are some obvious limitations to the application of this theory. Assuming that the director can draw upon the various power bases, can nurture a supportive environment, and can find the time necessary, she or he can implement the strategies described below.

## STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND FOR RUNNING THE BASIC COURSE

The following six strategies offer insights for effective leadership in the basic course. Leadership studies and recent scholarship pertaining to directorship of the basic course and to TA training illuminate why these strategies are useful and validate what many directors may have pursued intuitively and/or view as commonplace.

1. *Accommodate various levels of maturity among the staff.* A director often works with a staff whose maturity levels vary from individual to individual and range from novice to seasoned veteran. A common handbook, a resource manual, and a resource center helps a director to accommodate all by providing structure and yet inviting participation.

   a. A *handbook for the course* (a custom publication which students will purchase) provides detailed descriptions of assignments, policies, and procedures which not only inform students but also guide instruction. Beyond promoting consistency across sections and the overall integrity of the course, a handbook assists instructors who stand before the classroom for the first time (i.e., possess low maturity). To accommodate veteran instructors (who possess higher levels of maturity), the director might enlist their assistance in preparing the handbook. The director might involve the staff in a critique of the handbook and fashion a new, improved "package" for the following semester. The director could encourage an ongoing, informal dialogue and schedule a formal meeting for critiquing and revising the handbook. The meeting would be held after instructors have had an opportunity to assess its strengths and weaknesses. TAs might offer their input to help construct a tentative agenda prior to the meeting. *All* TAs should participate and air their views with the understanding that they are the architects of the forthcoming improved course package.

Viewed as a leadership tool, the handbook allows the director simultaneously to engage a participative style with veterans and a more directive style for incoming TAs. Novice TAs will have substantial direction and support from the package and staff members who are intimately familiar with its components can explain and otherwise assist new TAs. Peer mentoring becomes automatic as veteran TAs emerge as leaders. In addition, the director can boost maturity levels by actively involving the staff (novices and veterans alike) in discussions which reflect upon pedagogical and curricular matters and which discuss relevant educational philosophies, theories, and knowledge.

b. An *assistance manual,* assembled for the staff, answers common inquiries. An assistance manual accommodates the need for various levels of knowledge and minimizes repetition of the mundane. As Fleuriet (1993) observes, such a booklet "will save the BCD [basic course director] time because those teaching the course will have easy access to answers to many questions which would normally have to be answered by the BCD" (p. 158). The assistance manual answers simple yet vital questions such as where to procure a grade book, strategies for taking attendance and establishing speaking order, what to do about excessive absence, and what role to play and who to contact when a student is distraught, as well as a wealth of other informational items. The manual might repeat and elaborate on material covered during initial training sessions as well as feature additional readings that enhance pedagogical knowledge, such as philosophies and strategies for providing in-class oral critiques of student performances. The manual should be well-indexed and each entry written concisely and with an accessible style. As with the handbook for students, the manual should undergo constant revision. The staff can participate (formally and/or informally) in this process.

c. An *instructor's resource center* centralizes the location of various pedagogical materials. It provides assistance as well as encourages reflection and the exchange of ideas. The center could feature a library of readings to supplement the textbook, including other textbooks, relevant journals such as *Communication Education* and *The Speech Teacher,* copies of the *Basic Communication Course Annual,* and a collection of idea papers — both published and those written in-house by the director and staff. In addition, files of sample lectures, discussion topics, and activities could be kept in the center. The resource center also could house a video collection (e.g., student speeches for training and/or classroom instruction) and ideally would feature equipment for video playback and dubbing. A small section within the departmental library might suffice for the center.

2. *Establish and maintain ongoing contact.* The amount of contact with TAs varies according to maturity and need, with low-maturity individuals generally requiring and desiring more involvement. Hence, meeting regularly with new instructors to provide timely coverage of various pedagogical matters is effective for novice TAs. For example, TAs could discuss approaches to instruction, including lecture, discussion, and activity early in the semester. They also

could discuss types of students, styles for classroom management, the purposes of critique and strategies for providing effective in-class criticisms. Prior to the first exam they could discuss the purpose and functions of testing and how to construct a solid test item. Before papers are due they could discuss methods of grading that will assist student development. For more mature individuals, the director might be available as needed and maintain contact in a more informal manner.

The director can employ "small talk" to promote an ongoing dialogue and can encourage interaction via an open door policy for the staff. The director recognizes that open, steady dialogue provides a context for discovery. The director might also meet formally with the entire staff to evaluate the course in terms of curriculum, policies and procedures. Conducting the meetings with a participative style likely will promote camaraderie as well as boost maturity levels.

3. *Provide space from the start.* Although ongoing instruction and close contact with TAs is necessary during their first semester, TAs will need room to grow and to develop. In addition, breaking away is a natural tendency which the director might assist by building in some latitude from the start. Doing so minimizes the chances of a disruptive break in which a TA feels compelled to assert her or his independence. The director may wish to structure a few instructor's discretionary assignments (10 per cent or so of the final grade) into the syllabus to allow for experimentation as well as reflection. At the same time, though, a comprehensive file of ideas could be available to assist anyone who needs them.

   The director might encourage instructors to modify (if they see fit) any activity they pull from the files and to place their revised version alongside the original in the appropriate file. Doing so allows all TAs to benefit from another's insights and to improve their own reflection. In this manner, the instructor's discretionary assignments encourage autonomy while the process of sharing ideas emphasizes interdependency.

4. *Provide exposure and experience.* Publicize and make available various relevant readings which TAs can peruse and add to their files. For lengthy readings, provide a one page synopsis. Also acquaint them with new resources to assist them — anything from videos to software. Such information builds competence and confidence as well as stimulates discussion. Encourage them to be publicists as well.

   Facilitate experiences that involve them and boost their maturity. For example, the director might require that TAs submit an item or two for each exam and provide feedback to their submissions. They not only can learn from the process but also might appreciate seeing one or more of their items appear on the exam. The director might also solicit and react to their most successful lesson plan, activity, or discussion idea. The submission would not only promote reflection but also would provide quality material for course files.

5. *Visibly involve and reward.* Encourage participation by letting TAs know that their involvement is expected and valued. For example, rotate veteran TAs to assist with training and development during orientation as well as with ongoing efforts. For example, while discussing classroom critiques of student speeches, veteran TAs could illustrate how they would evaluate a speech from the video collection and how

they use the taped speech in their classroom to facilitate discussion and to clarify their expectations.

Directors in programs that feature mass lectures might ask veteran TAs to deliver the lectures a few times during the semester. Doing so acknowledges confidence in their ability as well as provides them with valuable experience as they test their command of the subject matter. In addition, their example might motivate other instructors to volunteer to conduct a mass lecture. TAs recognize that their involvement in mass lecture will build their own credibility as well as that of the staff.

6. *Employ a directive style when appropriate.* Recognize that crises or exigencies require swift action and little time to consult even the most mature individuals of the staff. In such instances directors should make the decision and then inform the staff of the decision and the rationale. Directors might follow up with a participative style, welcoming a review of the decision for future reference.

   Directors should underscore the importance of consistency, noting that course standards *must* be upheld. They might emphasize that instructors must work with the package that has assembled and agreed upon. If an instructor is less than satisfied with something, he or she may suggest revisions for the next package.

Obviously, these strategies are only a few which illustrate how a life cycle theory of leadership can be used to train and develop TAs and to oversee tasks of the immediate course. The practices described in this article may prove especially useful for the director of a basic course that features numerous sections and that relies upon instructors who range designing the basic course as if each context was different, students complete the basic course with the impression of multiple and independent contexts and without seeing the relevance of communication processes across contexts. They have trouble understanding the relevance of conversational skills to public speaking or interviewing; they have difficulty relating the relevance of delivery to interviewing or casual conversation. Students who want to study public speaking may think interpersonal communication is irrelevant. Even though students may perceive they are successful in interpersonal relationships, they are apprehensive about a public speech since they perceive it as a totally different context requiring skills they have not developed. Students do not see the relevance of processes taught in one context to communication skills and knowledge needed in another context, perhaps, because those who teach the courses fail to see the relevance themselves.

Because we teach communication processes as being context based, students leave the basic course with the notion that certain processes are appropriate to one context while other processes are appropriate to other contexts. This perception is further heightened by the use of different contextual vocabularies for essentially the same communication behavior and processes. Basic courses talk about compliance gaining in interpersonal contexts, but persuasion in public speaking, and leadership in small groups. Students learn about person perception and behavioral flexibility in interpersonal contexts but study audience analysis and adaptation in public speaking and impression management in interviewing. They learn problem-solution sequences (e.g., Monroe's Motivated Sequence) for public speaking, and then learn different names for essentially the same organizational patterns for group decision-making (e.g., Dewey's Reflective Thinking Model). Almost all hybrid and public speaking books have separate chapters on nonverbal communication and delivery, even though the chapters discuss the same concepts and processes (e.g., kinesics, eye contact, appearance, etc.). Students learning different models and processes for different contexts cannot help but think that the material learned in one context does not generalize to any other.

The contextual approach has derived from a long-standing tradition of classification and sub-classification of communication phenomena into contextual categories. The over-specialization creates barriers for researchers, teachers, and students in understanding the commonalities among communication contexts, and it gives an unnecessarily fragmented view of communication (Marlier, 1980; Burgoon, 1989). This fragmented view of contextual differences pervades the basic course and promulgates the notion that there is no agreement as to what the basic course is or should be. What would happen if we started over and tried a different approach to structuring the basic course?

## THE PROCESS APPROACH

If we abandon the contextual approach that defines both our discipline and our basic courses, what alternative focus can we adopt? How will that focus restructure our thinking, and subsequently, our teaching of the basic course? One possibility is to focus on the *processes* of communication rather than the context in which the communication takes place.

### *The Transactional Approach*

Many communication scholars, and subsequently, many basic course textbooks advocate a transactional, process approach to the study of communication. The transactional approach makes two important assumptions concerning the nature of communication. First, the transactional approach assumes that people communicate simultaneously, and through their simultaneous enactment of communicative in level of experience. These strategies allow the director to target those instructors who require the most direction and to garner the assistance of instructors with more expertise.

## CONCLUSION

Life-cycle theory of leadership suggests that basic course directors should be attuned to their staff and administer to their particular needs. The director should constantly assess individual capabilities as well as motivation and be careful not to provide too much or too little involvement and assistance. The director must recognize that in order to grow, people need nurturing but they also require some latitude for experimentation. In addition, studies of transactional versus transformational leadership, the study of power bases, and findings regarding directive versus participative styles of leadership complement life-cycle theory and provide additional insights on working effectively with the staff and nurturing their growth. Participation of mature individuals will foster and sustain healthy relations. Mature TAs will break away; they need to be encouraged toward the interdependency that characterizes of a team of professionals.

The basic course director can be an effective leader by fashioning materials and providing resources and support in a manner that will accommodate the various maturity levels of the staff and their individual needs. The director also can adapt the level of direction and involvement with regard to the maturity levels of the staff. The director can promote their growth by allowing experimentation, emphasizing interdependency, and by visibly involving and rewarding them. The director can improve the course and foster compliance and camaraderie by involving the staff in dialogue and discussion — both formally and informally. All the while, though, the director must remain the director, overseeing the integrity of the course and meeting her or his accountability to the students and to the department. In this manner, the basic course director provides the leadership that achieves success for the basic course and for the staff.

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# Context vs. Process: Revising the Structure of the Basic Course

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The theme of the 1994 SCA convention, "Building Community," was quite appropriate for communication. The contemporary field of Communication seems to be a set of specialists studying communication phenomena in specific and unique contexts as if those contexts had no connection with each other (Burgoon, 1989; Burgoon, Hunsaker, & Dawson, 1994; Reardon & Rogers, 1988; Wiemann, Hawkins, & Pingree, 1988). Powers (1995) refers to these contexts as the "level-centered" tier of human communication theory and research. Wartella (1993, 1994) clearly described this situation by saying that the field has "no intellectual unity." We are left, says Wartella, with a "fractured set of subfields who know little about each other." The communication field seems concerned with classifying the study of communication into contextual categories. which define the field of communication (Marlier, 1980), the individual departments (McCroskey, 1982), and curriculum development (Phelps and Morse, 1982).

The divisions within the communication discipline were formally begun in the earlier 1950's when SCA proposed restructuring the organization into twelve autonomous "departments" representing different communication contexts (Gilman, 1952). These contexts became further subdivided as research accumulated and interests of communication scholars became more and more specialized. Over time, the number of contexts being studied has increased dramatically. As illustration, more than fifty divisions, sections, commissions, committees, and caucuses and more than eighty different program sponsors listed in the 1995 SCA Convention Program. Even a casual glance at the programs sponsored by each of the separate "departments" indicates an immense amount of overlap in the content, theory, and processes of communication discussed. Yet each unit perceives itself to be distinct from the other groups so much that the field has become more occupied with the study of the idiosyncrasies of specialized contexts than with the processes they hold in common. The contextual approach to the study and pedagogy of communication is a barrier to building community and developing a coherent field of communication (Burgoon, 1989).

## THE CONTEXT APPROACH IN THE BASIC COURSE

The problem of specialization and departmentalization of our field is reflected in the definition and construction of the basic course in communication. Participants at the 1994 Midwest Basic Course Directors' Conference in Kansas City attempted to determine the specific nature of *the* basic course in communication. After extended discussion, the consensus was that there is, in fact, no single basic course, but rather several basic courses. The definition and description of the basic course varies among institutions and sometimes even within institutions. Lester (1982), Gibson, et al. (1985; 1990), Trank & Lewis (1991), and Seiler (1993) report several forms of the basic course including those concentrating on specific contexts of public speaking, business and professional speaking, interpersonal communication, interviewing, and group discussion. In some schools, the basic course is the blend or hybrid course which covers a number of communication contexts, adding mass communication, organizational communication, interviewing, and/or intercultural communication to the traditional contexts.

Even within a specific type of basic course, there are a number of variations of the contexts covered. For example, some public speaking courses teach group communication, some do not. Some interpersonal courses teach interviewing and others do not. Some hybrid courses teach mass communication and organizational communication, some focus only on interpersonal and public speaking.

Even within a specific context, variations occur. Public speaking courses cover different combinations of informative, persuasive, ceremonial, after-dinner, introduction, group presentations, and motivational speeches. Some hybrid and interpersonal courses teach employment interviewing, while others teach journalistic, sales, appraisal, media, or medical interview contexts. Some small group courses teach group discussion, forums, and symposium presentations, others focus on group decision making contexts, while still others focus on family, organizational, and educational group contexts. This seemingly infinite bifurcation and subdivision of the basic course reflects the fragmentation of the field into specialized contextual units.

As scholars in communication continue to specialize and the field becomes more fragmented, the number of specialized communication contexts continues to increase. For example, interpersonal communication now focuses on specific categories such as family, intercultural, friend, marital, gender, gay, health, and aging. Public speaking is subdivided into contexts such as political, presidential, debate, and religious contexts. The list goes on. The problem of subdividing the basic course into contextual units will become further exacerbated as more and more of these contexts become integrated into the basic course. Even now, some basic course textbooks include separate chapters or units on family communication, conflict, gender, intercultural communication, small group discussion, small group decision making, and speeches for special occasions.

The fragmentation of the communication discipline, which is reflected in the structure of the basic course, seems based on the assumption that each context is in some meaningful way unique. Subsequently, knowledge of one context cannot transfer directly or completely to the idiosyncracies of other contexts. Similarly, communication skills for any specific context typically taught in the basic communication course would be distinct from basic communication skills needed in other contexts. Despite the contextual approach to defining and structuring the basic course, however, basic courses seem to exhibit extensive commonality and overlap among topics. Regardless of contextual focus, all or most of the basic courses include communication concepts such as listening, nonverbal communication, audience analysis and adaptation, organization, persuasion, information sharing, credibility, and the use of language. The problem is that these concepts are taught as if they are a characteristic of only specific communication contexts, rather than generalizable across contexts. Granted, different contexts have different situational constraints. However, the processes or activities of communication remain constant; they do not change across contexts (Yoder, Hugenberg, & Wallace, 1993). For example, each participant in interpersonal, interviewing, or small group contexts must engage in the processes of organization, audience analysis, listening, use of vivid language, delivery, and audience adaptation. These processes are **not** unique to the public speaking context. However, many courses are structured as if these processes only applied to public speaking situations.

The thesis of this article is that the assumptions of the context approach are neither warranted by the theoretical foundations of the course nor do they have pragmatic value for pedagogy. Rather, the transactional perspective that assumes that contexts are more alike than different, that basic communication processes transcend contexts, seems to be a more theoretically defensible and pedagogically sound approach to structuring the basic communication course. The implications of the context and process approaches are especially evident in evaluating communication skills, creating accurate understanding of the nature of communication, and an appropriate image of the communication discipline.

## CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE

One assumption underlying the assessment practices in the basic course is that competent communication performance within the classroom setting will be similar to performance in other settings. In other words, the classroom setting is generalizable to other settings and the evaluation of students in the classroom are in some way predictive of their abilities to perform in other contexts. The contexts which define the basic course, however, are arbitrarily defined stereotypes. The class in public speaking arbitrarily defines the parameters of the student speeches and the types of speeches the students perform. The type of speeches taught in the classroom, however, are seldom representative of the non-classroom experience. The occasion for a public speech as performed in the classroom will probably never arise for most, if not all, students after the conclusion of the basic course. How often does anyone outside the classroom give a five minute (plus or minus fifteen seconds) speech about seat belts using one notecard, citing three library sources, and a hand drawn chart on a posterboard? Similarly, an employment interview for a fictitious job conducted by a first year student pretending to be a personnel officer is undoubtedly dissimilar from any experience the student will have when applying for a career position after graduation.

The communication skills discussed in a public speaking class or interviewing class are quite valuable, but they are taught and assessed within a specific classroom context. The students' grades reflect not only their communication abilities but also their abilities to meet the constraints of the classroom performance. For example, students may receive lower grades (i.e., they may be labeled as less competent) because they spoke 10 seconds too long, failed to provide a full sentence outline, used a topic the instructor had not approved, or failed to list enough research sources in a bibliography. The same speech and performance of the same skills, however, may be very effective in a different context. Although students may fulfill (or not fulfill) the contextual requirements of the classroom performance, we cannot assume that they will be competent (or incompetent) in situations with different contextual demands.

The counter argument to the above statement is that the students learn the basic skills (e.g., public speaking or employment interviewing) in the classroom setting and can thus adapt to specific requirements and constraints of other communication conditions. That may well be true, but that is exactly the argument this paper tries to make about contexts. Gestures are as important to an interview and group discussion as a public speech, but seldom are people critiqued on their use of gestures apart from the public speaking context. Credibility is necessary when vying for leadership in a group or trying to convince a relational partner to attend a concert, but is seldom discussed in these contexts. To limit specific communication processes to one context arbitrarily departmentalizes skills and knowledge into segmented units.

## CONTEXT AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE BASIC COURSE

Student perceptions of the basic course and the communication field are, most likely, shaped by the content and perspective of the basic course (Bort & Dickmeyer, 1994). By behaviors, mutually create the communication situation. In other words, communication is not a "thing" which people create, but a process which people enact (Smith, 1972; Hawes, 1973; Fisher, 1987). The act defines the communication and the context, rather than the context defining the communication and hence the act (Freshley, 1975). Therefore, the contexts that are typically labeled as public speaking, group discussion, interviews, or conversations are stereotypes of generic definitions rather than isomorphic with the idiosyncrasies inherent in a specific communication transaction. No two situations are the same, yet we teach "public speaking" as if there is a particular model of public speaking that can be applied to all similar situations. The classroom "public speech," however, is unlike any other "public speaking" situation; a person who performs well in a classroom assignment may not perform equally well in other public speaking settings.

A second assumption of the transactional approach is that the definition of the context is part of the negotiated meaning of the communication. Most basic course texts define and characterize communication contexts as if they exist apart from the communication participants. The context is not imposed from external sources, however, but is agreed upon by the communication participants. If the participants define the context as an interview, then for the purposes of their communication, it *is* an interview regardless of whether it meets externally generated *a priori* definitions of an interview. Mutual perception that the situation is a "public speech" or a "conversation" is the *sine qua non* of the context rather than arbitrary criteria assumed to exist in "reality" and imposed on the situation.

If we assume that the context does not define the communication, but rather, that the communication defines the context, we must therefore focus on the *processes* of communication rather than the context. Processes of communication generalize across contexts and must necessarily include all people in the interaction, not just the message sender (speaker) or the message receiver (listener). This differentiates processes from the constituent concepts of "skills" and "knowledge". *Knowledge* is the cognitive schema which individuals have about the processes of communication which shape their perceptions of the communication event. Communication *skills* are specific behavioral patterns performed by individuals. From a transactional perspective, *process* becomes the cooperative, interdependent patterns of behavior and meanings mutually created by the communication participants. Processes are shaped by the interaction of the communicators' knowledge and their performance of communicative skills, but are not synonymous with behaviors and knowledge.

Once we adopt a process approach to communication instruction, we change the focus from identifying specific behaviors appropriate for an arbitrarily defined context, and focus instead on the creation and enactment of a repertoire of behaviors and the discovery of the meanings assigned to them. The appropriateness of behaviors to a specific context must necessarily be determined by the interactants, not by whether they are consistent with normative models or templates created by the instructor. The instructor changes focus from creating artificial contexts to helping students learn a variety of communicative behaviors and increasing knowledge so students can determine and understand the meanings of those behaviors for the other participants in the communication episode.

If we assume that communication processes transcend specific contexts, then we must be able to identify those processes which are basic to all contexts. A partial inventory of processes already taught in most basic communication courses includes, but is not limited to:

1. *encoding processes:* creation of verbal and nonverbal messages

2. *decoding processes:* cognitive information processing and listening
3. *persuasion and argument processes:* influencing others
4. *information sharing processes:* explaining, receiving, understanding and remembering information
5. *negotiation processes:* creating agreement about the nature of the communication and the accomplishment of interdependent goals
6. *decision making processes*: choosing among alternative actions
7. *critical thinking:* analyzing information and arguments; reasoning
8. *organizing processes:* the creation of meaningful and integrated patterns of messages and communication interactions
9. *adaptation processes:* changing communication behaviors to fit the continuously changing parameters of communication interactions
10. *affective processes:* managing and expressing emotions; motivating self and others

The advantages of focusing on these (an other) processes accrue from their generalizability across contexts. Marlier (1980) defined speech communication as "a discipline concerned with the study of a dynamic process which occurs in every social context" (p. 326). Persuasion processes, for example, are not limited to the enactment of Monroe's Motivated Sequence in a five minute public speech. Rather they entail the knowledge to identify the persuasive nature of any context, and to mutually create appropriate persuasive communication with others in that context. Organizing messages is not a communication skill relegated solely to the public speaking context, but an integral part of all communication situations. Similarly, asking and answering questions (information sharing) is as important to relationship development and group discussion as it is to the formal interview. In short, students learn communication skills and knowledge that can be used in all contexts, not just the arbitrarily defined contexts prescribed by the instructor.

Students realize that learning communication processes is not just something they do in the basic course but continue to do in all contexts. By avoiding the pitfalls of contextual limitations, students are discouraged from thinking that public speaking skills are irrelevant since they cannot perceive themselves "giving a speech" or that interpersonal skills are irrelevant since they "already know how to communicate with friends". By decompartmentalizing communication, the basic course relinquishes its focus on isolated contexts and creates a learning environment in which students can immediately understand the generalizability of their instructional experience.

Finally, the change in focus from context to process creates an integrative approach to communication study. Students can learn generalizable symbolic codes for communication processes rather than separate vocabularies for the same processes in different context categories. They can understand the commonalities of communication contexts rather than focus on arbitrary differences. For example, listening is not a "receiver skill" but a *communication* skill all people are performing simultaneously. Persuasion processes are inherently involved with decision making and information sharing processes. Skills and knowledge are not isolated to specific contexts (e.g., the persuasive speech, the information gathering interview, the decision making group, etc.), but integrated throughout all contexts and mutually created and performed by all participants.

## IMPLICATIONS

Changing to a process approach has several implications for the basic course. While it may be possible to "phase in" this approach as some combination of processes and contexts. The contradictory underlying assumptions of the approaches, however, make this problematic. The transactional process approach assumes that contexts are similar and that knowledge and skills applicable to one context are transferable to others. The context approach suggests that each communication situation requires different skills that are, at the most, only marginally transferable. Therefore, adoption of the process approach to structuring the basic course necessitates fairly dramatic and fundamental changes in the way the course is operationalized.

First, many traditional pedagogical practices will need to be changed. Course organization, assignments, and assessment procedures will need to focus on skills and knowledge about processes rather than defining and enacting contextually defined normative patterns of behavior. Assessment would focus on acquisition and demonstration of a repertoire of skills, ability to adapt to a variety of situational exigence, and motivation to engage in competent communication, rather than the performance of contextually defined communication events. All communication situations are perceived as equally viable for demonstrating communication knowledge and skills, not just the traditional public speech, interview, and group discussion formats. This assumption may also lift many of the time constraints in the basic course since the focus is no longer on the stand up 5-minute speech or the 30 minute group discussion as the only method of demonstrating skill and knowledge acquisition. Many classes already teach communication skills through experiential learning, activities, and worksheets. These activities might become the focus of skills assessment rather than used merely as activities building toward the "real assignment" (e.g., a formal speech or interview). Technological advances may allow the use of computer simulations to create a variety of interactive scenarios in which the student can demonstrate knowledge and skills acquisition in a variety of situations.

The change in focus will also necessitate a restructuring of traditional textbooks to focus on processes rather than contexts. Chapters or units labeled as "public speaking", "interviewing, or "small group discussion" will no longer be necessary. Rather, specific contexts will be used to illustrate all of the processes. In essence, the entire course becomes focused on public speaking, just as the entire course would be simultaneously focused on interpersonal, group, intercultural, and other contexts. Refocusing on processes may actually make the textbooks clearer, reduce redundancy of information, and allow more depth in the development of conceptual and behavioral (skills) material. For example, a student who learns the processes of nonverbal communication does not have to relearn the same processes as separate concepts in each different context.

Curriculum changes will encourage scholars to discover and understand generalizable processes of communication rather than the limitations and idiosyncrasies of specific contexts. Integrating communication skills across contexts requires a renewed focus on the ontological and epistemological assumptions of our discipline. Are processes hierarchical, i.e, are there "supra-processes" and "sub-processes?" What are the specific interdependencies of the processes? Are processes sequential or simultaneous? These questions may provide a fruitful endeavor for pedagogical research.

A final concern of the approach will be our ability to communicate the process approach to others outside of the course and outside the discipline. Some departments require their students to take basic communication courses which trains them in a specific context, e.g., public speaking or group decision making. Will other departments or administrative units understand the difference between learning persuasion processes and the ability to give a persuasive speech? Will they understand the advantages of learning information sharing processes rather than learning employment interviewing? Making the advantages of the process approach understandable to people in other disciplines may pose a special challenge for basic course administrators.

In summary, the context approach to structuring the study of communication creates problems in determining the nature and function of the basic course. The process approach was suggested as a possible alternative that looks for commonalities among contexts rather than differences. The process approach does not ignore the influence of contextual constraints, but does remove them as the driving force for communication research and pedagogy. A benefit that may result from the process approach is that we may finally avoid the problem of trying to justify the inclusion of one communication context in the basic course to the exclusion of others. The process approach may increase similarity among basic courses across colleges and universities. We may be able to draw closer to the notion that there is ONE basic course that covers the fundamental processes that define our discipline.

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# Creating and Teaching Special Sections of a Public Speaking Course for Apprehensive Students: A Multi-Case Study

***Karen Kangas Dwyer***

The Speech Communication Association recently reported that 79% of universities, colleges and community colleges surveyed now include one or more communication courses in their institution's general education requirements (Berko, 1995). Another recent investigation of trends in the basic communication course indicated that 56% of those schools surveyed chose a public speaking orientation for their introductory communication course (Gibson, Hanna & Leichty, 1990). Both of these surveys point to an increasing emphasis on public speaking instruction for all university students. One important issue arising from this emphasis focuses on the question: What can be done to help the 15% to 20% of college students who experience a high level of communication apprehension (CA)? Research shows that high CAs can become anxiety-conditioned or traumatized from having to take a public speaking course and will tend to drop the course, which would ultimately mean they could not graduate (McCroskey, 1977).

In an effort to answer this question, some universities have developed optional CA sections of a required public speaking course in order to teach a repertoire of alleviation techniques to their high CA students (Foss, 1982). Other universities indicate interest in providing such programs, "if models could be developed and made readily available"

(Raker, 1992, p. 46). How to create and operate special CA sections, however, has not been addressed in the communication literature even though a majority of universities surveyed see a need for treatment programs (Hoffman & Sprague, 1982; Raker, 1992). (Although Kelly's [1989] report on the Pennsylvania State University Reticence Program described the implementation of a special skills training option for a required speech communication class, the option was not a CA section of a public speaking class.)

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore how university professors describe the development and operation of a CA section of a basic public speaking course that is part of a core curriculum requirement. The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How is a CA section initiated?
2. How is a CA section funded?
3. How is instructor selection for the CA section accomplished?
4. How are students recruited and selected to participate in the CA section?
5. How is a CA section different from a traditional section of a basic public speaking course?
6. What teaching strategies are used in a CA section?
7. What challenges are faced in implementing a CA section?
8. How is student progress determined in a CA section?

# METHOD

The case-study research design was used in this study because in the words of Schramm (cited in Yin, 1989), "the essence of a case study...is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (p. 23). Since each university, communication department and professor is unique, this study sought to understand and describe each situation where a CA section was offered.

## *Participant Selection*

The university professors were selected based upon university programs listed on Foss' (1982) national survey and the Speech Communication Association's (SCA) "Commission on Communication Apprehension and Avoidance" list of operating programs. First, the communication departments on Foss' (1982) national survey that reported offering a CA section of a basic speech course were contacted. From Foss' (1982) list of seven universities offering CA sections for a basic course, only two of the universities continue to offer CA sections. Only one of the two universities offered a CA section with a public speaking orientation and that course was taught by an instructor who was not available or teaching during the term of this inquiry.

Next, the 1993 national SCA's "Commission on Communication Apprehension and Avoidance" chairperson was contacted for a list of post-secondary speech communication departments offering CA sections. There were 14 programs on this list which presumably included the fourteen programs Raker's (1992) survey reported were offering special sections of a basic course. The communication departments of these universities were called in an effort to find programs where

CA sections of a public speaking course were offered. From the 14 universities on this list, only three programs were found where CA sections of a public speaking-focused course are offered. The three professors who taught these sections agreed to give lengthy telephone interviews about their CA sections and send instructional materials from their courses.

## *Participants*

The three professors participating in this study represented universities located in three different parts of the United States. **Dr. A** is an associate professor at a large eastern state university and taught her first CA section in Fall 1979. **Dr. B** is a professor at a large western state university and taught his first CA section in Fall 1985. **Dr. C** is an assistant professor at a large southern state university and taught her first CA section in Spring 1993.

## *Data Collection*

The data was collected through telephone interviews and analysis of course syllabi and instructional materials. The focused interviews were open-ended and conversational in manner, but followed a case-study protocol of questions as suggested by Yin (1989). The first question simply asked professors to describe their CA sections. In the introduction it was communicated to participants that the foremost goal of this study was to assist instructors in developing a CA section of a public speaking course at a large midwestern state university. The interviews took place over a 10-day span in June 1993, and ranged in time between 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The interviews were transcribed onto a computer disk in order to be printed and analyzed.

## *Data Analysis*

All of the transcripts were analyzed and comments coded according to concept categories. Twenty-eight categories emerged from the coded concepts, which were collapsed into 11 sub-codes. These 11 sub-codes were again collapsed into six major codes representing six major themes. The six major themes that emerged from the transcripts included:

1. Initiating a CA section
2. Screening and Recruitment
3. Teaching Objectives and Strategies
4. Treatments for CA;
5. Grading;
6. Challenges and Rewards

Verification and internal validity was achieved through member checking. All three professors reviewed copies of this report, confirmed their comments and gave permission for use in the report.

# RESULTS

## *Initiating the CA Sections*

The three participants in this study started CA sections because they saw the need and were familiar with the research indicating how students experiencing high CA could be helped. All three looked for direction from nationally recognized researchers who were already working with high CA students. Although all three said no special funding was necessary to start a class, they believe there would be no CA sections at their universities if they were not teaching them.

Dr. A initiated her first CA section in 1979 because she saw the need and had done curriculum work in the CA area as part of her graduate program. "I asked for various grants to travel to different places," she said. "I went to all the sources that I could find to get information on starting the program, including Gerald Phillips and James McCroskey."

Dr. A reported that a speech communication course — either public speaking or group discussion — is required for all eastern university students. Students who take the CA section get credit for the public speaking section. Dr. A said her CA sections are limited to 20 students instead of the 25 students assigned to a traditional public speaking class.

Dr. A believes the CA sections would not exist if she did not teach them. She explained: "I haven't run into any people who were opposed to the class. It's just that there is no one around who wants to put the effort into it. People have developed their own expertise in other fields."

Dr. B teaches two CA sections of a public speaking course every semester at his western university. He said the public speaking course is one of four speech communication courses — in addition to group discussion, argumentation and debate, and persuasion — the 20,000 students at the western university may take to fulfill the university-wide general education requirement.

Dr. B "heard about stage fright since day one" and had been reading the communication literature in the 1980s on helping students reduce communication apprehension. In 1983 he applied for and was granted "a sabbatical to travel around the country to visit people who had programs." Dr. B "spent two days with James McCroskey at West Virginia, Gerald Phillips at Pennsylvania State, and Arden Watson at Pennsylvania State, Delaware Campus, plus a lot of telephone time with Phillip Zimbardo at Stanford." These professors and researchers gave him the input and direction he needed to start his program.

**Dr. B** said it does not take special funding to start a CA section "because it's a section of a regular public speaking course." The university and his department "are very supportive" by allowing him to limit the CA sections to 20 students instead of the 30 students assigned to a traditional section. If he had not started the CA sections, **Dr. B** doesn't believe it would be offered at the western state university today.

**Dr. C** teaches a CA section of a basic speech course that emphasizes public speaking. She said a speech communication course is not a part of a general education requirement at her southern university, but it is a required course for most colleges, departments and majors.

**Dr. C** started the CA section because she did research in this area and saw a lot of students in the basic course who had "severe communication apprehension and would get very emotional about public speaking." She "talked with a number of researchers in the CA field" about how to initiate a CA section. She said nothing had been written on how to set up a special section of a traditional public speaking course so she had to pull information from a variety of sources and adapt it to her situation. She added: "I basically started out by the seat of my pants like others are doing. It would be wonderful if we had one program that could be introduced as a module and would fit into any basic speech program." Since traditional sections of the basic speech course enroll about 30 students, her CA sections are capped at 30 students also.

## *Recruitment and Screening*

In regard to recruiting and screening students, all agreed that some means must be taken to get the information about the CA sections to interested students and then to ensure only the truly apprehensive students get into the classes. All said more CA sections could be offered because more students were interested in the classes than space allowed. The students who enrolled in the CA sections were high CAs, at least in public speaking, and many in various other communication contexts.

To advertise for the CA sections during enrollment time, Dr. A sends "letters to all the faculty, to all the administration, and to all the advisors." In addition, she puts an announcement in the school paper and school bulletin. She said: "Students have to come to my office for an interview. Although they may be afraid to come to my office...they still come. I ask them what is on their mind...and they are very explanatory about their fears. If they come into the office and I can see that they are very verbal and confident and controlled...then I tell them that this is the wrong course for them and recommend the regular course." During the interview she invites every student to take McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) and discusses their scores and needs in relationship to the class.

On the first day each semester, Dr. A also asks the speech communication instructors to read a flyer describing the CA section and who the course can help. If students come to her from another speech class, she "works with the registrar and makes the drop-adds for those students." She thinks the "advertisement in the registration bulletin" and "word of mouth" from former students is the most effective way to reach students. Dr. A offers one CA section per year, every Spring, although she knows student interest is there for more sections.

To recruit students for CA sections, Dr. B sends out an announcement that describes the CA sections and it is read in all the basic speech communication classes on the first day each semester. The announcement invites interested students to his office. Dr. B said: "Then students come to me and I simply interview them. It's not a very scientific process. I look for two things — the history of avoidance and a willingness to do something about it. Not too many of them are trying to pull the wool over my eyes...Just about all are high CAs in public speaking situations, while others are also high CAs in dyadic situations." He interviews 60 to 90 students in two days every semester.

**Dr. B** makes sure the students know it will take more work than a traditional section and that "it is not a section for dummies." He said: "The students that come, need it in their selective professions and majors. They know they're not up to par in terms of their own abilities, so they're often very heavily, highly motivated." If they decide to enroll in his section, he "gives them a drop and add computer form immediately" and informs their instructors about the changes. Many students hear about his special CA sections by "word of mouth from other students or counselors," he said. Once he fills his quota for each section, he tells the remaining students to come back the following semester.

In order to recruit students for the CA section, **Dr. C** "sent around fifty flyers" announcing the class "to all the advisors and professors." She said it was strictly by recommendation that students heard about the class. She screened every student through an office interview until she reached the cap and then started a waiting list. She said she could have filled two sections.

When asked to describe a typical profile of a student in the CA section, **Dr. C** responded: "I think they were fairly shy, and they were shy in interpersonal relationships. We had a few extroverts, but not very many — it was shyness that was the predominant problem for the students."

## *Teaching Objectives and Strategies*

The three professors reported they require between three and five formal speeches for their students. All cover the same objectives and materials of a traditional speech communication section, plus teach the CA interventions. Two of the professors get their students speaking in front of a class right away, while one waits until the third week of class. Each employs various fun and encouraging activities to alleviate the fear of communicating. All three said a typical class meeting would include small group interaction or discussion.

## *Required Assignments*

**Dr. A** said the objectives for her CA section are the same as for a traditional section of public speaking plus she includes the anxiety alleviation strategies. For the first day of class she has an autograph party. She teaches students how to introduce themselves and then assigns them to do the same and to get an autograph from every member in the class. She said: "We have a talking start where we get to know each other, where we feel safe...One thing I do up front is to get them to share their feelings about communication. They really do not internalize that other people have the same feelings." Throughout the semester, she puts the students in pairs and then in triads in order to build as much rapport as possible between the students.

**Dr. A** assigns four formal speeches, but not until eight weeks into the semester when students have had a chance to develop anxiety-coping strategies. The speaking assignments include: 1) A 3- to 5-minute "Something You Like" informative speech (students fill out a data sheet about their interests to aid in topic selection); 2) A group symposium in which each student must contribute a 5- to 7-minute presentation; 3) A 5- to 7-minute informative speech using a visual aid; and 4) A 7- to 9-minute persuasive speech using the motivated sequence.

**Dr. B** said his objectives for the CA sections are the same as for a traditional section of public speaking. In addition, he teaches students about their problem and the intervention strategies they need to reduce CA. Students are required to take four exams and give four formal speeches. The speaking assignments include: 1) A 2-minute autobiographical speech, assigned the first day of class and due the next class period (he uses the first speech as a launching pad to talk about students' fears and what they can do to overcome them); 2) A 5-minute presentation, assigned during the second week of class (it is a symposium where students work in groups of four or five, but are graded individually); 3) A traditional informative speech; and 4) A traditional persuasive speech. Regarding the third and fourth speeches, **Dr. B** said: "I have each student pick a controversial topic...and give an informative speech on the problem, the nature of the controversy, the different points of view. Then for the persuasive speech students assert and defend a proposition on the same issue."

**Dr. B** said the first out-of-class assignment helps students understand their own apprehension. After explaining CA, its causes, effects and treatments, he assigns students to write the "Self as Communicator Paper Number One." "I ask them to analyze themselves as communicators — what they do well and not so well, what they're comfortable with and not comfortable with, and what they would like to change." Then he gives them a "Communication Survey" that consists of four instruments — the PRCA-24, the Shyness Scale (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995), the Willingness to Communicate Scale (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995), and a measure that he and James McCroskey developed to determine in what contexts students perceive they need the most help. The students score the instruments and compare their scores with what they wrote in their papers. "What you find is a tremendous parallel about what they say about themselves and what the test scores are," he said. "Then I have them come into my office for a little conference to discuss their papers."

At the end of the semester **Dr. B** assigns the "Self as Communicator Paper Number Two." Students again analyze themselves as communicators and how they have changed as a result of the course. He gives them the same four-instrument Communication Survey as a post test so students can evaluate their own progress. Both "Self as Communicator Papers" are required, but ungraded.

**Dr. C** follows a master syllabus developed for all sections of the speech course. There are six speeches or projects, plus a midterm and a final, required for the class. **Dr. C** teaches the CA treatments during the first two weeks of class and then on the third week students deliver a simple 2-minute informative speech. The remaining speech assignments include: 1) A 4-minute speech of introduction (students interview each other); 2) A 5- to 6-minute informative presentation on a social issue; 3) A small group discussion; 4) A group symposium in which each student must contribute a 5-minute oral presentation; and 5) A 6- to 8-minute formal persuasive speech.

## *A Typical CA Class Meeting*

**Dr. A** said "You don't get the same response" on a typical day that you would get in a traditional class. Many students are shy and don't respond verbally to even a "Good Morning! How are you?" she said. "You have to become so sensitive to nonverbal communication — nonverbal interaction and feedback." A nod or some eye contact may be the most involvement you will get in the beginning. She said: "Sometimes when I walk into class the students are just sitting in the dark ... I have to keep a sense of humor about it. No lights, no sound, no response of any kind could make you feel paranoid ... Sensitivity (to nonverbal communication) is one of the major things that is required of a teacher in this type of class."

**Dr. A** said her goal for each class is a "merry mixbox." "I want something different to happen everyday. I want to put them in a different position everyday ... I do as much group activity as possible, either in pairs, or triads or groups of four to five people. She said: "In a lecture, often students appear bored. If I give them a discussion question and put them in groups, they just blab up a storm and come out with good ideas. Then we put those ideas on the board and compare ideas. It is pretty much a discovery lesson, and it works well."

**Dr. B** said his classes involve lots of discussion, small group work, and intervention activities. "My goal is to have every person say something in every class, every time," he explained. He continually asks questions to draw students out and spins discussion off of students' experiences.

A typical class period in **Dr. Cs** class was scheduled to run one hour and fifteen minutes. However, **Dr. C** would extend the class for up to twice as long in order to accomplish all the goals of the course, plus teach the CA interventions.

A typical class would involve small group activities. "I would say perhaps only seven out of the 30 times would be considered a full-hour lecture," **Dr. C** said. She explained: "Students were afraid to speak to each other when we started. I was afraid we would have students with acute shyness, and a lot of inability to communicate. But they got to know each other first of all in partners, then in groups of three, then four, five, and six. The first time they walked to the front of the room was with their partner." **Dr. C** said she worked at building a camaraderie in the class. Students even exchanged phone numbers with their partners.

## *Treatments for Anxiety*

All three professors teach systematic desensitization (SD) (McCroskey, 1972), cognitive modification (Fremouw & Scott, 1979; Ellis & Harper, 1975) and skills training in public speaking, after helping students understand the causes and effects of CA. All three use commercially-produced relaxation tapes to teach SD and/or Visualization (Ayres & Hopf, 1987). In regard to skills training, two of the three emphasize goal setting for each speech.

In order to help students cope with CA, **Dr. A** said that she "begins with a lot of assessment." She added: "I believe that apprehension comes from negative thinking, learned anxiety, and lack of skill. So I do a certain amount of individual assessment to learn who we are, what we are, and how this comes about. We look at it as a problem that can be unlearned and that it doesn't make a person good or bad or different. It is something that has been learned somewhere in some fashion and...we are going to do something to take care of this problem."

When **Dr. A** first started teaching the CA section, she did the individual assessment and then organized a plan for each student. For example, if a student needed cognitive modification, she gave him/her materials to work on in that area. Then one semester, she gave every student all three alleviation techniques — SD, cognitive modification, and skills training. She realized this was the best way. The research supports this, she said.

In regard to cognitive modification, **Dr. A** uses the ABC model of Albert Ellis. She said, "I give the students instructions in making out a form that works through the "ABC" model about capturing your thoughts." Once negative thoughts are located, they can be systematically rooted out and replaced with positive ones, she said. Students do the ABC forms throughout the semester.

In regard to SD, **Dr. A** uses audio tapes in class. "We did one each week," she said. The tapes address pubic speaking in the hierarchy of fear events. She used to put the tapes on reserve in the library and assign students to use them. However, she said, "In some cases they would say they were doing it, but I wasn't seeing any results."

**Dr. A** assigns goals for students in regard to skills development. "I think this is important," she said. Students work on conversational skills, then group discussion skills, then public speaking skills. "I would keep bringing in the alleviation technique for the skills we were approaching, and the skills were, of course, the course objectives that we needed to manage."

**Dr. B** said he breaks the intervention strategies down into three sections — skills training, cognitive restructuring, and systematic desensitization. First, he teaches cognitive restructuring and works on students' attitude toward public speaking. He said students say they hate public speaking because they are afraid of making a fool of themselves. He added: "You find out that their perceptions of the audience is that they are a bunch of vultures, that they are out there just waiting for someone to screw up so they can laugh at them. I turn around and say, 'Have you ever been in a high school play that is not being done well or a musical presentation where someone was too flat...and they were obviously embarrassed? How do you feel then? Do you just sit there and say, "Ha, ha, burn baby, burn"? No, you are sympathetic. Your heart goes out. You want them to do well.'" Thus, he spends a lot of time in class discussion helping students identify and restructure their attitudes.

**Dr. B** also teaches students to work on relaxation in order to reduce their anxiety. He shows his class the "Coping with Fear of Public Speaking" video tape (Joe Ayres, 1990), to teach SD and visualization.

**Dr. B** uses a skills training technique called "Goal Analysis" that he modeled after the Pennsylvania State University Reticence program (Kelly, 1989). For each speech, "every student writes a goal analysis and a goal report." He said, "The analysis is what you want to do, and the report is what happened and why. The goal analysis is turned in two class periods before the speech is due." His perception is the goal analysis raises the quality of speeches and level of preparation, even though it is a lot of work for both students and instructor.

**Dr. C** teaches cognitive modification, SD, visualization, and skills training as interventions for the CA students. During the first week of class, she introduces relaxation exercises (via audio tape), visualization, and SD so students can begin to prepare themselves. **Dr. C** focuses skills training on preparing students to give formal speeches. She said all speech assignments follow a prescribed model for speech-making with their various topics.

## *Grading*

Since students get full speech credit for the CA sections, all three professors believe students should be graded as they would for traditional sections. One professor said students objected to not being graded differently. Another professor said high CA students may give better speeches than traditional students.

**Dr. A** said CA students "do as good or better work than the regular student." In fact, one day she asked other instructors to help her grade student speeches; after hearing the speeches, the instructors said, "Those speeches are better than I have in my regular communication classes." Dr. A said, "You see, if they are apprehensive they are going to try harder." She added, "Students always think my grading is too hard...but students do a good job."

**Dr. B** expects his students to do better with each speech so he builds that philosophy into his grading criteria through the weighting of assignments. "For example, the autobiographical speech is mandatory, but no formal grade is given. The symposium has less weight than the informative speech which has less weight than the persuasive speech." Many other assignments are mandatory, but ungraded.

Although all her students in the CA section "really improved a lot," Dr. C "did not give any special benefits as far as grades were concerned." She "graded them just like a traditional section." However, many of the students hoped to get higher grades than they received, she said.

## *Challenges and Rewards*

All three professors reported one of their biggest challenges was fitting everything into the time constraints of the class. All tried to cover the objectives of a traditional section plus the CA treatments. Two professors specifically mentioned the need for print media to aid in planning and teaching a CA section. One mentioned the need for audio tapes for all students. All agreed it takes a lot of extra work, commitment, and dedication to teach a CA section because the extrinsic rewards are few. However, all said teaching a CA section was intrinsically rewarding as they enjoyed seeing the student progress.

**Dr. A** said one of the biggest challenges she faces teaching the CA section is confronting daily the fear of the students. "It can become inhibitive, it is hard to continue to be outgoing when you aren't getting any feedback...I want to help every student I work with if I can," she said. Dr. A believes there is a definite need for CA sections and more sections should be offered. "The research shows that the regular speech classes create more apprehension for these students, so why not provide help." She added: "I do enjoy when the light comes on. Somewhere toward the end of the semester, they begin to realize that they can do a lot of things that they haven't done before...I enjoy hearing teachers in other classes saying so and so is participating so much more. I just think it's a good idea!"

**Dr. B** reported one of his biggest challenges in teaching the CA sections "is juggling to get everything done." He said: "I hold firmly to the notion that if they are getting university credit for a basic communication course then they need to get it all (the traditional course and the CA treatments) ... I do not cut corners ... It takes some planning. One of the things that helps is that I made the pitch to the department to keep the classes under 20." He added another challenge, "I am not real apprehensive myself." Over the years he has had to develop sensitivity and appreciation for students' feelings. "At first, it is easy to say, 'Come on, you can do it, it's not a big deal.' But, for them it is a big deal." He warned: "You have to be careful not to allow the program...to be tainted by a remedial label. Remember the data shows no correlation between apprehension and intelligence."

**Dr. B** reported one frustrating challenge: "There aren't any textbooks out there...for the high CAs." He said there used to be a good textbook available, but that it is no longer in print.

**Dr. B** "finds great joy and delight in seeing the progress of the students." He said: "I would suggest that this is the most meaningful teaching that I do ... Without taking credit for it, I really feel that I made a significant contribution to each life." However, he believes an instructor of a CA section does need time to "get the batteries recharged." "One of the things that Gerald Phillips warned me about was to get some help because it takes a lot of work to run these kinds of programs. I think I'm ready for another sabbatical!"

**Dr. C.** reported one of her biggest challenges was "to get all the speeches in and to do the anxiety reduction training as well." "It would have been nice if each student could have had a relaxation tape to practice with at home," she said.

**Dr. C** thought teaching a CA section "was very rewarding." She said: "If we had more people to teach it, we probably could teach 10% to 20% of the student body...I personally think that a special section should be considered in basic speech courses." She would like to see more information and media made available to instructors who want to start a special CA section for the basic course.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how university professors describe the development and operation of CA sections of a public speaking course. Only three programs were found where CA sections of a public speaking course were taught by university professors. The three professors interviewed represented a variety of programs and experiences (see Table 1). From interviews with the professors, six major themes emerged: 1) Initiating a CA section; 2) Screening and Recruitment; 3) Teaching Objectives and Strategies; 4) Treatments for CA; 5) Grading; and 6) Challenges and Rewards. Although each university and communication program was unique, some common threads run through these themes.

All three professors represent universities where a public speaking oriented communication course fulfills a core curriculum requirement for various departments, colleges or entire universities. All three saw the need for the CA sections, had read the empirical literature on student CA, and sought guidance from communication researchers on how to create the CA sections. All three believe if they were not teaching the special sections at their respective universities, it would not be offered today.

Since students in the CA sections get full public speaking credit for the classes, all three professors try to fulfill the objectives of a speech communication course and, at the same time, teach the CA treatments. However, all admit it is very challenging and often frustrating to do both because of time constraints. To get all course material covered and allow time for the instructional activities, the professors make some adjustments. Two professors enroll less students in their CA classes than in traditional sections, while one professor often teaches classes an hour longer than scheduled.

All three professors use some form of announcement to get the information to the students. Some send the information about the CA section to advisors who pass the information on to the students. Others have an announcement read in all speech communication classes on the first day of the semester and put announcements in student newspapers and registration bulletins.

All three professors said a screening process was important. All screen students through office interviews. All look for high CA in public speaking and other communication contexts. In addition, all said there was more student demand for CA sections than could be offered.

All three professors used a variety of teaching strategies to get students speaking in the classes. All mentioned the use small group interaction. All taught SD, some form of cognitive modification, and skills training in public speaking for CA intervention strategies. In addition, all relied on commercially-produced relaxation tapes to teach SD or visualization.

The three professors required their CA students to give from four to five formal speeches. All three professors said students had to be graded on the same criteria used in a traditional public speaking class because students receive full university credit for the speech course. They reported some students might be disappointed with grades when held to the same high standard for speeches, while many students will put forth extra effort to produce excellent speeches.

All three professors described the CA sections as time consuming, energy expending, yet intrinsically rewarding. All mentioned that there were few extrinsic rewards for teaching the CA sections; all reported it was some of the most enjoyable and meaningful teaching of their careers.

Several questions for future research arise from this study. First, where universities or colleges and departments are requiring public speaking as part of their core curriculum, what is being done to help the students with high CA? The research is lucid: where there are required public speaking classes, high CAs will often drop the class and even drop out of college to avoid the fright from giving speeches (McCroskey, 1977).

Table 1
CA Sections of a Public Speaking Course

| | Dr. C southern state university | Dr. A eastern state university | Dr. B western state university |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Program Initiation Date | Spring, 1993 | Fall, 1985 (but first taught CA section in 1979) | Fall, 1985 |
| 2. Gen. Ed. Requirement *CA section focus | Required for most majors and departments: *speech communication with public speaking focus. | Required for all. Students choose: a) group discussion or b) *public speaking | Required for all. Students choose: a) group, b) debate, c) persuasion or d)* public speaking |
| 3. When Offered | One section every Spring | One section every Spring | Two sections every sem. |
| 4. # of Trad'l Sections Offered | 40 sections of speech communication per year | 14 sections of public speaking per year | 40 sections of public speaking per year |
| 5. # of Students per section | 30 max in CA<br>30 max in trad'l | 20 max in CA<br>25 max in trad'l | 20 max in CA<br>28 to 30 max in trad'l |
| 6. Screening Process | Office Interview | Office Interview (survey & discuss PRCA-24) | Office Interview |
| 7. Recruiting | Announcements to all advisors | Announcement to advisors, school paper, registration bulletin, read first day of class, word of mouth | Announcement read in speech comm. classes first day of class, word of mouth |

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| | Dr. C southern state university | Dr. A eastern state university | Dr. B western state university |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Formal Speech Required | 4 speeches; 1 group discussion; 1 symposium | 3 speeches; 1 group symposium presentation | 3 speeches; 1 group symposium presentation |
| 9. CA (Anxiety Reduction) Treatments | **SD** (uses audio tape) **Cog. Mod.**; **Sk. Training** in public speaking | **SD** (uses audio tape); **Cog. Mod.**(ABC model); **Sk. Training** in public speaking & conversation | **SD & Visualization** (via videotape); **Cog. Mod.**; **Sk. Training** in public speaking |
| 10. Challenges | a) Time for everything;<br>b) More SD work needed;<br>c) Grading;<br>d) Energy and commitment required | a) Confronting students fears;<br>b) More students than sections available | a) Time for course work and treatments;<br>b) Avoid remedial label;<br>c) Develop sensitivity to students;<br>d) Burn-out |
| 11. Rewards | Finds it very rewarding and enjoyable to teach CA students | Enjoys seeing student progress and hearing about students participation in other classes | Finds delight in seeing student progress and most meaningful teaching he does |

Second, what is the current status of special programs designed to help CA students? If many of the programs from Foss' (1982) survey are no longer in operation, what happened to them? What can be done to keep such programs in operation? Raker (1992) reported only 42 universities were presently offering treatment programs (14 were listed as "special sections," 6 were called "elective speech classes," 5 were identified as "no-credit workshops," and 17 were listed as "other").

Third, where is the media and information to aid college instructors who want to initiate a CA section of a required class? This report showed that three professors went to great efforts, including traveling across the country, to get direction on setting up a CA section. However, they all agreed that no special funds were needed to start the program. It was the information on how to start a CA section, the media, and the teaching materials that were hard to find. As Raker's (1992) study revealed, "...the speech community is ready to start implementing treatment programs if models can be developed and made readily available" that work within budgets and program restraints of universities (p. 46).

Fourth, what can be done to encourage professors to create the needed CA sections? Finding instructors to initiate and teach a CA section of a public speaking course is like finding doctors who are willing to practice in a small town. Many see the need, but only a few are willing to go the extra miles to help those most in need. Although it takes a person with a lot of dedication and commitment, and the work might not receive extrinsic reward; personally it could be one of the most rewarding experiences in a professional's career.

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# Predictors of Behavioral Competence and Self-Esteem: A Study Assessing Impact in a Basic Public Speaking Course

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In recent years, evaluation and accountability have been gaining in importance for educators and administrators in all academic disciplines. Within the field of communication, oral competency and its assessment have become increasingly important (Backlund, 1990; Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982; McCroskey, 1982(A); Morreale & Backlund, in press; Pearson & Daniels, 1988; Rubin, 1990; Speech Communication Association, 1993; Spitzberg, 1983; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). That importance was highlighted recently by the convening of SCA's Summer Conference on "Assessing College Student Competency in Speech Communication" (Morreale, Berko, Brooks, & Cooke, 1994). The increase in concern for assessing communication may be related in part to institutional and administrative pressures to respond adequately to accreditation requirements (Cronin, 1992). A survey of regional requirements for oral communication in higher education indicated that many colleges and universities seeking accreditation must ensure that their students achieve competence as oral communicators (Chesebro, 1991). Issues of accreditation and assessment of oral communication remain in the forefront as an increasing number of regional and state agencies include oral communication in their standards for academic institutions (Allison, 1994; Litterst, Van Rheenen, and Casmir, 1994).

Concomitant with the inclusion of oral communication in the curriculum is the necessity for satisfactory assessment methods, procedures, and instruments. According to McCroskey (1982), the development of accurate assessment methods is critical to the design of instructional and interventional techniques. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1984) stated that the creative use of assessment by college faculty and administrators is key to improving the quality of higher education. Therefore, it is imperative that speech communication professionals devote attention to the assessment of the impact of courses in oral communication instruction on students. That necessity was resoundingly articulated in a resolution passed at the SCA 1994 Summer Conference. The resolution called attention to participants' serious concerns that the conference seemed too focused on departmental/program outcomes or individual assignment assessment rather assessing the basic course as part of the general education curriculum or as a college-wide service course. An example is the public speaking course, which serves as one of the basic courses for many communication departments. One recent study did explore assessment in a public speaking course, examining students' self perceptions of apprehension and competency and their perceptions of the teacher's immediacy behaviors (Ellis, 1995).

The present study describes an assessment process/ program for the public speaking course that could be useful when the course functions as a general education requirement or service course. This study is intended to:

1. underscore the importance and possible uses of assessment data in a public speaking course;
2. explore the use of existing assessment tools for responding to the assessment challenge; and

3. provide an example of how those tools can be used and the kind of results they will generate in terms of assessment and accountability requirements.

This article briefly describes the theoretical base and design of a laboratory-supported, basic public speaking course and then discusses results regarding the impact of the course on undergraduates' behavioral competence and self-esteem as a function of their level of communication apprehension, gender, age, and ethnicity. The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** What impact will communication apprehension, gender, age, and ethnicity have on changes in students' behavior?

**RQ2:** What impact will communication apprehension, gender, age, and ethnicity have on changes in students' level of self-esteem?

The predictor variables were selected for several reasons. For instance, communication apprehension has been found to impact on several communication outcomes, including self-esteem (McCroskey, 1977). The remaining predictors were examined in order to determine whether the laboratory-supported course described in the article impacted similarly on all students regardless of their biological sex, chronological age, or their ethnicity. Respondent age and ethnicity were particularly important to this study because the university where the data were collected enrolls a large percentage of non-traditional students.

## THEORETICAL BASE AND COURSE DESIGN

Previous research has shown that communication competence, in public speaking and other contexts, is necessary for academic and professional success (Curtis, Winsor, & Stephens, 1989; Rubin & Graham, 1988; Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990; Vangelisti & Daly, 1989). To achieve that competence, the course described in this study is grounded in four domains of oral communication competency that emphasize cognition, affect, behaviors/performance, and ethics (Morreale & Hackman, 1994). Some of the literature on communication competency does suggest that a composite model of competence should focus on:

1. a cognitive domain subsuming knowledge and understanding of the communication process;
2. an affective domain subsuming the communicator's feelings, attitudes, motivation, and willingness to communicate;
3. a behavioral domain subsuming abilities possessed by the communicator and observable skills or behaviors; and
4. an ethical domain subsuming the communicator's ability and willingness to take responsibility for the outcome of the communication event (Littlejohn & Jabusch, 1982; McCroskey, 1982(B); Spitzberg, 1983).

Achievement for students in the course described here is centered in these four domains by the articulation of specific objectives and required activities related to each domain. The present report describes the results of assessment in the affective and behavioral domains. Achievement in the cognitive and ethical domains of competency are assessed in the course using traditional valuative methods such as speech outlines, paper and pencil tests, and other written assignments.

Instruction in the course detailed in this study is supported by a communication laboratory and the course is taught in a lecture/recitation format. One instructor delivers all lectures in a large group setting and recitation/ performance sections are conducted by graduate teaching assistants (TAs). All speeches are videotaped and students are required to immediately view and critique each speech in the communication laboratory adjacent to the recitation classroom. In addition, students are required to visit the laboratory for help with developing speech outlines and/or individual coaching prior to presenting speeches in class. Students are further required to participate in entrance (pretest) interviews at the beginning of the course and exit (posttest) interviews at its conclusion.

# METHOD

## *Research Design*

The concern for course-specific assessment procedures expressed at the SCA 1994 Summer Conference, suggests a need to explore the use of various methodological designs for conducting assessment in the basic course. Therefore, this study examines the use of a pre-posttest research design, despite the inherent threats to internal validity raised by the use of such a design. Alternatively, the use of a control or comparison group design would have spoken to some threats to internal validity such as history, selection, and maturation (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Reinhard, 1994). However, using a control or comparison group of students would have prohibited those students from the individual benefit of the self-assessment process. Therefore, the purposeful use of the pre/post design permits an evaluation of the impact of the course on all students.

The research questions related to changes in students' behavioral competence and self-esteem and were assessed with multiple regression. Predictor variables were communication apprehension, gender, age (17-23 = younger aged students and 24-56 = older aged students), and ethnicity (Anglo, and non-Anglo). Measurement variables were communication competence and self-esteem.

## *Subjects*

Subjects were 128 students (Female = 77, Male = 51; Anglo = 101, non-Anglo = 27; Mean Age = 26.62) enrolled in a lower division public speaking course at a mid-sized university in the western United States, from 1991-1995.

## *Data Collection and Interview Process*

During the students' entrance and exit interviews, demographic and assessment data are gathered for advising and assessment purposes. The same assessment measures are administered in both interviews. The one-hour interviews are conducted by TAs who are trained to administer the selected assessment instruments to students. TAs attend pre-semester training and weekly meetings during the semester focusing on the administration and interpretation of the assessment tools. For purposes of consistency, the same TA conducts the pre- and post-interviews with each student. Pretest scores are used to indicate strengths and weaknesses the student should consider during the course. If any pretest score indicates the student has deficiencies in any area diagnosed, the TA coordinates a laboratory-based individual assistance program related to that problematic area. Individual assistance programs containing videos, cognitive information, and experiential exercises are conducted in the laboratory. The TA is trained to administer these standardized materials to students. Also, several non-labor-intensive, interactive modules can provide individual instruction to students. In the post-interview at the conclusion of the course, based on pre/post differences in scores, progress and plans for the student's future development are discussed. Students also set two personal goals in the pre-interview and review their degree of goal attainment in the post-interview. A student's goal might relate to presenting a speech more confidently, using nonverbal behaviors more effectively, or presenting a speech before the student government or some other organization (Hackman, 1989).

## *Measurement Instruments*

The following instruments are administered to students in both the pre- and post-interviews: the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, 1970), the Communication Competency Assessment Instrument (CCAI; Rubin, 1982), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). These three instruments were selected for use in the public speaking course for several reasons. First, they are recognized assessment tools that have been previously tested for their psychometric properties. Also, when used collaboratively in the course, they examine, in part, the two domains of competency in public speaking of interest in this study, affective and behavioral competence. These domains are what faculty teaching the course expect to impact. Finally, these three tools were selected given their demonstrated reliability as evidenced in other studies.

**Communication Apprehension.** Traitlike communication apprehension was measured with McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24). This 24-item, 5-step Likert-type scale has been used extensively in apprehension research and has consistently demonstrated high reliability and predictive validity (McCroskey, 1978, 1984). The PRCA-24 measures self-perceived levels of communication apprehension in four contexts: conversations, group discussions, meetings, and public speeches. The PRCA yielded the following descriptive statistics (Mean = 66.47, SD = 15.49, Range = 25-111, Median = 64.00, Alpha =.89). The PRCA was recast as a range level variable (low, moderate, and high) based on mean deviation for the purpose of conducting analysis of variance tests.

**Behavioral Competence.** Observed performance of behavioral competence was measured using Rubin's (1982) Communication Competency Assessment Instrument. The CCAI is a 19-item behavioral assessment instrument that is administered individually to the student by a TA. It assesses the student's actual performance of public speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills, as opposed to their intentions to perform or their perceptions of self as a performer. The CCAI demonstrated reliability of .82 and .78 with pre- and post- measurement.

**Self-Esteem.** Self-report of esteem was measured with Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965). This 10-item, 4-step Likert-type scale has been used extensively in psychological research. In this study, the RSE scale revealed an alpha coefficient of .73 with both the pre- and post- administration.

Speech performance grades and test scores were considered as candidates for dependent measures. However, the focus of this study rested with selecting standardized tests that may make the most persuasive case when demonstrating the impact of the basic course to university administrators. We do not wish to minimize the importance of these other course indicators, because they are central to a departments's internal assessment. Our purpose in not offering course performance indicators as evidence to administrators is simply to avoid a potential counterargument on their part that performance indicators are subject to scoring variability when a course is instructed by several different instructors.

# RESULTS

## *Overview of Findings*

Findings in this study generally confirmed the instructional value of a laboratory-supported basic course in raising both the level of behavioral competence and level of self-esteem of students. Behavioral competence, as measured by the CCAI, revealed a significant mean difference of nearly 10 points (Paired t-value = -13.36, df = 135, $p<.01$, $r = .56$) from the pretest (Mean = 71.94, SD = 9.35) to the posttest administration (Mean = 81.42, SD = 7.15). Significant mean differences (Paired t-value = -6.76, df = 135, $p<.01$, $r = .64$) also were observed between the pretest administration (Mean = 32.05, SD = 4.78) and the posttest administration (Mean = 34.26, SD = 3.96) of the self-esteem scale.

## *Test of Research Questions*

The research questions were examined with stepwise multiple regression. Regression models were run with the four predictors entered as either raw score composites (communication apprehension and age) or dummy-coded dichotomous variables (gender and ethnicity). Multiple regression was considered an appropriate test since multicolinearity was not observed among the predictors. Two regression models were defined as tests of the research questions. One model regressed the four predictors against self-esteem and the other model regressed the same predictors against the CCAI.

Findings for RQ1 revealed that the CCAI gain score (i.e.,pretest minus posttest) was singularly predicted by respondent gender (zero-order correlation = -.20, df = 1.126, F = 5.37, $p<.02$). Regression demonstrated that female respon-

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dents scored a larger gain in communication competence than male respondents. RQ2 examined which of the predictors would best impact on gains in self-esteem. Regression revealed that ethnicity functioned as the single predictor of gains in esteem. That is, non-Anglo respondents reported larger gain in esteem than Anglo students (zero-order correlation = .18, df = 1.126, F = 4.26, p<.04).

Failure to observe significant findings with all four predictors should not be interpreted as an indicator that significant increases did not occur in the dependent measures. Table 1 reports pretest and posttest scores for the two measurement variables with all four predictors. Mean scores indicate that all four predictors resulted in significant within-group gain

Table 1
Mean Scores for Self-Esteem and Communication Competence

| | SELF-ESTEEM | | CCAI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| PRCA | | | | |
| Low | 33.21 | 35.65 | 69.69 | 80.65 |
| Medium | 32.52 | 34.57 | 73.39 | 81.73 |
| High | 29.53 | 32.11 | 69.25 | 81.11 |
| AGE | | | | |
| Younger | 31.43 | 33.96 | 72.38 | 81.72 |
| Older | 32.58 | 34.51 | 71.58 | 81.17 |
| SEX | | | | |
| Male | 33.14 | 34.78 | 74.50 | 82.03 |
| Female | 31.21 | 33.91 | 70.21 | 81.01 |
| ETHNICITY | | | | |
| Anglo | 33.14 | 33.71 | 68.33 | 79.52 |
| Non-Anglo | 31.86 | 34.36 | 72.60 | 81.77 |

scores. For instance, both low and high apprehensives realized an average increase in CCAI scores of approximately 10 points while registering an average increase in self-esteem of just over 2.0 points. Thus, gain scores only indicate that within-group increases among the four predictors were approximately the same, thereby nullifying significant between-group scores.

## *Relationship Among Test Variables*

A final set of correlations investigated the relationships among all six test variables. The analysis was conducted to

Table 2
Correlation Among Test Variables

| | A | G | E | P | E1 | GE | C1 | GC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | — | .07 | –.11 | .06 | .02 | .04 | –.06 | .01 |
| S | — | — | — | .15 | –.20 | –.13 | –.22 | –.20 |
| E | — | — | — | –.05 | –.10 | –.18 | .18 | .10 |
| P | — | — | — | — | –.34 | –.04 | .04 | –.01 |
| E1 | — | — | — | — | — | .60 | .05 | .13 |
| GE | — | — | — | — | — | — | .07 | .14 |
| C1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | .68 |
| GC | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |

Keys: A = Age
S = Gender
E = Ethnicity
P = PRCA
E1 = Pre-Esteem
GE -= Gain/Esteem
C1 = Pre-CCAI
GC = Gain CCAI

Notes: Correlations above .18 (p<.05) and Correlations above .34 (p<.01) determine the relationship between the dependent measures and whether entrance level of self-esteem and behavioral competence influenced exit levels of esteem and competence. The correlation matrix reported in Table 2 provides a fuller understanding of the process leading to gains in esteem and competence. Two sets of correlations are most instructive. One, communication apprehension initially impacts negatively on self-esteem but by the end of the semester yields a negligible correlation with self-esteem. And two, both behavioral competence and self-esteem function as their own best predictors over the course of the semester. That is, initial level of self-esteem best explains gains in esteem while initial level of behavioral competence best explains gains in competence.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the present study suggest that students demonstrated significant positive changes related to the behavioral and affective domains of communication competency. These findings are generally consistent across levels of commuication apprehension, gender, age, and ethnicity in the reported sample.

The results of this study are of value to communication educators seeking support for the impact of any basic public speaking course that is well structured and effectively taught. The assessment process, and its results, can be used to indicate the impact of the course on students when addressing departmental and institutional accountability. And, despite an acknowledged concern for the internal validity of a pre-posttest only design, significant improvements between pre- and posttest scores can present a strong argument for the impact of any good public speaking course on students.

The course described in this study was conceived to provide students with as much help as they may need both prior to and after the required assignments they must complete. The ongoing interaction between student and teacher serves as the focus of the learning experience so that students learn how to use course concepts and principles under the watchful eye of the instructor. Students are not simply turned loose to view their videotaped speeches; they review and critique the speeches with the consultation of their instructor who first reassures students about the quality of their performance while also recommending how they may improve upon their performance in a spirit that does not arouse performance anxiety.

University administrators are less concerned with pedagogical design and more concerned with the big picture which convinces them that their dollars are well spent on a course that produces statistical documentation. However, as communication researchers, our ongoing concern rests with identifying factors that may impact the learning experience.

We therefore believe research is needed to examine other results of student participation in the public speaking course. For instance, over time, do students retain the degree of improvement evidenced at the conclusion of the course? Further studies might examine students' ability to retain exit levels of behavioral competence and increased self-esteem beyond the public speaking classroom. And, in an attempt to identify mediators of the learning experience, future research might satisfy the lack of rigor of the pretest-posttest design by controlling for the effects of videotaping. Beatty (1988) has previously shown that having high apprehensives view model speeches actually increases their speech anxiety. Thus, other researchers might retain the features inherent in the laboratory-assisted course but amend the design in this study by controlling for the effects of videotaping on high apprehensives' subsequent communication competence and self-esteem. This study opted not to control for the effects of videotaping because of the close, individualized attention provided to students in the form of instructor feedback and laboratory activities that were designed to alleviate rather than elevate anxiety associated with videotaping of speeches. In addition to controlling for the effects of videotaping, future studies will need to directly assess the effects of the laboratory-supported basic course on state anxiety levels.

The results of the present study also have implications for communication in professional settings. The need for communication competence and related communication skills beyond the classroom is well documented. The Secretary of Labor's highly visible SCANS report (1993), along with several reports in the communication discipline (see for example: Curtis, Winsor and Stephens, 1989), have documented the need for communication training in oral competence in the workplace. The present study may have raised as many questions as it has answered; yet this study has demonstrated that the helping nature of a laboratory-assisted basic course can provide students with communication skills that can be useful in the workplace.

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