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Deanna D. Sellnow Editor
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Editor's Page

I'd like to take this opportunity to make a few comments after finishing my first year as editor of the Basic Communication Course Annual. I'll begin by making some personal comments to the commission and to the contributors and, then, by providing a preface to the essays in this 13th edition of the Annual.

First, I'd like to thank members of the NCA Basic Course Commission for entrusting me to this assignment. I hope I haven't let you down. Second, I'd like to formally thank each member of the Editorial Board for the time and energy spent reading and thoughtfully critiquing the essays. I truly believe that any journal is only as good as its reviewers. Your conscientious work has made this issue of the Annual, in my opinion, an outstanding one. Finally, I'd like to thank the authors for their careful attention to the reviewer suggestions when revising their manuscripts. You are to be applauded. Doing so has made your essays more helpful to the field.

I've decided to arrange this issue of the Annual thematically. Hence, the first two essays focus on student perceptions of the basic course. Stephen Hunt and his co-authors extend what we know by comparing university and community college student perceptions of usefulness and relevance of communication skills taught in the basic course. Stephen Cox and Timothy Plax extend
existing research by comparing student perceptions in self-contained versus mass-lecture courses.

The next four articles pose suggestions for modifying our approach to the basic course. Kris Treinen and John Warren challenge us to teach the course as if whiteness matters. That is, we should move our approach to cultural communication from the margins to the center and take care to avoid presenting cultural communication as a study of the exotic cultural ‘other,’ or as an individual rather than systematic construct, or as a non-issue. Jon Hess asks us to consider modifying the basic course with ethics, not only embedded throughout, but as the foundation. Roy Schwartzman challenges us to deconstruct the economic consumerism metaphor of the basic course and then replace it with one that acknowledges it as a value-laden communication environment, or ethosystem. Finally, Marcia Dixson explores the idea of integrating social construction theory into the basic course as a means by which to connect contexts of interpersonal, small group, and public communication.

The final article, by Ronald Arnett and Janie Harden Fritz, is unique in that it describes and evaluates a basic service communication course that was designed strategically to be sensitive to the mission of the university, its own mission, and the mission of its constituents. That course is entitled “Communication and Professional Civility.”

Combined, these articles remind us of the complex nature of what we call the “basic” course. Moreover, they challenge us to expand our thinking by questioning why we approach the course as we do. Finally, they entice us to probe deeper through additional research about the basic communication course. Enjoy!
Students’ Perceived Usefulness and Relevance of Communication Skills in the Basic Course: Comparing University and Community College Students ................................................................. 1

Stephen K. Hunt, Daradirek Ekachai, Darin L. Garard, and Joseph H. Rust

Communication skills training is extremely important in terms of students’ career choices. However, few studies have been conducted regarding differences between community colleges and four-year universities in terms of students’ perceived usefulness and relevance of the study of communication in relation to career choice. The present study extends extant research by examining students’ perceptions of this issue. The participants in Study 1 were 155 community college and 291 four-year university students and the participants in Study 2 were 205 community college students. The results demonstrate that students at both institutions perceive that the skills learned in basic communication courses are useful and relevant in relation to their future career. There were differences among students enrolled in interpersonal and public speaking courses, with those in interpersonal courses perceiving greater relevance of communication skills in terms of their future career.

Contrasting the Relationships between Teacher Immediacy, Teacher Credibility, and Student Motivation in Self-Contained and Mass Lecture Courses ................................................................. 23

Stephen A. Cox and Timothy S. Todd
Basic communication courses are increasingly taught in mass-lecture formats. Research on teacher verbal immediacy, teacher nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation has failed to contrast the relationships between these four variables in different basic course formats. Respondents enrolled in self-contained \((n =326)\) and mass-lecture \((n =865)\) formats of basic communication courses completed surveys measuring these four classroom variables. Results showed that all variables were positively and significantly correlated in both formats. However, four of the six correlation coefficients between teacher verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation were statistically higher in the self-contained format. Verbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation scores were statistically higher in self-contained formats. These results show that past research has produced some potentially misleading conclusions about these variables. Discussion of the results, suggestions for mass-lecture instructors, and research directions are proposed.

Antiracist Pedagogy in the Basic Course:
Teaching Cultural Communication
as if Whiteness Matters ............................................... 46

Kristen P. Treinen and John T. Warren

As we have found in our experience as communication educators and scholars, there is a need for educators to understand the implications and impact of whiteness in the classroom. What we argue is typically missing in the basic course is an antiracist pedagogy. An antiracist pedagogy asks educators to understand the power and privilege inherent in whiteness, and asks educators to examine how whiteness affects their classrooms, students, teaching strategies, and attitudes toward students of color. In this essay, we offer four modifications to the basic course which are consistent with an antiracist pedagogy. The first modification involves re-examining the way cultural communication is approached in the basic communication course through a move from the
margins to the center. The second modification explores the
danger of turning cultural communication into a study of the
exotic cultural other. The third modification explores the
ways the rhetoric of individualism reinforces inequality. Fi-
nally, we critique the notion that colorblindness is the ap-
propriate way to handle issues of race in our classrooms. We
conclude the essay by suggesting ways in which whiteness
work is applicable and important in the basic course.

Rethinking Our Approach to the Basic Course: Making
Ethics the Foundation of Introduction to Public
Speaking ............................................................... 76
Jon A. Hess

The basic public speaking course is often taught from a
standpoint of effectiveness. That approach can be prob-
lematic due to the dangers of technique. The use of ethics as a
foundation for public speaking can overcome this drawback
and has other advantages. Included in these advantages are
its fidelity to the subject matter, promoting more responsible
use of power, improved fit with the liberal arts mission of
higher education, and better meeting student needs. Issues in
implementing an ethics-based course are discussed, such as
identifying ethical issues and engaging in dialogue. The
model is illustrated through a description of one introduc-
tory public speaking course that was recently restructured to
meet this philosophy.

What's Basic About the Basic Course?
Enriching the Ethosystem as a Corrective for
Consumerism ............................................................... 116
Roy Schwartzman

A marketplace mentality featuring the student as consumer
reaches deeply into educational practice today. This essay
examines the roots and implications of framing public speak-
ing education in economic terms. The amorality of the mar-
ketplace could be supplemented by closer attention to how
values infuse the communication process. A value-laden communication environment, or ethosystem, may contribute to greater student awareness of their obligations to others and yield a fuller description of communication education.

Teaching Social Construction of Reality in the Basic Course: Opening Minds and Integrating Contexts ........................................... 151
Marcia D. Dixson

After a brief review of social construction theory (SCT), this paper explores the introduction of SCT into the hybrid basic communication course. SCT offers a theoretical perspective that can open minds and integrate the contexts of our basic course. Specifically, this article offers a) an introduction to the theory; b) application of SCT to the areas of interpersonal communication, small group communication and public communication; and c) a description of a syllabus using team based learning to integrate the concepts and contexts of the hybrid basic communication course (all of the SCT projects referred to can be found in the Appendix).

Communication and Professional Civility as a Basic Service Course: Dialogic Praxis Between Department and Situated in an Academic Home ................................................ 174
Ronald C. Arnett and Janie M. Harden Fritz

Communication departments frequently offer basic service courses to other campus departments or schools. A communication course sensitive to the mission of the university or college of which it is a part, as well as to its own mission, allows programs that include such a course in their curriculum to distinguish themselves from competing programs. Additionally, such a mission-sensitive course further defines departmental and university identity, assisting in institutionalizing a mission. Offering such a course provides an opportunity for dialogic praxis to occur between departments

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situated within the context of a local institution. Dialogic praxis involves knowledge of one's own position, listening to the position of the Other, and recognition of the social and historical situation in which both parties are situated, and application, and collaborative application. Duquesne University's Communication Department designed a course entitled Communication and Professional Civility for the Physician Assistant Department through a process of dialogic praxis. This course addresses issues of working on a task with others from a variety of professional perspectives with different standpoints within a local organizational home centered around a clear mission. This course provides a public discourse approach to basic communication issues within a complex modern organization.

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Students' Perceived Usefulness and Relevance of Communication Skills in the Basic Course: Comparing University and Community College Students

Stephen K. Hunt
Daradirek Ekachai
Darin L. Garard
Joseph H. Rust

Extant literature clearly indicates the need for communication training in an undergraduate curriculum. For example, Boyer (1987) argues that the ability to write and speak with clarity as well as the capacity to read and listen with comprehension are requisites for students' success in college. In fact, all of the skills students learn in their areas of study may be rendered useless if they are not equipped with the ability to communicate competently (Donofrio & Davis, 1997). Additionally, Moyer and Hugenberg (1997) note that "all college and university accrediting agencies emphasize training in oral communication skills as central to a bonafide general education" (p. 1). It is in the introductory communication course that students are most likely to receive training in fundamental communication skills.

Several scholars have attempted to identify the communication skills students need in order to be suc-
cessful in their careers. For example, DiSalvo (1980) identified listening, writing, oral reporting, persuading, interpersonal, and small group problem solving as critical communication skills for entry-level positions. In a survey of 446 alumni of a required introductory communication course, Wolvin and Corley (1984) found interpersonal communication, listening, and small group communication to be among the most often utilized communication skills in various career fields. In a survey of employers, Willmington (1989) found listening variables ("understanding what others are saying" and "paying attention to what others are saying") to be the highest rated communication variables for career success. In addition, Sypher, Bostrom, and Seibert (1989) found that effective listeners hold higher level positions and are promoted more often than individuals who are not effective listeners. Similarly, Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle's (1997) research further substantiates that oral communication skills are necessary for success in the workplace. This literature clearly supports Wolvin's (1998) argument that the "workplace today requires skilled communicators who can function effectively at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public communication levels" (p. 4).

Given the importance of communication skills training, researchers have sought to evaluate the efficacy of introductory courses in communication. For example, Bassett and Boone (1983) found that students can develop a wide range of verbal and nonverbal skills in the basic public speaking course. In a study of 393 students enrolled in a similar course, Ford and Wolvin (1992) found that the course had a positive effect on students' perceptions of their communication skills.
Bendtschneider and Trank (1990) surveyed basic course instructors, alumni, and students to determine the extent to which the communication skills alumni and students found most important were adequately addressed by the instructors in the basic course. Despite finding some differences between what was considered important and what was taught, they concluded overall that the institution’s basic course did respond to students’ communication needs. Finally, in studies of the impact of required introductory courses in communication on students’ perceived communication competencies in class, work, and social contexts, Ford and Wolvin (1993) and Kramer and Hinton (1996) found significant improvements for all three contexts.

Continued exploration of the usefulness and relevance of the skills taught in basic communication courses is essential for a number of reasons. We agree with Bendtschneider and Trank’s (1990) argument that “we need to ask which communication skills are important, useful, and relevant in producing effective and appropriate messages across a variety of situations” (p. 169). Such research is necessary if communication educators are to develop curricula that meet students’ needs. As Ford and Wolvin (1992) note, faculty who design basic communication courses are not always in touch with students’ communication needs. In addition, Hugenberg and Moyer (1997) argue that “faculty frequently rely on their own views of what communication skills should be taught undergraduates, with little regard to existing results in the literature” (pp. 3-4). In fact, Johnson and Szczupakiewicz (1987) found that faculty and alumni differed in their views of what public speaking skills were most important in the workplace.
Specifically, alumni ranked informative speaking, listening, and handling questions and answers as the top three skills, while faculty ranked informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and gathering supporting materials as the top three skills necessary to operate as a competent communicator. Clearly, communication scholars must develop an understanding of the skills their students perceive to be most useful and relevant to their future careers.

In attempting to evaluate whether the basic course fulfills students' communication needs, communication educators should devote considerable attention to the format of the course (i.e., public speaking, interpersonal communication, hybrid). According to Hugenberg (1996), the beginning public speaking course "has been and remains the most offered, the most taken, and the most popular basic course in communication" (p. 11). Despite the apparent popularity of this format, research has not demonstrated that the public speaking approach is the most effective (Seiler & McGukin, 1989). In fact, research indicates that many students and faculty perceive that interpersonal skills are at least as important as public speaking skills. For instance, Sorenson and Pearson (1981) surveyed alumni about the communication skills that they perceived to be most important to their job success. They found that interpersonal communication skills were deemed most important by respondents. Given these concerns, additional research which evaluates students' perceptions of public speaking and interpersonal skills is warranted.

It is important that research examining students' perceptions of communication skills not be limited to four-year institutions. In fact, community colleges have
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become a popular option for many students. According to Schrof (1993), enrollment in community colleges has increased 23 percent nationwide since 1988. One reason for this trend may be that such institutions offer scheduling flexibility and occupation-oriented training which caters to “non-traditional” students as well as those retooling for new careers (Schrof, 1995). As a result, it is possible that students enrolled at a community college and those at a four-year institution may have different perceptions regarding the usefulness and relevance of the communication skills offered in the basic course. At a minimum, a better understanding of the perceptions of students enrolled in different types of institutions could contribute to a data base “from which to identify similarities and differences in students’ communication needs across institutions” (Bendtschneider & Trank, 1990, p. 188).

STUDY ONE

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine community college and university students’ perceptions of communication skills learned in a basic communication course in relation to their career choice. Further, since basic communication courses are often offered in two areas — public speaking and interpersonal communication, we were also interested to see if the different content areas might affect students’ perceptions.
Research Questions

The following research questions guide our investigation of students' perceived usefulness and relevance of communication skills:

RQ1: Do students perceive communication skills they learn in a basic communication course to be useful?

RQ2: Do students perceive communication skills they learn in a basic communication course to be relevant to their future career?

RQ3: Is there a difference between the perceptions of students enrolled in public speaking courses and those of students enrolled in interpersonal communication courses regarding the usefulness and relevance of communication skills and their future career?

RQ4: Is there a difference between the perceptions of students enrolled in a two-year community college and those of students enrolled in a four-year college regarding the usefulness and relevance of communication skills and their future career?

METHODS

Participants

Participants in Study 1 were 446 students (228 males, 215 females, 3 students did not identify their sex) enrolled in required basic courses in interpersonal
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communication and public speaking. Two hundred ninety-one of the participants were from a large, four-year university, while 155 were from a medium sized community college. Participants from the four-year university were drawn from randomly selected sections of the basic communication course. Although the basic course at the four-year institution was a general education requirement for all students, it was offered in two formats (public speaking and interpersonal communication) and the students were allowed to enroll in the format of their choice. Participants from the community college were the entire population of students enrolled in the basic course at the institution. The basic course at the community college was also a general education requirement but was offered only in the public speaking format. Overall, the sample was divided almost equally among students enrolled in interpersonal communication \((n = 208)\) and public speaking \((n = 238)\).

Instrument

A 24-item questionnaire was developed for data collection. Items on the instrument consisted of both demographic-type questions (e.g., participant age, gender, class level) and opinion questions (e.g., perceived usefulness and relevance of communication skills). Factual data were collected through forced-choice scales and free-response scales, while opinion data were collected using Likert-type scales. Specifically, the instrument measured participants perceived usefulness of communication skills by ten, five-point, Likert-type scales (very useless to very useful). The ten communication skills (speaking, listening, self-presentation, non-
verbal communication, providing feedback, critical thinking, problem solving, language usage, cultural sensitivity, and group discussion) were derived from the stated course goals and texts used at the two institutions. Given that it is possible that students can perceive particular communication skills to be generally useful (i.e., worthwhile) but not relevant (i.e., applicable) to their future careers, the researchers also included a measure of relevance in the instrument. Perceived relevance was measured by four, five-point Likert-type scales (never to always) developed by Frymier and Shulman (1995) (see Figure 1). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistencies among items in this application. The scales measuring students' perceived usefulness and relevance of communication skills generated a Cronbach’s alpha reliability of .91 and .82 respectively.

Figure 1
Relevance Scale

1. The instructor uses examples to make course content relevant to your career goals.
2. The instructor provides explanations that demonstrate the importance of the course content in relation to your career goals.
3. The instructor explicitly states how course materials relate to your life in general.
4. The instructor gives assignments that involve the application of the content to your career interests.
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Frequency distributions and t-tests were utilized to analyze the data. The .05 level of significance was established for all statistical tests.

Demographic Information

The median age of students enrolled at the four-year institution was 18, while that of the community college students was 19. The means were 19.8 and 23.5 respectively. The majority (95%) of students at the four-year university were single, while 65% at the community college were single and 31% reported being married. The respondents at the four-year university were more racially diverse: 73% Caucasian, 12% African American, 5% Asian, 4% biracial, 1% Hispanic, and 5% other. Respondents at the community college were predominately Caucasian (93%).

In terms of career related information, students' average length of previous employment was 4.97 years. Almost half of the respondents (199 or 45%) were not employed, while 183 respondents (43%) reported that they worked part-time. The majority of students surveyed at both institutions (71% at the four-year institution, 72% at the two-year institution) indicated that they knew what type of career they wanted to pursue. Three-fourths (75%) of the students reported that they were attending college to prepare themselves for their first career, while 11% indicated a desire to retool for a new career. Only 6% reported going to college for their own intellectual development.
Results

The first research question asked if students perceive communication skills they learn in a basic communication course to be useful. The ten-item perceived usefulness scale was employed to answer this question. Results indicate that the majority of students do perceive the communication skills taught in the basic course useful ($M = 4.33$). In terms of the ten specific skills, the majority of students ranked each skill as "useful" and "very useful:" 92% for listening, 87% for speaking, 85% for self-presentation, 83% for critical thinking, 83% for language, 80% for problem solving, 73% for group discussion, and 72% for cultural sensitivity.

The second research question asked if students perceive communication to be relevant to their future careers. The researchers analyzed results of the four-item relevance scale to answer this question. Results demonstrate that students do perceive that their instructors are making course material relevant to their career goals and interests ($M = 3.56$).

Research question three asked if public speaking students' perceptions of communication skills differ from interpersonal communication students' perceptions (see Table 1). In terms of the usefulness of communication skills, results indicate that students' perceptions do not differ significantly ($t(439) = -0.37, p > .05$). In terms of the relevance variable, significant differences were found ($t(441) = -6.78, p < .05$). Specifically, students enrolled in interpersonal classes reported higher percep-
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Tions of relevance \((M = 3.79)\) than students enrolled in public speaking classes \((M = 3.28)\).

Table 1
T-Test results for Differences in usefulness and Relevance as a Function of Course Type: Study One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Speaking</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>-6.78*</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

Research question four asked if four-year university students’ perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of communication skills differ from those of two-year community college students. In short, the researchers failed to find significant differences (see Table 2). Students at both institutions perceived the communication skills offered at both institutions to be useful \((M = 4.33\) for the four-year university students, \(M = 4.23\) for the community college students) yielding a nonsignificant difference \((t(438) = 1.35, p > .05)\). The students at both institutions also reported similar results in terms of the relevance of communication skills to their future careers with a mean of 3.56 for the four-year university students and 3.43 for their community college counterparts \((t(440) = 1.68, p > .05)\).
Students’ Perceived Usefulness

Table 2
T-Test Results for Differences in Usefulness and Relevance as a Function of Institution: Study One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The data indicate that students perceive that the skills learned in required basic courses in interpersonal communication and public speaking are useful. Students also report that their instructors make the course material relevant to their future careers. Although students’ perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of communication skills do not differ based on type of institution, students enrolled in interpersonal communication classes perceive their instructors to make course content more relevant to their future career than those enrolled in public speaking sections. It is possible that students in these courses perceive that public speaking skills are not work-related and/or not relevant outside of the context of the classroom. These findings will be explored in more detail in the following sections of this essay.
STUDY TWO

Using a pretest-posttest design, Study 2 extended the initial research project by examining whether students' perceptions changed over the duration of the course.

Research Questions

For Study 2, we asked the same first and second research questions as Study 1, and added the following question:

RQs: Do students' perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of communication skills in relation to their future career change significantly over the course of the semester?

Because of a change in the nature of the basic communication course offered at the four-year institution (from public speaking and interpersonal communication to a hybrid course), Study 2 only surveyed students from the community college to retain consistency with Study 1.

Participants

Participants in Study 2 were 205 students (92 males, 113 females) enrolled in a required basic public speaking course at a medium-sized community college. As with Study 1, these participants were the entire population of students enrolled in the basic communication course at the institution.
**Instrument**

The researchers utilized the same 24-item questionnaire for Study 2 that was developed for Study 1. Participants completed the instrument in the second and twelfth week of the semester. This procedure allowed for pre- and posttest comparisons to determine if results changed as a function of the course. The scales measuring students' perceived usefulness and relevance of communication skills generated a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .93 and .85 respectively.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Frequency distributions and t-tests were employed to analyze the data and the .05 level of significance was established for all statistical tests.

**Demographic Information**

Although the median age of students in Study 2 (19) was the same as Study 1, the mean was lower from the previous year (22.7). Seventy-four percent of the students reported that they were single, 19% reported being married, and 6% reported that they were divorced. Respondents at the community college were predominantly Caucasian (98%).

In terms of career related information, the majority of students (78%) reported that they knew what type of career they wanted while 17% reported that they were unsure. In addition, the previous job experience of the community college students in Study 2 averaged 5.5
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years; the majority of them (56%) indicated that they worked part-time while attending school. Consistent with Study 1, 76% of the respondents indicated that they attended college in order to prepare for their first career, followed by career retooling (17%), and current job advancement (3%).

**Results**

The first research question asked if students perceive communication skills to be useful. The results indicate that, for both the pre- ($M = 4.27$) and posttests ($M = 4.30$), students perceive the communication skills offered in the basic public speaking course are useful.

Research question two asked if students perceive communication skills to be relevant in terms of their future career. Again, results indicate that students perceive their instructors are making course content relevant to their future careers for both the pre- ($M = 3.62$) and posttests ($M = 3.80$). However, it is important to note that the results suggest higher perceptions of usefulness than relevance.

The third research question asked if perceptions of usefulness and relevance change significantly over the course of the semester. For the usefulness variable, results do not indicate significant differences between the second and twelfth weeks of the semester ($t(368) = -.38, p > .05$). However, significant results were discovered in terms of the relevance variable ($t(361) = 2.36, p < .05$) (See Table 3). Specifically, participants reported higher perceptions of relevance at the end of the semester ($M_1 = 3.62, M_2 = 3.80$).
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time One</th>
<th>Time Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M  SD</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>4.27 .71</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>3.62 .70</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with the findings presented in Study 1, the data indicate that students perceive that the skills learned in the basic public speaking course are useful and relevant in relation to their future career. The data analyzed in Study 2 also suggest that there was an increase in students’ perceptions of relevance over the course of the semester; however, the students’ already high-rated perceptions of the usefulness of communication skills did not change significantly. These results are significant for a number of reasons. The fact that students’ perceptions of relevance became more positive over time can be at least partially attributed to their participation in the basic public speaking course. Also, students clearly perceive that the skills taught in the basic course are valuable in the workplace.

OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

Taken together, the results of these two studies provide evidence to substantiate the claim that students
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perceive the communication skills taught in basic interpersonal communication and public speaking courses to be useful and relevant for their future career. Importantly, these findings were consistent for both university and community college students. In addition, students' perceptions of the relevance of communication skills taught in the basic public speaking course were found to change in a positive direction over time. Despite the significant positive findings presented in Study 2, the research design prohibits us from claiming that changes in students' perceptions were solely a function of the basic course. Specifically, the lack of a control group prevents us from knowing whether students enrolled in other courses may have experienced the same changes as those enrolled in the basic course. However, the results are of significant value to communication educators looking to corroborate the value of skills offered in the basic public speaking course.

The results also elucidate important concerns for communication educators in terms of the format of the basic course. As noted previously, the beginning public speaking course is among the most popular basic courses in communication. However, the results of the present study reveal that students enrolled in the basic interpersonal communication course report higher perceptions of relevance than those enrolled in the basic public speaking course. It seems reasonable to speculate that students view public speaking skills as less directly relevant to their future careers compared to interpersonal skills. This line of thinking is consistent with Bendtschneider and Trank's (1990) findings that students and alumni rate interpersonal skills as more important than their instructors. Extant research also in-
Students' Perceived Usefulness
dicates that training in interpersonal communication is at least as important to career success as training in public speaking (Sorenson & Pearson, 1981).

The data presented here contribute to an emerging body of research suggesting that pedagogy in the basic course should extend beyond a strict focus on public speaking. As Hugenberg (1996) notes, "Teaching communication skills in the interpersonal, group, interviewing, public speaking, and other communication contexts seems a good starting point for the student taking only one communication course. Focusing on just public speaking skills leaves out many other important communication contexts" (p. 1). An obvious alternative to the basic public speaking course is the hybrid course. According to Moyer and Hugenberg (1997), the "course best suited to establish the foundations of communication competence for undergraduate students is the hybrid course" (p. 12). Communication educators should consider the hybrid format because it can be designed to provide students with an optimal mix of communication competencies in multiple contexts including public speaking, group communication, and interpersonal communication.

In sum, communication skills training will continue to play a vital role in the education of undergraduate students. In order to extend current understandings of the usefulness and relevance of communication skills, future research should examine the skills employers deem most important in relation to specific careers. In addition, research is needed which demonstrates that students' communication skills change as a function of their enrollment in the basic course. Such information could prove valuable in meeting the needs of various ac-
Students' Perceived Usefulness

creditation agencies and improve educators' abilities to
tailor the basic course to students' specific learning
needs and career interests.

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Contrasting the Relationships between Teacher Immediacy, Teacher Credibility, and Student Motivation in Self-Contained and Mass-Lecture Courses

Stephen A. Cox
Timothy S. Todd

Research shows that increased teacher immediacy (i.e., interpersonal behaviors that create physical and/or psychological closeness) enhances teacher credibility, student motivation, and learning (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, & Barraclough, 1995; Frymier, 1993; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Because most college students are first exposed to the communication discipline in an introductory level course, motivating these new students and establishing teacher credibility are critical activities for the basic communication course instructor. If basic course instructors can enhance their credibility and their students' motivation, communication students will learn more and departments may recruit additional students. Clearly, the relationship between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation in basic communication courses can influence both student and departmental success.

Forms of mass-instruction (e.g., mass lectures, online courses, and interactive television courses) allow
educational institutions to reach a larger number of students often at a lower per-student cost. Scholars suggest that the use of mass-instruction in basic communication courses will continue to increase as college enrollment increases (Gleason, 1986; Morreale, 1998; Trank, 1990). With a trend towards mass-instruction, educators who are effective in self-contained courses may or may not be as effective in these alternative instructional formats (Carbone, 1998). Previous research fails to address if the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation may differ in the mass-lecture format versus the self-contained format of the basic communication course. Due to the increased average distance between teacher and student, the larger mass-lecture setting may make it more difficult for teachers to appear physically and psychologically immediate, thereby diminishing the positive effects teacher immediacy can have on student motivation and teacher credibility in smaller, self-contained classes.

The purpose of this study is to investigate if the basic courses’ instructional format makes a significant difference on the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. By contrasting the findings from two distinct course formats, it is possible to assess the methodological limitations and applicability of previous research into the dynamics of teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. Investigating the dynamics of mass-lecture and self-contained formats can benefit basic course instructors’ understanding, adaptation, and performance in each of these unique classroom settings.
LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Immediacy & Student Motivation

Studies clearly show the positive influence that teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy can have on student motivation. Teacher communication not only sends messages of content and control, but it may also be the primary means by which student motivation can be increased and learning enhanced (Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990). Richmond (1990) found a significant correlation of .38 between nonverbal immediacy and student motivation. In a series of studies conducted by Christophel (1990), she found the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and student motivation ranged from .34 to .47, and verbal immediacy correlated with motivation between .36 to .47. Although somewhat weaker than earlier findings, Frymier (1993) also reported student motivation to be significantly correlated with nonverbal immediacy (.21) and verbal immediacy (.37). To further understand these relationships, Christophel and Gorham (1995) measured teacher immediacy and student motivation during both the second/third week and twelfth/thirteenth week of the semester. They found these relationships strengthened over time — the verbal immediacy and motivation relationship increased from .49 to .53, and the nonverbal immediacy and motivation relationship increased from .23 to .44 over the semester (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). These studies, however, do not indicate if their data were from respondents in mass-lecture or self-contained courses.
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

Immediacy & Teacher Credibility

McGlone and Anderson (1973) wrote that teacher credibility includes teacher fairness, expertness, personality, trustworthiness, impressiveness, sociability, affability, sympathy, and accuracy. Because vocal variety is positively related to teacher credibility (Beatty & Behnke, 1980), the use of greater vocal variety may boost teacher credibility by making the teacher "sound" more personable, social, sympathetic, and/or trustworthy. Extending research into the communication dimensions of teacher credibility, the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and teacher credibility has also been studied. Frymier and Thompson (1992) found that nonverbal immediacy was significantly correlated with two dimensions of teacher credibility--teacher character (.40) and teacher competence (.29). Thweatt and McCroskey's (1998) quasi-experimental study of teacher immediacy, misbehavior, and credibility found teachers who had appropriate behaviors and high nonverbal immediacy were rated significantly more competent and trustworthy than teachers with low nonverbal immediacy and appropriate behaviors. In related studies, McCroskey, et al., (1995) and Christensen and Menzel (1998) found that increased teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy enhanced students' affect towards and evaluations of teachers. Combined, these studies show that teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy has a positive relationship with teacher credibility, but it is not clear how course format may moderate these relationships.
Teacher Credibility & Student Motivation

A positive relationship also exists between teacher credibility and student motivation. More credible teachers should be more effective persuaders and better able to motivate student learning (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Frymier and Thompson's (1992) regression analysis found that teacher credibility accounted for 30% of the variance in student motivation. Student motivation was significantly correlated with both teacher character (.43) and competence (.49) (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). This limited research should be extended to see if the teacher credibility and student motivation relationship differs in self-contained and mass-lecture formats.

Mass-Lecture Format

Very few studies have examined the communication dynamics of the mass-lecture classroom. Moore, Masterson, Christophel, and Shea (1996) found that teachers of very small classes (< 20 students) were rated as being significantly more immediate than teachers of small (21-40), large (41-99), or very large (100+) classes. Bourhis and Noland (1990) and McCroskey and Andersen (1976) found that high communication apprehension (CA) students had significantly better academic performance than moderate and low CA students in communication-restricted classrooms, such as the mass-lecture format. Other research has examined related topics such as students' preferences about course size (e.g., Feigenbaum & Friend, 1992) and academic performance in large versus small courses.
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture (e.g., Hancock, 1996). The remaining literature on the mass-lecture format provides advice, tools, and strategies for being effective teachers in mass-lecture settings (e.g., Carbone, 1998; Pearson, 1990; Smith, Kopfman, & Ahyun, 1996). This literature provides little insight into the dynamics of teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation in the mass-lecture format.

Research Questions

The literature review shows that teacher immediacy has a positive relationship with both teacher credibility and student motivation, and teacher credibility has a positive relationship with student motivation. Other than Moore, et al., (1996), these studies on teacher immediacy, student motivation, and teacher credibility failed to gather data about course format. These authors did not report if respondents were evaluating teachers in mass-lecture or self-contained courses, nor did the respondents identify the size of the class they were evaluating. Subjects were asked to evaluate a) the class/teacher they were currently in (Christophel 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995), b) the class/teacher immediately prior to the course in which they completed the surveys (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Frymier, 1993; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; McCroskey, et al., 1990; Richmond, 1990), or c) hypothetical scenarios containing no contextual information about the course format (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Because it is unknown if the respondents were evaluating self-contained or mass-lecture courses, the conclusions about teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation...
The relationships between verbal immediacy, non-verbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation may differ in mass-lecture and self-contained formats of the basic communication course due to the particular formats' physical dimensions. In mass-lecture formats, teachers are more physically distant from each student making it more difficult for professors to be verbally and nonverbally immediate. For example, larger class settings make it more difficult to address all students by their first names, speak with a conversational tone of voice, encourage student participation, provide individualized feedback, make eye contact with students, and stand near students. Ratings of teacher immediacy have been found to be significantly higher in smaller class settings because smaller classes allow for increased physical closeness and personal interaction with students (Moore, et al., 1996). Because past research has not been consistent in drawing samples from a particular class format, the conclusions from these studies may provide misleading conclusions about the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. By statistically contrasting data from mass-lectures with data from self-contained formats, additional insight can be gained into the classroom dynamics of the basic course.

Because the literature review showed relationships do exist between the study's variables, it is cumbersome and unnecessary to propose separate research questions for each possible relationship in each of the two course formats. By generating a correlation matrix for each basic course format, the correlated relationships in the
self-contained format could be statistically compared to the correlated relationships in the mass-lecture format. Therefore, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: What are the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy in the self-contained format of the basic communication courses?

RQ2: What are the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy in the mass-lecture format of the basic communication courses?

RQ3: Do the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy differ significantly between self-contained and mass-lecture formats of the basic communication courses?

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected during 1997 and 1998 at a comprehensive university located in the southern United States. A sample of 1196 students completed the entire survey administered during the final week of the semester. Students were enrolled in either a self-contained or a mass-lecture (with a lab) section of basic public speaking or introduction to interpersonal communication. Twelve different instructors taught these courses; seven instructors taught only self-contained sections.
while the remaining five taught both mass-lecture and self-contained sections. Respondents in 3-hour, self-contained sections evaluated courses taught by adjunct or tenure-track professors. The mass-lecture respondents were given the surveys during the mass-lecture and instructed to “evaluate your experience in this class.” The researchers intended for respondents to evaluate the weekly 2-hour mass-lecture taught by a full-time adjunct or tenure-track professor; however, it is unclear if or how the weekly 2-hour lab (16-18 students) taught by a graduate teaching assistant may have influenced their responses. Therefore, data from the mass-lecture may reflect some respondents’ “overall” impression of the mass-lecture and lab experience.

Of the 1196 respondents, 326 were enrolled in the self-contained format and 865 were enrolled in the mass-lecture format (5 respondents failed to report course format). Twenty-nine percent were Freshmen, 36% Sophomores, 17% Juniors, 16% Seniors, and 1% irregular students. Fifty-five percent were female, 88% Caucasian, 7% African American, and 5% other races. Forty-one percent of respondents were age 19 or younger, 50% were from age 20 to 23, and 9% were 24 or older.

Surveys contained four instruments: the Student Motivation Scale (Christophel, 1990), the Teacher Credibility Scale (McCroskey & Young, 1981), the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument (Gorham, 1988), and the Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987). Based on a Varimax rotated factor analysis (item loading >.70, crossloading <.30), a seven-item version of the Student Motivation Scale (Christophel, 1990) was used. The
modified version contained seven, five-point, semantic
differential questions and achieved a reliability alpha of
.88 (M = 23.8, SD = 5.6). Following a Varimax rotated
factor analysis of the complete Teacher Credibility Scale
(McCroskey & Young, 1981), a modified five-item (five-
point semantic differential) scale was used to measure
teacher credibility—including questions on both teacher
competence and character. The modified, five-item
Teacher Credibility Scale achieved a reliability alpha of
.91 (M = 21.7, SD = 4.0). Gorham's (1988) 17-item (five-
point Likert-type) Verbal Immediacy Behaviors Instru-
ment was used to measure teachers' verbal immediacy
behaviors, and it achieved a reliability alpha of .91 (M =
59.7, SD = 12.9). Finally, the 14-item (five-point Likert-
type), Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument was
used (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987), which
achieved a reliability alpha of .90 (M = 56.3, SD = 9.4).
Higher scores on each instrument represent greater/
stronger perceptions of each variable. These data were
analyzed via Pearson Product Moment Correlation
Coefficients, Fisher's Zₜ transformations, and ANOVA
procedures to indicate the existence of any statistically
significant relationships or differences.

RESULTS

RQ1: Relationships in the self-contained format

Correlation coefficients are reported to the one thou-
sandth decimal as required for Fisher's Zₜ transforma-
tions (Ferguson & Takane, 1989). All the variables in
the self-contained format were positively and signifi-
cantly correlated at p < .01 (see Table 1, column 3). In
### Table 1: Correlated Classroom Variables and t-Tests between Self-Contained and Mass-Lecture Formats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Classroom Variables</th>
<th>Combined Data (self+mass)</th>
<th>Self-contained Format</th>
<th>Mass-lecture Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Motivation</td>
<td>r=0.515*</td>
<td>r=0.566*</td>
<td>r=-0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Credibility</td>
<td>r=0.475*</td>
<td>r=0.469*</td>
<td>r=0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Immediacy</td>
<td>r=0.379*</td>
<td>r=0.416*</td>
<td>r=0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>r=0.454*</td>
<td>r=0.550*</td>
<td>r=0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Classroom Variables</th>
<th>Combined Data (self+mass)</th>
<th>Self-contained Format</th>
<th>Mass-lecture Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Credibility and Verbal Immediacy</td>
<td>r=0.475*</td>
<td>r=0.469*</td>
<td>r=0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>r=0.379*</td>
<td>r=0.416*</td>
<td>r=0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Correlated Classroom Variables</th>
<th>Combined Data (self+mass)</th>
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<th>Mass-lecture Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Immediacy and Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>r=0.550*</td>
<td>r=0.536*</td>
<td>r=0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Combined data (N=1196); Self-contained (n=326); Mass-lecture (n=865); *p<.05; t=1.96, p<.05; t=3.29, p<.01
self-contained formats, student motivation was moderately correlated with teacher credibility ($r = .586, r^2 = .34$), verbal immediacy ($r = .469, r^2 = .22$), and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .416, r^2 = .17$). Students in self-contained courses reported a moderate correlation between teacher credibility and both verbal immediacy ($r = .590, r^2 = .35$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .536, r^2 = .29$). Also, verbal and nonverbal immediacy were highly correlated ($r = .702, r^2 = .49$).

**RQ2: Relationships in the mass-lecture format**

Verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation were all found to be positively correlated ($p < .01$) in the mass-lecture format (see Table 1, column 4). The positive relationship between student motivation and teacher credibility ($r = .426$) was significant but moderate ($r^2 = .18$). While verbal immediacy was moderately related to student motivation ($r = .412, r^2 = .17$), nonverbal immediacy had a low correlation ($r = .308, r^2 = .09$) with student motivation in mass-lecture formats. Concerning teacher credibility in mass-lecture formats, verbal immediacy ($r = .333, r^2 = .11$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .381, r^2 = .14$) had small but significant relationships with teacher credibility. In the mass-lecture the relationship between verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy was moderate ($r = .482, r^2 = .23$).

**RQ3: Differences between relationships in self-contained and mass-lecture formats**

RQ3 was concerned with determining if the relationships between classroom variables differed across in-
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

structional formats. *T*-test comparisons between the correlation coefficients in self-contained and mass-lecture formats were calculated (see Table 1, column 5). This comparison was done using Fisher's Z transformation, which converts correlation coefficients into standardized scores that can be compared using a *t*-test. All the coefficients in the self-contained format were stronger than those in the mass-lecture format; however, the *t*-test indicates if these differences were statistically significant.

**Student motivation.** The *t*-test shows that the correlation between student motivation and teacher credibility was significantly higher in the self-contained (*r* = .586, *r*² = .34) format versus the mass-lecture (*r* = .426, *r*² = .18) format (*t* = 3.31, *p* < .001). The relationship between student motivation and both verbal immediacy (*t* = 1.13, *p* = ns) and nonverbal immediacy (*t* = 1.86, *p* = ns) was not significantly different across formats. Combined, verbal and nonverbal immediacy in self-contained formats accounted for 39% of the variance in student motivation, and in mass-lecture formats, these variables accounted for 26% of the variance in motivation. In light of these findings, an ANOVA was run to see if student motivation significantly differed across course format. Results indicate that student motivation in self-contained formats (m = 24.84, sd = 6.11) was significantly higher than student motivation in mass-lecture formats (m = 23.40, sd = 5.38). While the *F* statistic was statistically significant (*F*[1, 1183] = 15.66, *r*² = .01, *p* < .001), examination of the means and standard deviations indicates that the differences are not dramatic.

**Teacher credibility.** *T*-tests comparing the correlation coefficients between teacher credibility and verbal
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

immediacy \( (t = 5.06, p < .001) \), and teacher credibility and nonverbal immediacy \( (t = 3.02, p < .01) \) showed that these coefficients were significantly higher in the self-contained format. Combined, teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy in self-contained formats accounted for 64% of the variance in teacher credibility; however, these variables accounted for only 25% of the variance in teacher credibility in the mass-lecture format. An ANOVA was also run to determine if teacher credibility differed between self-contained and mass-lecture formats. The ANOVA was significant \( (F[1, 1188] = 4.28, r^2 = .004, p < .05) \) showing that teacher credibility was statistically different and higher in the self-contained formats \( (m = 22.04, sd = 4.17) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 21.51, sd = 3.90) \). Although statistically different, the variation in teacher credibility between course formats was very small.

Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy. The \( t \)-test \( (t = 5.28, p < .001) \) showed that the correlation between verbal and nonverbal immediacy was significantly higher in the self-contained format \( (r = .702, r^2 = .49) \) than in the mass-lecture \( (r = .482, r^2 = .23) \). ANOVAs were also calculated to see if verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy differ across instructional formats. Results show that verbal immediacy was statistically higher \( (F[1, 1181] = 165.84, r^2 = .12, p < .05) \) in the self-contained \( (m = 67.10, sd = 13.24) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 56.94, sd = 11.63) \). However, nonverbal immediacy was not statistically different \( (F[1, 1180] = .14, p = ns) \) in the self-contained \( (m = 56.46, sd = 11.25) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 56.23, sd = 8.64) \).
DISCUSSION

The major significance of this study is not the confirmation that teacher credibility, teacher immediacy, and student motivation are positively related. Rather, this study's contribution is its focus on the differences in the relationships between these classroom variables across self-contained and mass-lecture formats of the basic courses. This study showed that four of the six correlation coefficients between teacher verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation were statistically higher in the self-contained format of the basic communication courses. Only the relationships between student motivation and both verbal and nonverbal immediacy were not significantly different across course formats (see Table 1). The varied results between the two formats clearly show that future research must specify the course format from which the data is gathered. Otherwise, combining data from mass-lecture and self-contained formats produces misleading conclusions about teacher credibility, teacher immediacy, and student motivation that may not hold true in either course format.

While previous research found that teacher credibility accounted for 30% of the variance in student motivation (Frymier & Thompson, 1992), this study found teacher credibility accounted for 34% ($r = .586$) of the student motivation variance in the self-contained format but only 18% ($r = .426$) in the mass-lecture. Not reported in previous studies, this investigation found that verbal immediacy accounted for 35% ($r = .590$) of the variance in teacher credibility in self-contained classes, but only
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

11% \((r = .333)\) in the mass-lecture format. Frymier and Thompson’s (1992) study found that nonverbal immediacy accounted for 8% \((r = .29)\) to 16% \((r = .40)\) of the variance in teacher credibility; this study found nonverbal immediacy accounted for 29% \((r = .536)\) in the self-contained and 14% \((r = .381)\) in the mass-lecture classes. Overall, these results further support the notion that more verbally and nonverbally immediate teachers create more engaging classrooms, facilitate greater student participation, and develop more personal rapport with students, all of which boost students’ motivation (Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993) and perceptions of teacher competence and character (McCroskey, et al., 1995; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). These findings suggest that mass-lecture instructors would be advised to make extra efforts to display verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

Consistent with past research (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993), verbal immediacy was more highly correlated with student motivation than was nonverbal immediacy regardless of the basic course format. Earlier studies reported the student motivation and verbal immediacy relationship ranged from .36 to .53 while the student motivation and nonverbal immediacy relationship ranged from .21 to .47. Similarly, this study found that student motivation correlated with verbal immediacy at .469 in the self-contained format and at .412 in the mass-lecture format. Student motivation and nonverbal immediacy correlated at .416 in the self-contained format and at .308 in the mass-lecture format. These findings suggest that some of the variance reported by earlier studies may have been due to the predominant course format.
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

represented in the sample. Additional investigations should be conducted to better understand which verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors contribute the most to student motivation in both basic course formats. Such insight into immediacy behaviors can further help teachers in basic and advanced courses enhance the state motivation of students.

Results are consistent with claims that students are significantly more motivated with more verbally immediate teachers (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993). The teachers of self-contained classes were found to be significantly more verbally immediate and students in self-contained classes were significantly more motivated. This finding supports research showing immediacy is higher in smaller classes (Moore, et al., 1996). Apparently, the larger size of the mass-lecture decreases verbal immediacy behaviors such as soliciting student viewpoints, addressing students by name, encouraging students to talk, and conversing with students after class. It is not surprising that students would be less motivated in class environments that lack these teacher behaviors. An unexpected finding was that non-verbal immediacy was not significantly different across instructional format. Apparently, teachers in either format were no more or less likely to display nonverbally immediate behaviors such as using gestures, standing behind the podium, smiling at students, looking at notes, or using vocal variety while teaching.

These results suggest that the link between verbal immediacy and student motivation (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993) may be the influence that verbal...
immediacy has on teacher credibility. Because the correlation between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation was not statistically different across the two instructional formats, some other variable must be contributing to the higher student motivation in self-contained classes. Recall that self-contained classes were significantly higher in teacher credibility, student motivation, and verbal immediacy. Verbal immediacy accounted for 35% of the variance in teacher credibility in self-contained classes versus only 11% in the mass-lecture classes. Teacher credibility was also significantly more related to student motivation in the self-contained format accounting for 34% ($r = .586$) of the variance in student motivation versus 18% ($r = .426$) variance in the mass-lecture format. These results suggest that the higher student motivation in the more verbally immediate, self-contained classes is due to verbal immediacy contributing statistically more variance to teacher credibility. The results suggest the following path — as verbal immediacy increases it contributes more to teacher credibility, and enhanced teacher credibility has a positive effect on student motivation. Perhaps the lower levels of teacher verbal immediacy in mass-lecture formats lowers teacher credibility, and this decreased teacher credibility lowers student motivation. Additional studies could apply statistical path analysis to better understand how teacher immediacy and credibility contribute to student motivation.

The correlation coefficients found in this study were relatively high, or higher, compared to those reported in earlier studies. This study's data were entirely drawn from students in basic communication courses but ear-
lier studies either did not specify the disciplines represented in their samples or used sampling techniques that gathered a heterogeneous sample of disciplines. It is possible that communication teachers, versus other disciplines, are more aware of their own communication behaviors and display more verbal and non-verbal immediacy. If the instructors teaching the mass-lectures and those teaching self-contained courses were distinct, non-overlapping groups of instructors, this study’s findings could have been attributed to differences between instructors rather than differences between the instructional formats. Differences found between the formats are less likely to be due to differences in instructors because the mass-lecture instructors also taught some of the self-contained sections of these courses.

A limitation of this study is that the data from the mass-lecture respondents may have been influenced by their experiences with a lab instructor, therefore reflecting a “hybrid” rather than a “pure” mass-lecture experience. Additional research should analyze data from mass-lecture students who do and students who do not have lab instructors to measure possible differences in teacher immediacy, credibility, and student motivation. Future research should investigate if the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, student motivation, and course format differ between the communication discipline and other disciplines, including those in the humanities and the sciences. Such studies can potentially improve the teaching outcomes in basic and advanced courses across the university. Perhaps the communication discipline’s most significant contribution to the university will be improving classroom communi-
cation between professors and students in order to maximize the one critical process in higher education—the teaching/learning transaction.

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Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture


Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture


Anti-racist Pedagogy in the Basic Course: Teaching Cultural Communication as if Whiteness Matters

Kristen P. Treinen
John T. Warren

Rather than attempting to correct erroneous views that lend themselves to racism, whiteness theories begin with the recognition that because terms like black and white (or white/non-white or white/"other") are constructed in binary opposition, it is impossible to rescue blackness or brownness from its deviant status without deconstructing the whiteness against which such deviance is measured. (Thompson, 1997, p. 146).

Scene 1

You stand in front of your students and introduce Boris, a friend of yours from Russia who happens to be a colleague in your departmental office. Your basic course students, a room filled with twenty-three white and very

1We borrow this writing style from Kathleen B. Jones's "The Trouble With Authority," and Darlene M. Hantzis and Devoney Looser's "Of Safe(r) Spaces and "Right" Speech: Feminist Histories, Loyalties, and Theories, and the Dangers of Critique." We were inspired by their use of second person narrative and replicate it here.

BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL

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bored first-year college students, stare up at you without taking their books out of their bag, looking up at the sound of your voice, or even bothering to act like they are listening. Boris is used to this, he will tell you later, noting that this was his sixth guest lecture this semester on cultural communication. You recall thinking that someone like Boris would personalize cultural communication — a making real of the issues in the textbook. He approaches the students and begins to weave a story about life in Russia and the students slowly start to transform — they perk up and become seduced by this storyteller.

You sit in the back of the room and smile as your students get caught up in Russian life — this exotic place they have heard about but only seen on television. During the course of the hour, Boris brings in course terms and concepts all while passing those ideas through his own life experiences. When the hour is over, you and Boris walk back to the office and again you are proud you asked him to come, for the students got more from him than they possibly could have gotten from you. After all, a lecture on culture is more interesting when they can hear the material applied to someone who is different than they are, you think. On the way back, Boris asks you a question: 'I'm glad I could help you out, but I always wonder if what I say ever really makes them think about the issues I just told them.' You looked surprised and respond that it went well and that they were attentive. He smiles and notes, 'yeah, but tomorrow I bet all they remember are the weird stories from the weird Russian.'
Scene 2

You are lecturing on informative speeches to your students. You assign the informative speech and ask students to begin brainstorming topics with each other. The next class period it becomes obvious that many of your students are struggling with a topic. The following semester you've come up with a new way to alleviate this stress (for your students and for you); this semester you are going to change the informative speech to a speech of information on diversity. Of course, you hope that your students will find it easier to choose a topic, but you have an ulterior motive, you hope that this speech will help your students to become more culturally aware and culturally sensitive. You require your students to "step-out" of their cultures/co-cultures and to research a culture that is different than their own. If they could not think of a topic, you provided each student with a list of cultural "others" they could present to the class. You were very happy with the outcome of the presentations because your students seemed genuinely interested in the speeches on different cultures.

The following semester you are discussing cultural communication with a friend. Your friend asks you if you have ever heard of Whiteness Studies. At first you're shocked and confused; you have a hard time believing that you have more privileges than other people do: you are a woman living in a patriarchal society. After several discussions, and readings about whiteness, you realize that the strategies you have used to create cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness in your classroom have been naive and misguided. You wonder how you can change your class to address these issues.
As we have found in our experience as communication educators and scholars, there is a need for educators to understand the implications and impact of whiteness in the classroom. The belief that educators must engage in a critique of whiteness is reinforced by several scholars (Nakayama, and Krizek, 1995; Sleeter, 1996; McIntyre, 1997; Scheurich, 1993; McIntosh, 1995; Giroux, 1997; Fine, Wies, Powell, and Wong, 1997). Whiteness Studies encourages educators to problematize the unexamined cultural center in order to better understand how whiteness affects our teaching, curriculum, and students. As Ferguson (1990) explains, the cultural center of power is often exercised from a hidden place, and whenever we try to find it, it moves somewhere else, "yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the entire framework of our culture, and over the ways we think about it" (p. 19). Whiteness Studies is designed to examine that elusive center of power and deconstruct it. Whiteness Studies are not a threat to other areas of cultural study; rather, it enhances the techniques and strategies we employ to teach multiculturalism in the basic communication course. Whiteness Studies is critical largely because the common ways we teach multicultural communication do not encourage students to examine how racism is systemic, or how white privilege impacts our understanding of diversity issues, nor does it locate white people in the discussion.

What we argue is typically missing in the basic course is an anti-racist pedagogy. An anti-racist pedagogy asks educators to understand the power and privilege inherent in whiteness, and asks educators to examine how whiteness affects their classrooms, students,
teaching strategies, and attitudes toward students of color. An anti-racist pedagogy begins when educators and students engage in self-reflection about what it means to be white, and how it “affects our thinking, our behaviors, our attitudes, and our decisions from the micro, personal level, to the macro, social level” (Scheurich, 1993, p.3). Whiteness Studies are “designed not to gaze outward at the margins but critically examine what lies at the center of racial institutional power: whiteness” (Warren, 1999, p. 185). Whiteness Studies can help instructors and students in the basic course approach racism in a new way. All too often we teach students that racism is something that puts ‘others’ at a disadvantage without teaching students about who concurrently is “advantaged” by racism. McIntosh (1995) characterizes this advantage as white privilege (p. 190). In this essay, we suggest a new way of addressing culture in the basic course. We offer a re-framing of how cultural communication could be approached in the basic course through work in Whiteness Studies. Such a refocusing towards a critique of whiteness makes the basic course a possible site for transformation and social justice while promoting a more accurate understanding of the influence of racial power in cultural communication. Additionally, the basic course represents a powerful site for this kind of conversation due to its wide-ranging student audience and the unique effect of culture on communicative interaction.

In what follows, we build from Whiteness Studies to offer four modifications to the basic course, which are consistent with an anti-racist pedagogy. The first modification involves re-examining the way cultural communication is approached in the basic communication
course through a move from the margins to the center. Communication educators must begin to consider how the privilege of the "center" works in their classrooms and institutions. The second modification explores the danger of turning cultural communication into a study of the exotic cultural other. When studying culture and communication, often we engage our students in an examination of how "others" communicate without reflecting on the ways our communicative practices affect our daily lives. The third modification explores the ways the rhetoric of individualism reinforces inequality. The logic that we are all individuals, which underlines much of the work in the basic course ('look at people as individuals,' 'we should not stereotype'), taken to its extreme only maintains an illusion of a pre-established equality, as if race has no effect on our collective social world. Finally, we critique the notion that colorblindness is the appropriate way to handle issues of race in our classrooms. If educators continue to be "colorblind," we are sending a message to students that being black and brown is a fault or flaw that should be overlooked and/or ignored; it thus becomes hard for students of color to feel "worthy of notice" (Delpit, 1995, p. 177). We conclude by suggesting ways Whiteness Studies are appropriate to the basic course and offer some brief practical suggestions from our own experiences as a beginning implementation of this work. We make such suggestions with caution; we do not wish to imply that the suggestions we make here are the only possible solutions to the dilemma, nor do we wish to imply that such ideas radically subvert the cultural politics of the classroom. Rather, we wish them to begin the work this essay charges — to begin conversations about how to improve
the educational experiences of students in introductory communication courses.

REFRAMING CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE BASIC COURSE: FOUR MODIFICATIONS

From the Margins to the Center

... most of the time white people speak about nothing but white people, it’s just that we couch it in terms of ‘people’ in general.

(Dyer, 1997, p. 3).

Have you ever been asked what your cultural background is? What did you say? Norwegian? Irish? German? Maybe you simply said, “American!” Have you ever asked a person of color what their cultural background is? If you answered no, why not? Maybe because you do not consider White the same as African American, Latino/a, or Native American. In other words, you may assume that a person of color has a cultural background; therefore, there is no need to ask. White people, on the other hand, are the invisible norm from which people of color are measured against and placed in opposition to. Many times cultural communication is approached in the basic course as an opportunity to study how different cultures communicate or how we [white people] might better communicate with cultural others. Notice how the words ‘different’ and ‘others’ implicitly set up a marker from which those others are measured as different. Whiteness Studies demands that one understands culture as a political system of power rela-
tions in which whiteness is the privileged center. This is very different from how the basic course typically operates, where a white student is the imagined audience and whiteness is often taken for granted and thus never critiqued. In describing how the invisibility of whiteness operates, Titone (1998) explains that "I was well instructed when it came to studying the educational research related to diversity. I learned to conceptualize 'the other' as a cultured being to respect and affirm 'them'" (p. 162). Yet, what we do not study is the issue of other in relation to what. Without addressing the norm against which "others" get judged, these others continue to get marginalized. At the same time, the power of the center, the norm that is whiteness, gets further entrenched.

Whiteness Studies demands that one understand culture as a political system of power relations in which whiteness is privileged, and where that privilege translates to cultural power. Whiteness scholars ask that we mark and understand the invisible center as real and culturally defined. They ask educators to expose "whiteness as a cultural construction as well as the strategies that embed its centrality" (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995, p. 297). Nakayama and Krizek explain that

We must deconstruct it as the locus from which Other differences are calculated and organized. The purpose of such an inquiry is certainly not to re-center whiteness, but to expose its rhetoric. It is only upon examining this strategic rhetoric that we can begin to understand the influences it has on our everyday lives. (p. 297)
Whiteness functions as the unexamined center, which we argue needs to be examined, exposed, and dismantled.

Whiteness is difficult to see because it is taken for granted that people of color are raced and white people are not. Frankenberg (1993) found that “a significant number of young white women” in her study found that “being white felt like being cultureless” (p. 196). So, the question remains, what does it mean to be white? How can we begin to understand whiteness? We can begin to understand whiteness, Schuerich contends, when we admit that we are all a part of racialized groups “that is, all people are socially influenced in significant ways by their membership in racial groups” (Schuerich, 1993, p. 9). McIntosh (1995) explains that white privilege is an “invisible weightless [unearned] knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank checks . . . . which I can count on cashing in each day” (p. 1-2). Whiteness is often seen as synonymous with the common, ordinary, and natural way of being human and thus whites do not perceive it as meaningful, or as something that has an impact in the classroom. We suggest White instructors of the basic course need to unpack their “knapsacks” of taken-for-granted privilege and allow that reflection to inform their pedagogy.

Whiteness Studies encourages communication educators to begin to consider how the privilege of the center works in their classrooms and institutions. By “going public” with our whiteness, educators can begin to engage in a dialogue and critique about what it means to be white with our colleagues and our students. The ex-
amination of whiteness should not perpetuate the racism that already exists in our society; instead, an examination of whiteness should deconstruct the center of privilege and power that is embedded in whiteness. Communication educators should help students engage in a critique of racism which names and marks whiteness as a historical and political center of power and privilege. As Warren (1999) suggests, “rather than making the center bigger, including more voices and more cultures, Whiteness Studies demands a critical examination of the center in the hope that the center will fall” (p. 197). Whiteness Studies is an integral, but often missing, component in the study of multiculturalism. It serves to critically interrogate racism and privilege, pushes for a more equitable society, and demands that we do not tokenize or exoticize non-whites.

Of Tacos, Veils, and Pow Wows: The Exotic Other

With a different focus, this education initiative might move away from the “food and festivals” multicultural programs that serve culture up with an “ethnic” dish and traditional garb. These kinds of programs only render various cultures exotic and thus fail to impact the stability and power of the center. (Warren, 1999, p. 200)

We must account for the food, fun, and festival approach to multiculturalism in the basic course. Think back to multicultural and intercultural courses you have taught or taken as a student in the past. How was culture approached? Did you engage in “cultural experi-
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ences" such as attending a Native American Pow-Wow, having a Mexican Fiesta, or attending an African American church? Sleeter (1996) maintains that "multicultural education is very often reduced to folksongs and folktales, food fairs, holiday celebrations, and information about famous people" (p. 145). These approaches to multiculturalism only serve to "otherize" people of color; stereotypes are reinforced rather than undermined. As Sleeter maintains "Anglos will romanticize piñatas and Mexican hat dances, and at the same time argue that characteristics of Mexican culture keep Mexican people from advancing (such as large families, adherence to Spanish language, external locus of control, lack of ambition-manana, etc.)" (p. 146). As a response, Whiteness Studies holds the white race accountable for their culture. This response is important because it is through the hidden norms of white culture that we criticize others.

Academic research often serves to 'otherize' people of color without considering the effect these studies have on the people being studied. In their article, "Multicultural Education Courses and the Student Teacher: Eliminating Stereotypical Attitudes in our Ethnically Diverse Classroom," Tran, Young, and DiLella (1994) conducted a study to examine the effects of a multicultural education course on the formation of attitudes toward three ethnic groups: European Americans, Mexican-Americans, and African Americans. This study was conducted during a multicultural education course and was an attempt to reduce "stereotyping attitudes" toward these groups. In order to reduce "stereotyping attitudes," the participants were asked to immerse themselves in a cultural activity and interact with members
of another culture. These cultural immersions included "neighborhood festivals," "ethnic churches," and "half-way houses." According to the study:

Students, often reluctant, at first, to visit an African-American Baptist church, or work in a elementary school fair with Mexican, Asian, or Middle-Eastern students, speak or write about their experiences with joy and enlightenment as if they just began to empathize with their racially-different neighbors. From these experiences blossom less fearful, more sensitive students. (p. 276)

It is reassuring to know that these student teachers become less fearful and more sensitive to "other" cultures through a multicultural course, but does this process help the student teachers understand the role they play in the classroom when their classroom has students of color, or when they are teaching about diversity to white students?

The desire to use cultural communication to talk about others, pointing out the different communicative styles and cultural practices, has the pretense of educating students about the differences between differing cultures. But such a lesson also teaches the students about what those communicative practices are in relation to — to the white cultural practices embedded in the American educational system. This again normalizes whiteness but does so directly on the bodies of those non-white others we exoticize. A denial of this kind of study of culture is a denial of representations that continue to promote and reify the stereotypical understandings about those different. Such a redefinition of cultural communication means that easy
critiques of cultural practices (i.e., Middle-Eastern gender relations, Ebonics, or meritocracy) are replaced with discussions of these practices in cultural context with a reflection of how our own complex cultural practices can also fall victim to easy reductions (i.e., the politics of make-up, tanning, and the like).

Rather than asking our students to examine those mysterious others, as some research appears to ask us to do, we should instead recognize that such approaches can serve to otherize to such an extreme that we put others on display while at the same time positioning whiteness as absent, central, and normal. One useful way to envision how exoticizing occurs is to imagine how we might ask cultural others to study “whiteness.” What would it look like to have a ‘white’ booth at the cultural fair? The seeming absurdity of such a question only demonstrates the ways our representations of culture frame marginalized others as exotic in comparison to the normalized white center of power. Any conversation of cultural others without an accompanying reflection on how such conversations situate whiteness only goes to otherize and exoticize those groups while strengthening whiteness’ position of dominance. A change in the focus of multicultural studies within and outside the communication classroom will allow student to comprehend the complexities of one’s cultural background. Failing to address whiteness in multicultural classrooms means failing to address that whiteness is a race and a cultural standpoint.
The Privilege of Individualism

Among Whites, the idea that each person is largely the source or origin of herself or himself, that is, individualism, is considered a natural facet of life. . . . individualism is seen as a naturally occurring, transhistorical, transcultural condition to which all humans naturally aspire. (Scheurich, 1993, p. 6)

In the basic course, as in other classes, we teach our students about racism, prejudice, and stereotypes in an attempt to help students see that their communicative practices may have negative consequences. We believe it is valuable to encourage our students to be more open-minded, accepting and culturally sensitive. Not only do we want our students to be more culturally sensitive, but we also desire that our students will become responsible and competent communicators. However, there is a significant consequence to teaching only these aspects of communicative competence to our students: a lack of accountability. We ask our students to understand what racism, prejudice, and stereotypes mean, and we ask our students to be tolerant and respectful of people who are different from them, but we seldom ask our students to reflect upon their own involvement and implication in the system of racism. Our students are taught to view racism as an individual problem that puts 'others' at a disadvantage, instead of being taught about the corollary of white privilege and the advantages which result for whites (McIntosh, 1995, p. 190).

If basic course instructors continue to teach their students that racism is an individual problem, students will not have to implicate themselves in the system of
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racism. An absence of self-reflexivity will ensure that
racism will continue to be seen as "someone else's prob-
lem." Sleeter (1996) explains that "most white teachers
greatly minimize the extent and impact of racial (as
well as the forms of ) discrimination, viewing it as iso-
lated expressions of prejudice that hurt a person's feel-
ings" (p. 141). Discrimination and racism get inter-
preted as isolated acts "by prejudiced individuals"
(Sleeter, 1996, p. 142) and therefore never considered as
part of a larger racist system.

Because racism is often thought of as individual acts
of unkindness, we neglect to examine the role we whites
play in a larger system of racism. Racism is not an indi-
vidual problem which can be attributed to the mysteri-
ous "them" who engage in racism. Thompson (1997)
explains that "racism is a system of privilege and op-
pression, a network of traditions, legitimating stan-
dards, material, and ideological apparatus that together
serve to perpetuate hierarchical social relations based
on race" (p. 9). As Thompson asserts, racism is a sys-
temic problem found in our classrooms, textbooks, and
institutions; however, racism is often presented as an
individual problem. Scheurich further offers that

[highly educated Whites usually think of racism in
terms of the overt behaviors of individuals that can be
readily be [sic] identified and labeled. A person who
does not behave in these identifiable ways is not con-
sidered to be a racist. Within this perspective, racism
is a label for individuals but not for social groups. (p.
6)

An individual approach to racism only serves to per-
petuate inequality. It places blame at the door of the
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person of color who cannot make it and says, 'if you had only worked harder you could have made it.' The presentation of racism as an individual problem ignores the fact that we all function within a system; we all gain privilege and suffer inequality in a synchronous relationship. Sleeter (1996) describes how European-Americans defend the individualistic view of the American system "because it portrays the system as open to those who are willing to work hard and pull themselves over barriers of poverty and discrimination"(p. 138). It is a statement of privilege to gain all the systemic benefits of whiteness and then pretend that 'I got them all because I earned them.' Believing in an individualistic society allows us to blame the people who do not gain these privileges for not working hard enough or for being inferior. If people really want to have privilege, they are expected to work harder, and to pull themselves up by the bootstraps (Ryan, 1976).

Our educational system reflects the individualistic ideology of the dominant society and perpetuates the notion that discrimination and oppression are results of individual acts of racism. McIntosh (1997) asserts that her "schooling gave [her] no training in seeing [her]self as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture" (p. 190). We need to think more about her concern here, particularly as it relates to a learned ignorance of systematic issues. An exclusive focus on individual actions and behaviors is problematic. It drastically reduces a complex and historically constructed system to one's own interpretations and one's own actions. As long as racism is presented as an individual problem, we do not have to be accountable for our actions unless we intend or inflict harm on an-
other. How often do we ask our students in the basic course to explain how they are invested in, or benefit from, systematic racism? As educators we have a responsibility to explain to our students that the “system” of racism allows for the oppression of the “other,” and allows those with privilege and power to flourish.

One important center of power and privilege is our own classrooms (Delpit, 1995, p. 24). A culture of power exists throughout the curriculum and structure of our schools. According to Anderson, Bentley, Gallegos, Herr, and Savvedra (1998),

A classroom contains a culture of power to the extent that social relations in the classroom reproduce social relations in the wider society. For example, the curriculum tends to reflect the dominant culture (middle class, male, European-American, heterosexual, able-bodied, etc.) -- that is, men tend to demand their privileged position in the public sphere and dominate discussions; a hierarchical system is reproduced throughout the student-teacher relationship, evaluation procedures, and so on. (p. 276)

The culture of power in the basic course can be seen in the way we teach our students how to deliver an effective public speech: an effective public speech as envisioned by Aristotle. In our experience, the basic course asks students to deliver highly structured speeches that are modeled after the white, elite men who invented the process for men like them. Not only is the structure, organization, and delivery of a speech modeled after the dominant class, it is also a reflection of the way the dominant society engages in public discourse.

Communication educators can begin to deconstruct and de-center the “culture of power” in our classrooms.
An examination of whiteness in the basic course will demand that our students understand culture as a political system of power relations in which whiteness is the privileged center, and that privilege means more power. In these and other ways, the basic course so often imagines white students. For instance, basic communication textbooks generally (if culture is included at all) have a chapter on culture and communication, while still others attempt to incorporate culture in all chapters, usually relegating this weaving to a paragraph here or there. While we argue that these are necessary and beneficial elements to a communication textbook, we also assert that these textbooks place whiteness as the invisible norm, while people from other cultures or other countries are posited as the exotic other (for instance: Lucas, 1995; Wood, 1998; Samovar and Mills, 1998; Gronbeck, McKerrow, Ehninger, and Monroe, 1997). We have yet to see a textbook seriously scrutinize the communicative and political effects of whiteness without reinforcing the normality of whiteness.

**Color Evasion: An Ignorance of Difference**

Colorblindness treats race as if it did not matter, invoking an idea according to which color *ought* not to matter, a world in which color is not a difference that makes a difference. . . colorblindness also involves a refusal to see racism as anything more than prejudice.” (Thompson, 1997, p. 14)

As instructors, we are taught in our coursework or in training to be more culturally aware and more culturally sensitive toward the students we will teach. Warren (1999) maintains that “multicultural education
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has traditionally been based on examining racial others, in an effort to expand the curriculum to include racial and ethnic minorities" (p. 197). Few educators would argue that expanding the curriculum to include racial and ethnic minorities and creating more culturally sensitive and culturally aware teachers is a problem; however, if engaging students in the examination of the "other" leads to ignoring important social and cultural difference, the practice then perpetuates racism rather than working to undermine it. Playing off the double meaning of ignorance (stupidity and purposive ignoring), to claim colorblindness is both an inaccurate response to difference, where one actually believes or claims to believe they are color-blind, and an ignorant response implying that being different is deficient.

Rains (1998) argues that the color-blind response often is used in a sweeping and generalizable way. It goes something like this: "You know, some of my best friends are (a color/ethnicity), but I don't see color . . . . I treat all my friends the same." For the white person, this type of response is supposed to be politically correct, and nondiscriminatory." Rains goes on to explain that race-neutrality is often more personally directed and typically goes like this: "Gee, I don't think of you as (color/ethnicity)." Rains explains that a race-neutral response is often thought to be a sort of compliment for the person of color (p. 91). In reality, the race-neutral response creates a false sense of equality. This response is used to alleviate the possibility that the white person will implicate him/herself as a racist, as if not-seeing color logically correlates to an anti-racist attitude. A person with this response is attempting to take away the possibility that he/she is overtly racist. Rains main-
tains that this benign response is “both unconscious de­
fensiveness and denial.” Rains continues maintaining
that “the unconscious defensiveness works to safeguard
the reactor from harmful definitions or accusations” (p.
92). Being politically correct is perceived as the right
thing to do, and as a result many people fear being seen
as racist if they see color. By engaging in race neutral­
ity, a white person tries to erase their responsibility for
racism, allowing their own privilege to be uncritiqued.

Educators and students who claim they do not see
race have bought into the logic that racial difference (or
the acknowledgment of racial difference) is inherently
racist. Ladson-Billings (1994) explains the great harm
that teachers can do when they engage in color-blind­
ness:

My own experience with white teachers, both pre­
service and veteran, indicate that many are uncon­
fortable acknowledging any student difference and
particularly racial differences. Thus some teachers
make such statements as “I don’t really see color, I
just see children” or “I don’t care if they’re red, green,
or polka dot, I just treat them all like children.” How­
ever, these attempts at colorblindness mask a “dy­
sconscious racism,” an “uncritical habit of mind that
justifies inequities and exploitation by accepting the
existing order of things as given.” This is not to sug­
gest that these teachers are racist in the conventional
sense, they do not consciously deprive or punish Afri­
can American children on the basis of their race, but
at the same time they are not unconscious of the ways
in which children are disadvantaged in the classroom.
Their “dysconsciousness” comes into play when they
fail to challenge the status quo, when they accept the
given as the inevitable. (p. 31-32)
These teachers believe that to notice or call attention to difference and how that difference has altered who we are in the world, is somehow worse than ignoring it. Colorblindness allows people to maintain an illusion that race has not affected who we are. Promoting colorblindness in the classroom both ensures that students (and teachers) will never critique race in meaningful ways while also maintaining the belief that it is good that race does not matter. Engaging in color-blindness is significantly problematic. We argue that race does matter and that meaningful reflections on how and in what ways it matters are always better than living an illusion of imagined equality. Asking students to engage in color-blindness or race-neutrality ensures that they will not examine the impact race has on their daily lives (Warren, 1999, p. 189).

Promoting color-blindness in the basic course (and beyond) ignores the historical content of racism, and how race has shaped who we are in society. Sleeter (1996) explains that “white people in general find it difficult to appreciate the impact of colonization and slavery on both oppressed groups as well as whites; we tend to prefer to regard everyone as descendants of immigrants” (p. 140). If communication educators continue to ignore the impact of colonization and slavery on the power structures of today, we will allow our white students and students of color to continue to believe that privilege based on skin color does not exist, that individuals have an equal opportunity when it comes to social, political, and economic promise. Color-blindness in the basic course makes race, and real talk about race, taboo; that is the most destructive thing we, as communication educators, can do.
CONCLUSIONS: POSSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF WHITENESS

Scene 1 Revisited

The single most important thing Whiteness Studies has provided me with is a sense of responsibility. This responsibility manifests itself in two key ways. First, I must approach my life differently. I must speak responsibly—I must never think that my voice is free from the historical legacy of racism and it is my job to deconstruct that which I say. I must listen responsibly—I must always question the stories I hear about myself and others. I must always ask how race is affecting what I hear and how I think about what I hear. I must always (re)evaluate what I encounter to make sure that I am consistent in my attempts to resist the influences of whiteness. Second, I must approach my teaching differently. No more is it sufficient to ask the person of color to come in and lecture on culture, providing the exotic for my white students' eyes. When I did that, Boris' message was turned into a day off—a story time about the bread lines in Russia or some other tale that lost the real power of his message. I also said something about myself and my own whiteness — I told my students that I was unable to talk to them about culture. Perhaps they learned that whiteness was not a culture, which then demanded a 'cultured' person to come in a talk to them. Perhaps I taught them that my whiteness was not part of racism and the system of privileges and disadvantage of which Boris spoke. Perhaps, worst of all, they learned that racism was not their problem — that it was an
interesting issue tied in a package of stories that never had to do with their own lives, their own actions, their own racist everyday behaviors. So today, I don't ask a Boris to come talk to my students — I tell them this story and make culture and whiteness about all of us.

Scene 2 Revisited

I used to treat all my students the same, as if color did not matter, as if difference was a bad thing. I used to ask my students to examine cultures other than their own. So, what have I learned from Whiteness Studies? Whiteness Studies have given me a new lens with which to examine racism. I no longer ask my students to 'gaze' upon the cultural other, instead I ask my students to 'gaze' inward and understand what role they play in the system of oppression. I ask my students to understand how whiteness is related to cultural studies and the impact that it has on their communicative practices. I have also learned that these discussions are not easy; they are complex and often uncomfortable (for my students and for myself). However, if I continue to ignore or avoid the impact whiteness has on racism, then I continue to perpetuate racism. If I continue to ignore my whiteness, I will continue to encourage my students to engage in color-blind practices, color evasion, and presenting the cultural other as exotic. This is equivalent to perpetuating the system of racism — to choose not to change.

The basic course has the potential to reach every student at a college or university. It is, therefore, an ideal place for a critical examination of whiteness. In this essay, we offer four modifications to the basic
course through work in Whiteness Studies that encourage an anti-racist pedagogy. A re-examination of the methods used to approach cultural communication in the basic communication course through a move from the margins to the center is necessary to consider how the privilege of the center works to maintain its power. The second modification attempts to explore the danger of turning cultural communication into a study of the exotic and mysterious cultural others. Next, in the basic course we need to explore how the rhetoric of the individual reinforces inequality. The logic that we are all individuals, which underlines much of the work in the basic course (look at people as individuals — don’t stereotype), perpetuates the illusion of a pre-established equality, as if race has not had an effect on our collective social world. Finally, we argue that engaging in color-blindness sends the message that being a person of color is a problem that should be overlooked or ignored in order to ensure equality.

The basic course is an appropriate and needed space to expose our students to the systemic nature of racism. Students need to learn that racism is a system that consists of political, economic, and social components. American racism started with the colonization of North America, and continued with slavery. Racism and whiteness have become so “naturalized” that many basic course instructors and students do not question whether they are actually acting in racist ways or how they might be working to promote inequality. It is far too easy for students to ignore their complicity in our racist society. Through communication theory and an anti-racist pedagogy, educators can investigate the impact whiteness has on our communicative practices as well
as engage in a concentrated effort at locating and critiquing whiteness as the social/cultural center of power. An anti-racist pedagogy enables students and instructors to engage in a dialogue that deconstructs the existing power and privilege that is so invisible in our society. Through Whiteness Studies, educators and students in the basic course will no longer study the 'other' without examining the taken for granted normalcy of the culture of power. This is a much needed improvement because students and educators may begin to understand that "existential reality is not the product of divine intervention (that is, "the way things just are"); instead social reality is made by men and women" (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 35). Because racism and systems of privilege are socially constructed, they can also be deconstructed. We suggest that reconstructing our understandings of whiteness is a critical first step towards altering the basic course in the interest of greater equality and justice.

At the risk of ending with easy answers to the complex array of problems detailed above, we also worry that ending without any tangible possibilities for classroom practice might leave one feeling a bit overwhelmed. As a beginning to opening up conversations on the possible ways one might go about undermining the invisibility of whiteness in the basic course, we would like to share three brief examples of how we have worked to incorporate this material into our classrooms. First, we begin our courses by framing our teaching of the basic course with standpoint theory, establishing each class member of the course as always already a product and producer of culture. Thus, we begin with a locating of our voices in culture, noting that each of us
have varying degrees of cultural power based on age, race, gender, sexuality, education, and other factors. As white teachers, we locate our positions as educated, as institutional agents granted with the power to grade, and as individuals from the culture of power. This is further extended by the first speech assignment where we ask our students to again examine their own cultural positions through speeches of introduction.

Second, we both include Peggy McIntosh’s essay “White Privilege, Male Privilege” as required reading, asking students to critically investigate her claims. While this is often students’ first interaction with an academic essay, we find they generally are able to work through the essay in mature and sophisticated ways. Specifically, we ask students to consider the 46 privileges McIntosh lists based on her whiteness. With which of these do students agree? Which do they find problematic? After a class conversation on the essay, we ask students to generate their own lists of privilege. We find that reading this essay and doing this classroom work allow the conversation of culture to focus both inward toward the cultural center, while also making space to examine racism as a system.

A final example of interrupting the reproduction of whiteness in our classrooms lies in our own cultural confessions (Kanpol, 1998). Barry Kanpol (1998) argues that confession is a pedagogical tool that creates the conditions for the possibility of critical transformation in the classroom — an owning up of our own responsibilities in resisting the maintenance of systems of inequality (p. 67). In other words, we narrate our own experiences in coming to see ourselves as participants and police of the systems of racial dominance. We
narrate our struggle. We tell our students what it means to see ourselves as oppressors. We do this in order to both “own up” to our privilege, as well as attempt to create ground upon which our students can stand as they begin their own journey of self-reflection. As white teachers, this process of self-narration is an ethical choice in service of creating possibility for our students and ourselves.

REFERENCES


Whiteness Matters


Rethinking Our Approach to the Basic Course: Making Ethics the Foundation of Introduction to Public Speaking

Jon A. Hess

Six years ago I published an article in the Basic Communication Course Annual on teaching ethics in the basic course (Hess, 1993). During the ensuing years I have reflected on that article in light of my own attempts — both as a classroom instructor and as a basic course director — to help my students simultaneously develop goal effectiveness and ethical responsibility in their public speaking. My experience has left me satisfied that the information contained within that article is very useful. At the same time, however, I have become convinced that if educators are to truly do justice to ethics in the basic public speaking course, we need to go a step beyond the approach I outlined earlier. That approach was grounded in the assumption that ethics is one among many topics that need to be considered in the basic course. But, research, experience, and listening during the time that has passed since that article was published leads me to believe that this approach underrepresents the role of ethics in public speaking. Rather than embedding ethics into the course structure as a modular topic, I believe that instructors need to embed the other topics into an ethical framework to give ethics proper treatment in the course.
This change is not antithetical to the approach outlined in the previous article, but rather, focuses on a more fundamental issue that was not examined in that article. This article presents a perspective that is different than the one that was employed in the previous article, but one in which all the ideas from the previous article can comfortably be placed. So, instead of addressing how to add ethics as a topic that might have been otherwise missed, this article examines what the role of ethics should be in the course. In this article, I describe the “effectiveness” approach to public speaking instruction and discuss dangers of that approach, propose a reversal in perspective (an ethics-based approach), and I discuss how this change can be accomplished within the confines of the standard basic course. To help make these ideas more concrete, one basic course is reviewed as a possible example of how such an approach might be implemented.

**PUBLIC SPEAKING AS TECHNIQUE**

*State of the art.* Public speaking is frequently taught as a skills-based course with the primary goal of increasing students’ effectiveness as speakers. This focus often guides both the approach textbook authors take in writing the texts (Hess & Pearson, 1992) and mainstream instruction in public speaking (e.g., Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1991; Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999). Educators often focus their discussion of the course on whether the skills taught in public speaking classes are the skills students will need when they take jobs after college (e.g., Johnson & Szczu-
pakiewicz, 1987; Wolvin & Corley, 1984; Sorenson & Pearson, 1980). In such discussions, the issue is what will make students effective in requisite tasks. The perception that public speaking is a class which primarily functions to help students with the mechanics of giving a speech is reflected in the fact that public speaking is often labeled as a "skills class." Reflecting not just on the introductory course, but the entire discipline, Jensen (1997) lamented, "We have excessively focused on achieving effectiveness — on convincing, converting skeptics, winning the debates — without balancing these aims with the ethical commitment" (p. 4).

When public speaking is taught with a focus on skills and effectiveness, the content is taught largely as technique, not as philosophy. The focus on technique means that public speaking is taught as a systematic procedure by which a task is accomplished, rather than as a body of knowledge in the sense of a liberal art. Students are taught which behaviors elicit which responses from listeners or lead to which perceptions among audience members. Successful speakers are then able to discern relevant variables that may inform which behavior choice will lead to the best result, and then perform the most effective behaviors. Such a model resembles the ideal of corporate training, where employees are taught how to master a certain skill, such as the use of a computer program or how to effectively handle a call from a dissatisfied customer (e.g., Rafaeli, 1989a, 1989b). Enriching the person's mind by developing a philosophy about that task is not a concern in such situations; instead, trainers are interested in enabling trainees to properly wield the tools of their trade in a way that functions most effectively for the organization.
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The danger of technique. Teaching public speaking as technique may be useful in corporate settings, but the approach is not ideal in a college or university setting for three reasons. Of greatest importance among these reasons is that it is not an accurate representation of the subject matter being taught. As discussed later, public speaking is intrinsically a moral activity; almost every aspect of the process involves ethical questions that must be addressed. Partitioning the moral element into one module misrepresents the nature of the subject and makes it likely that the philosophical questions will go largely unexamined.

A second problem with teaching public speaking as technique is that it increases the possibility that students, no matter how well-intentioned, will use the techniques they learn to harmful ends. Arnett (1996) labeled the individual who has learned a set of skills but not the philosophy to guide their use a "technician of communication" (p. 341). His concern, derived from Jacques Ellul’s warning about twentieth century mentality, is that a technician fails to comprehend the deeper and important questions guiding our behaviors. Such people are dangerous, even when trying to do good. Arnett illustrated what can happen when people practice technique without adequate philosophical understanding through the following examples: “Carl Rogers confided that he was pleased to be a Rogers instead of a Rogerian therapist. Can one imagine Karl Marx’s contempt for the bloated and corrupt bureaucracy of the former Soviet Union, as that dream failed from the overconfidence of a system led by technicians?” (p. 343).
A third limitation of teaching public speaking as technique is that it leaves the class vulnerable to the criticism that it is not worthy of a place in higher education; this criticism may be politically damaging to departments and the discipline. In general, communication departments have less credibility and influence across the academy than many of the longer-established departments in the social sciences and humanities such as psychology, sociology, and English. All departments compete for increasingly scarce resources, making it vital for any department's well-being that it not be seen as weak or unimportant. Yet, our discipline has been criticized for being both of those. Perhaps the best-known and most broadly sweeping attack of this sort was Alan Fischler's (1989) scathing indictment of the communication discipline in an essay published as an point of view essay in the Chronicle of Higher Education a decade ago. In this essay, Fischler suggested that discipline's subject matter is trivial and that it makes no significant contribution to the academy. Although communication scholars argued that these criticisms were unjust (e.g., Osborn, 1990), bad press like this essay is harmful to our discipline. To increase academic credibility, we must impress our colleagues that our research and teaching make a significant contribution to theory and to students' experience.

Public speaking is currently taught in many high schools. The ideas presented in most college-level textbooks are not only written near high-school levels (Schneider, 1991), the ideas presented in the typical text (Hess & Pearson, 1992) are no more intellectually sophisticated than what high school seniors can master. The fundamental skills taught are not particularly diffi-
cult — everyone practices them on a daily basis. Thus, it is easy for students and colleagues to see public speaking as a class more suited to high school than college. It is not surprising that by some accounts students see the basic course primarily as busywork (Weaver & Cotrell, 1992). What gives public speaking the capacity to contribute to the college experience is not so much the chance to practice the techniques in a formal setting, but rather, the chance to learn and understand the philosophy driving the application of these techniques, and the ideas that can inform students why people should make certain choices.

Situating public speaking as an form of applied ethics instead of a skills class does not exactly solve all political problems. After all, our discipline wishes no more for its basic course to be seen as a branch of the philosophy department than as a training ground for remedial skills. But, by helping students develop deeper understanding of the topic than just basic techniques, the course does enter the conversation about its own worthiness from a stronger position. Our discipline's place in the academy is part of an ongoing discourse throughout higher education, and the enrichment of the basic course's foundations might be one way to enhance the contributions we can claim.

If we wish to most accurately portray the essence of public speaking in our classes, the technique-driven approach is insufficient. If we hold true to the liberal arts mission of higher education — helping enrich students' minds — then instructing students what technique to apply under which circumstances fails to deliver. If we want to establish credibility for the course and our discipline, such an approach is not the way to earn it. The
foregoing points are not intended to devalue skills or argue that public speaking should become a course on philosophy. Skills are important, but they serve humanity best when they follow as praxis from a deeper understanding of guiding philosophies. This article is not a call to abandon skills, but rather, a call to enhance them through enriched grounding.

ETHICS AS A FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

The contention that the basic public speaking course should be taught from an ethical perspective is likely to raise some questions. Because it is the central theme in this article, a more careful examination of the arguments behind it is necessary. This claim is based on concerns for subject accuracy, responsible use of power, the mission of liberal arts education, and meeting student needs.

Subject accuracy. Perhaps the most compelling reason to teach public speaking from an ethical perspective is that it is more accurate to the subject than the effectiveness approach. Public speaking is a moral activity, so teaching it as amoral inaccurately portrays the nature of the act.

When differentiating moral from amoral situations, ethicists typically apply two criteria: choice and effect (Bormann, 1981; Johannesen; 1990; Nilsen, 1966). If a person’s action is not voluntarily chosen, then it is not usually considered to fall within the realm of morality (thus the common vernacular, “moral choice”). Kant, for instance, believed that ethics did not apply to animals.
because they lack the ability to reason, and thus, they cannot make ethical choices (Rachels, 1999). In the eyes of most philosophers, it makes no sense to judge someone morally on something that the person had no control over. As Bormann (1981) wrote, "The inevitable is not ethical. We ought not hold people responsible for communication over which they had no control" (p.269). There are, however, many choices people make that are not moral issues. For example, the choice of which outfit to wear on a given day is not a moral choice, but rather a practical one. Moral issues arise only when the choices people make have some impact on the world around them. Wearing a particular article of clothing could become a moral choice if it has a symbolic meaning that others would recognize or if it violates a dress code at work. In those cases, the action's effect on others transforms the choice from amoral to moral.

Applying the criteria of choice and effect to public speaking suggests that public speaking is inherently a moral undertaking. At every step of speech preparation and delivery, speakers make choices. These choices range from how much research to do, what material to include or exclude, whether or not to reveal affiliations with interest groups, or whether to use certain emotional appeals or delivery styles. All of these choices impact other people. With public speaking, the impact is multiplied by the number of people involved. While interpersonal or small group contexts involve no more than a handful of people, speeches are commonly delivered to twenty-five or more listeners, and audiences numbering hundreds or thousands are not unusual. It is not surprising that many early thinkers considered speech and ethics to be part of the same subject (Arnett,
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1990). For example, Aristotle viewed public speaking as a practical philosophy, and concerned himself with what constituted virtue in such a philosophy (Aristotle, antiquity/1932, antiquity/1962). To the founders of our discipline, public speaking was as much (if not more) about moral issues as it was about effectiveness.

To argue that public speaking is inherently a moral activity is not to say that everything a speaker does has moral value. There are many choices that speakers make which are not moral choices. However, the combined effect of all a speaker's choices is moral in nature, as are many of the individual choices along the way. Speakers need to have enough awareness of ethical issues that they can identify where these ethical decision points lie.

Responsible Use of Power. It can be easy to overlook how powerful of an act public speaking is. Yet one only has to think of the effect public speaking has had in history to realize it is a potent force in human society. If the pen is mightier than the sword, the voice is equally mighty. Just in the last century, the speeches of Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and Boris Yeltzin have influenced social and political history; on a more mundane level, many people have been inspired to action by popular speakers like Anthony Robbins and Stephen Covey.

Given the ability public speaking has to affect many people's lives, it is irresponsible to teach the skill without careful attention to proper use. Speeches can be used for the betterment of society, or they may be harmful to many people, even those who are not in the listening audience. Teaching students to be more effective in their speaking without any attention to the common
good runs the risk of contributing to some of society’s ills. If forced to choose, it would be better for educators to train students who understand the role of their public speaking in the common good and work toward that end despite mediocre content and delivery skills, than to produce speakers who are narcissistic manipulators with refined, polished, and influential speaking style.

Teaching public speaking from the perspective of effectiveness is dangerous not just because of the insufficient attention to ethical questions, but also because of the implication that ethics simply are not relevant. Johnson (1970) expressed concern that ethics be given more attention in public speaking classes because the most immoral speaker may not be the person who makes bad decisions, but rather, the one who fails to even consider the moral issues at hand. Todd-Mancillas (1987) wrote, “One of my greatest concerns is that we may well be helping an entire generation of students to presume the unimportance of asking fundamentally important questions about the rightness or wrongness of given communication strategies” (p. 12). Even if we fail to help students fully achieve the level of ethical understanding they need for public speaking, we at least need to help students shape the understanding that ethical concerns are a central component of public speaking. This understanding does not come from talking about ethics on a single occasion, but rather, from making it the perspective from which the material is addressed.

Mission of liberal arts education. Liberal arts institutions are often contrasted with technical schools, whose functions is to teach students the skills of a trade so that they can work in that selected career. It is the mission of the liberal arts university to develop students
minds and help them seek the good life. The goal of education is to help students learn how to think and to be able to provide intellectual leadership in their jobs and in society, not just to apprentice a craft (Arnett, 1992; Bloom, 1987; McMillan & Cheney, 1996; Schneider, 1998). For the mission of shaping students' minds rather than teaching a trade, focusing not on the skills for their own sake, but on the skills as the embodiment of philosophical stances, an ethically-guided approach to public speaking is more appropriate.

Student needs. In the past, moral philosophy was often the grand finale of a student's college experience. Bellah et al. (1985) noted that when American higher education was being formed, moral philosophy was what would be called a capstone class in today's vernacular — it integrated all their other course of study. Such is not the case in our current educational system. Many of today's college students take only one class on ethics, and some take none at all. Thus, it is safe to say that many students will not bring sophisticated ethical knowledge into their public speaking class, and they may not develop a sophisticated understanding of ethical issues pertaining to speech after they leave the class. Certainly there are many opportunities across the academy for students to develop ethical awareness and bring it into the public speaking class, but not all students will have taken advantage of those. So, if students are to develop their ethical expertise on speech-related topics, their time spent in the public speaking class may be essential.

The combination of these factors — accuracy, responsible use of power, the mission of liberal arts, and student needs — provides support for the idea of
teaching public speaking from an ethical perspective. The following section discusses how such an approach can be implemented in the classroom.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Teaching public speaking from an ethical perspective poses several challenges for the classroom instructor. The basic public speaking course is highly standardized across our discipline, a fact reflected in both surveys (e.g., Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1991; Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999) and in the texts themselves (Hess & Pearson, 1992). Many of the same topics are covered across classes (even if the proportion of the class devoted to it varies) and textbooks share remarkable similarity in both contents and approach. Many departments prescribe constraints for their basic course (whether it is faculty or teaching assistant-taught) to ensure consistency across sections. How then is an instructor to implement such a change?

The reversal in perspective, while significant in implication, can be carried out without need for wholesale reconstruction of the course. Implementing this philosophy requires not a change in topics covered, but rather, a change in the way the topics are approached. In 1998, the University of Missouri-Columbia restructured its basic course (Communication 75) to try to meet the objectives outlined in this paper. This section of this paper examines the basic format and instruction of Communication 75 as one example of how a course might be tailored to fit into an ethical framework.
Philosophy statement

The University of Missouri-Columbia offers approximately 33 sections of Communication 75 each semester. These classes share a common syllabus and text, as well as assignments and exams, but are taught independently by approximately 18 graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) each semester. The course is offered in three variations: regular sections, honors sections, and some sections dedicated to students majoring in business and public administration (B&PA). Honors sections assignments are the same as in regular sections, except for the first speech. The additional challenge in the honors version comes not from differences in topics, focus, or assignments, but through higher expectations and some more challenging variations on the regular assignments. The B&PA version uses the same syllabus, text, and exams as the other sections, but the speech assignments are tailored to public speaking in a business setting. Classroom activities (lecture, discussion, activities) are also focused on public speaking in organizational contexts rather than broader social contexts.

Before they arrive on campus, the GTAs are given a brief statement of the course philosophy to help them focus on an ethics-informed approach (see Appendix). This philosophy statement, also available to students on the course web page, outlines the course’s focus on “3Es” of ethics, effectiveness, and enjoyment, with the order of listing indicating priority. In brief, it states that class’s mission of helping students develop a conception of public speaking as an ethical activity, and within that
context considering issues of effectiveness. The last focus, enjoyment, is subordinate to the previous concerns, and simply suggests that public speaking can be an enjoyable activity, and it is desirable for instructors to help students start to enjoy giving speeches.

GTAs are given this philosophy statement in an Instructor’s Resource Manual created by the course director, and it is discussed in detail during fall orientation for all instructors. The philosophy is applied across all versions of the course. Even though the B&PA sections concentrate on public speaking in organizational settings instructors still try to help students see it first and foremost as a moral undertaking. Additionally, during the fall workshop, GTAs attend workshops on ethics in public speaking to increase their own knowledge of the subject. However, the course does not hold the philosophy that instructors need to begin their careers with extensive background in ethics. As long as they have a minimal level of competence, they can explore along with the students. The goal of the course is not as much to discover the final answer to all the questions (indeed, such an approach could be counterproductive), but to begin the process of discovery. So, if instructors have enough background to make an informed approach to the issues, they can further their own understanding as they teach the course.

Implementation in Lecture and Activities

Class instructors are encouraged to view the topics in the text from the perspective of the course philosophy statement. This can be facilitated by numerous texts which include an early chapter on ethics in public
speaking, a dramatic change from the page or two on ethics that was the norm in the early nineties (Hess, 1992). Instructors use the chapter on ethics as a platform from which the fundamentals can be introduced. This may entail emphasizing the role of ethics in public speaking, some useful theories of ethics, and a discussion of free speech. This introduction is designed to emphasize the role ethics plays in public speaking and provide the fundamentals that can be developed as the semester proceeds.

Identifying significant issues. After the ethics chapter, most textbooks have adequate coverage of how students can be more effective with their speaking, but contain minimal reference to ethical issues. So, instructors are asked to examine the moral dimensions of the various aspects of speech preparation and delivery in their lectures and activities. To illustrate some ethical issues instructors might address in class lecture, discussion, and activities, seven common topics are reviewed.

1. Topic selection and purpose of speech. One important ethical issue in this domain is the importance of the speech being given for the common good. The choices of what to talk about and how to approach the topic need to be driven not just by the speaker’s self-interest, but by consideration of what is in the audience member’s best interest.

2. Audience analysis and adaptation. Although there are numerous ethical issues pertaining to audience analysis and adaptation, one of the most interesting ones is adapting with integrity. Integrity refers to the act of discerning moral values and then adhering to them, even at personal risk (Carter, 1996). Audience
adaptation, the process of learning about audience characteristics and then making changes to suit that audience, is a process that might be at odds with speaker integrity. How can a speaker adapt both speech content and personal presentation without compromising integrity? What adaptations are acceptable, and under what conditions?

One Communication 75 instructor asks students to respond to the following case. It is designed to help students think about the issue of adapting with integrity, and begin to make their own judgments about what constitutes morally acceptable adaptation: "William Fulbright (of the Fulbright Scholarship) was an influential senator from Arkansas. He impressed members of Congress with his command of the English language. However, when Fulbright returned to Arkansas to speak with his constituents, mostly farmers, he would wear jeans and a flannel shirt and talk with a southern accent. How do you rate the ethical quality of his communication? Why do you rate it that way? Can he speak differently in Washington, D.C. and in rural Arkansas?" In answering this question, students must grapple with adaptations in both content and style, and determine what adaptations maintain integrity and what adaptations violate it.

3. Presentational aids. The ethical questions associated with presentational aids are many and varied. Most of the questions are specific to the presentational aid in question, or the way in which it is being used. It is often more difficult with presentational aids for students to comprehend the many ethical questions that
must be asked. Sometimes, it takes some examples to help them start thinking about the moral dimension.

As an example, consider the well-known 1968 photograph of Saigon police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan summarily executing a Viet Cong suspect during the Tet offensive. Nguyen is shown holding a gun to the head of the suspect, who is displaying a horribly anguished look on his face, knowing that he is just seconds from death. This photograph has been widely reproduced, even in communication textbooks (e.g., Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1989). Although there is no blood in the photograph, the victim's facial expression and the horror of the situation is enough to cause a strong negative emotional reaction in a sizeable portion of people who view the picture. Under what circumstances should this photograph be shown as a presentational aid? The emotional distraction obviously poses a possible threat to the effectiveness of a speech, but what about the ethical implications? Such a photograph may be offensive to one or more audience members. What topics, purposes, or situations justify such a graphic depiction? Should audience members be warned not to look if they think that viewing this image will be disturbing? Does the availability of alternative presentational aids make this picture more or less morally acceptable? Does the placement of this picture within the speech (at the beginning, middle, or end) make a difference? What if the picture is at the end and distracts students from the speech to follow? All of these are relevant ethical questions that students should ask when making choices about presentational aids. Those questions merely address the content of one photograph. There are an infinite array of

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other questions about presentational aids, covering both what is displayed and how it is used, that students must consider when making choices about aids so that their use of the visual channel is both effective and morally acceptable.

4. Conducting research. A tension exists between our country's belief in freedom of speech and the need for speakers to be well-versed on a subject. Overemphasizing the need for speaker expertise can repress challenges to authority and violates the First Amendment right to speak on any topic, but underemphasizing the need for speaker expertise can waste audience members time with inaccurate or obviously misguided commentary. Schwartzman (1987) suggests that speakers need to be competent, but not expert. This solution is sensible, but it can be difficult for students to operationalize. What criteria makes a person competent in an area? How do students know how much research they need to do to become competent, and how much, if any, do they have the right to expect from a speaker? Jensen (1997) suggests that freedom of expression is best judged by balancing both rights and responsibilities. Again, the values are easy to identify but difficult to determine. What responsibilities do people hold with regard to expertise? What are both the speaker's rights and the rights of the larger community?

5. Supporting material. It has long been said that "figures can't lie, but liars can figure" in reference to the fact that statistics can be manipulated to support almost any claim (e.g., Huff, 1954/1993). Textbooks do a good job telling students how to do research and make
their case using support materials to back up their claims, but what are the ethical questions? Many questions that texts raise under the heading of proper form are questions of both effectiveness and ethics. For instance, is an example typical or atypical? Presenting an atypical example as if it is typical leaves a speaker open to refutation (thus losing effectiveness) but it is also an act of low ethical quality. Likewise, ethical issues regarding support material can include quoting out of context, misleading with statistics, presenting hypothetical examples as real, choosing what information to omit from a speech, and more. A couple of the major ethical themes regarding support material are the fidelity of the information presented and the way this information affects the audience (Jensen, 1997).

6. Wording. Language choice is another significant point of ethical decision-making (Jensen, 1997). The use of a "trigger word" (a term that sparks an emotional reaction, such as "family values," or "pro-life") provides a good example. What ethical guidelines should constrain speaker's use of trigger words? Or, are any reactions the responsibility of audience members, who must control their feelings as part of proper listening? The question of responsibility is brought to life in a form that students can identify with by Michael J. Fox, whose character in the movie Back to the Future can always be emotionally manipulated by through the use of a derogatory trigger word.

Another significant issue with language is its lack of neutrality. Every term has connotations that bias it in some way. The difference between calling a person an
“anti-abortionist” instead of a “pro-lifer” are vast, despite the fact that both terms refer to someone who opposes abortion. What term should a person use for the military? “Military” implies a warlike organization more than does the term “service,” which suggests many of its civilian functions. Calling it the “defense” conjures something different than going to foreign soil and attacking enemy troops, which connotatively seems more like “offense.” In both of these examples, terms describing the military or people who oppose abortion, there is no word which describes the referent without introducing some type of bias. The speaker cannot describe such a subject with complete neutrality. It was his recognition of the fact that language conveys attitudes which led Mehrabian (1966) to study immediacy, construct which has spawned an extensive line of research by communication scholars on its impact in the classroom (e.g., Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Gorham, 1988). Speakers need to be aware of the implications of their language choice in shaping listener perceptions or fostering listener reactions.

7. Persuasion. Perhaps nowhere are ethics more important than in persuasion. It is the purpose of a persuasive speaker to have some effect on the listener, that is, to change her or him in some way. Such an intrusion into others’ lives carries a significant ethical responsibility. Philosophers have written much about the ethics of persuasion, with stances ranging from persuasion as an act of care to persuasion as an act of violence (e.g., Brockreide, 1972; Johannesen, 1990, Nilsen, 1966). It is most important for public speaking teachers to help students understand the importance of this responsibility. Questions of one- versus two-sided
approaches to persuasion are often presented as effectiveness questions, but often have stronger implications in ethics than efficacy. Can students differentiate persuasion from coercion, manipulation, and brainwashing? What should speakers do about information they discover during their research that is counter to their perspective? What degree of responsibility do speakers bear for audience perceptions, and what degree of responsibility do audiences hold for being insightful as to possible flaws in the speaker's argument (as in "buyer beware")? These are just a few of the many ethical issues inherent in persuasion.

Dialogue in community. Once an ethical question has been identified by the instructor or students, the challenge is how to best engage in dialogue on the subject. Addressing these questions requires coming to terms with two issues. First, educators must face the question of how much value judgment they offer. Few educators deem it appropriate to force their values upon students, yet the alternative of providing little or no value guidance seems equally unpalatable. One approach is to encourage students to come to their own value judgments, but for the instructor to require that they be able to articulate and critically evaluate reasons for those judgments. Barnes (1982) noted, "If values are not arbitrary, there must be reasons for them" (p. 8), and it is this set of underlying reasons that students need to comprehend.

Second, educators must consider the question of whether values are universal or whether they are individually- or culturally-determined. This issue is important because the educators' own views on whether
the conversation over values is moving toward uncovering a universal truth or toward each student finding their own independent truths will affect the ways in which the teacher influences the conversation in class. Scholars are not in agreement on this topic. Some theorists (e.g., Kidder, 1994; Rachels, 1999) suggest the promise of universal values, but others (e.g., Pointer & Young, 1997) express skepticism. Post-modern perspectives typically reject the notion of a single hegemonic metanarrative, instead favoring the co-existence of many guiding narratives (e.g., Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Regardless of whether future ethical theory settles on a set of universal values or suggests the impossibility of their existence, the present reality is that there is no consensus among scholars on a set of universally accepted values and standards. Thus, dialogue among students, who form the community in which the speeches exist, is the central ingredient to addressing ethical issues. Barnes (1982) argues for the centrality of dialogue in examining values, by noting that the refusal to engage in dialogue about value with others fails to take the other’s values seriously. For Barnes, values are neither individual nor social, but emerge when dialogue takes place among members of a community. It is in dialogue that moments of understanding take place and common meanings emerge (Cissna & Anderson, 1998). When educators address the moral face of public speaking, they must help the class grapple with issues for which they may not find easy answers and may not derive consensus. Although I have suggested some sample questions on different topics, it is the fact that there can be no easy list of ethical issues to address or ways to
respond which makes a "technician's" approach (Arnett, 1996) to the topic nonviable. Those samples were designed to stimulate thinking or begin a discussion, but they can only be a starting point, not a final destination.

In order for dialogue to flourish in a classroom setting, the class (led by the instructor) needs to be sensitive to different viewpoints in the class and foster comfort with that diversity. Makau (1997, 1998) suggests that mutual respect and equality, and ability to listen well are foundational for dialogue to occur. However, if dialogue truly takes place, she warns that students will test their ideas in ways they have not tried before, and that process may sometimes be uncomfortable. Such discomfort raises both philosophical and pedagogical issues. It is desirable because no enduring growth and change can take place without some degree (occasionally considerable) of discomfort. But, such discomfort can also create difficulties for instructors. It may express itself as hostility among class members, sometimes overt, and it may create stress and other problems from students. Addressing the manner in which class dialogue should unfold is one task of the classroom instructor, but dealing with hurt feelings or ripple effects of the class's ideas on a student's personal life may cross the boundaries of a teacher's role and responsibilities (Peterson, 1992). So, addressing questions of how much discomfort is created and how to best handle it (if at all) pose many questions not easily answered.

**Implementation in Assignments**

Communication 75 is designed so that the attention to ethics comes not from assignments about ethics, but
from attention to ethical dimensions of assignments that do not overtly focus on ethics. This is because the approach is to encourage students to view any given topic through an ethical lens, and to realize that ethics are inherent in any speech undertaking. The course includes four major speeches: a demonstration speech, an analysis speech, a group presentation, and a persuasive speech, in that order. Only in the persuasive speech are students required to explicitly address ethics as part of the assignment. For the other assignments, it is the responsibility of the course instructor to help students discern — through lecture, discussion, and class activities — the ethical issues that are inherent in the work.

The attention to ethics in the persuasive speech is not found in the spoken presentation itself, but rather, in an accompanying report. The persuasive speech is the final assignment, and thus the longest, best developed speech a student gives. To help students make this speech their capstone project for the semester and so that students must demonstrate knowledge of how and why they made their choices, they are required to write a strategy report while developing this speech. This paper is graded and returned to students before they give the speech, giving them time to make improvements based on feedback from the instructor.

In the persuasive speech assignment, students are reminded that "Your goal in persuasive speaking is that audience members, with full knowledge of all relevant information, voluntarily choose the perception or behavior you advocate." The strategy report asks students to consider two ethical questions. First, they are asked to evaluate the ethical quality of their speech's purpose.
Answering this question requires both an awareness of what ethical decisions they made in regard to their topic selection, but also an ability to defend their choice with good reasons. Second, they are asked to evaluate the ethical quality of the strategies they will use to accomplish their objectives. This question requires that students identify the ethical nature of a variety of decision-points they face in preparing the speech and trying to accomplish their objectives, and, as before, explain their choices with good reasons. For both of the questions, students must be able to demonstrate compliance with the aforementioned goal statement. In so doing, it is the intention of the assignment to encourage students to place their focus on the ethical questions they face as they work on matters of effectiveness.

Critique

The description of Communication 75 was included in this article to illustrate how an abstract rationale (ethical perspective) could be translated into course content. Still, it is natural to ask whether this course design has been effective in accomplishing its goals. A few remarks on this issue are in order, although they are kept brief because the purpose of the article is to develop a vision, not to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular course. The remarks here simply address the question of how well this course seems to have fulfilled that vision and where it could do better.

Because Communication 75's change in philosophy was accompanied by changes in text and assignments, no empirical data could be collected that would determine whether the new perspective was responsible for
changing outcomes. Beside, many of these changes have more to do with long-term perceptual and behavior changes than specific outcomes during the semester. Anecdotal evidence does suggest that the change in philosophy has had at least some of the intended effect. Interviews with instructors who have taught the course under both the effectiveness- and the ethics-based models suggest that the revisions have helped students make strides in the direction of increased awareness of ethical issues and responsibility, and that speeches seem to be more ethically responsible. On the other hand, it is not clear the degree to which students fully understand and appreciate the role ethics plays in public speaking. So, there is undoubtedly room for progress.

How might the implementation be improved? Supplemental readings on ethics and public speaking might further develop students' understanding in this area. Such readings could either be articles about ethics, such as chapters from ethics texts or books like Jensen (1997) or Jaksa and Pritchard (1994), articles about ethical controversies that might serve as discussion stimuli (e.g., Alter, 1995), or writings that draw on ethical principles and require the reader to examine the moral values when examining the work. For example, Troup (1999) reported that basic course students at Duquesne University read Thomas Paine's Common Sense as a way of examining philosophical issues pertaining to public speaking. This extra attention might further students' awareness of ethical dimensions and depth of thought on the topic.
CONCLUSION

Approaching the introductory public speaking course from an ethical perspective does not require abandoning the standard course format or making a radical departure from what had been taught before. What it requires is a change in the perspective from which the same topics are covered. When instructors change approach the class from a different standpoint, changes in lecture, discussion, and activities will naturally follow. Instructors need not be experts in ethics to start implementing these changes; they can learn and develop along with the students. Students sometimes find it empowering to know that the instructor does not have every answer and is accompanying them on a journey of discovery. Although it may take instructors some time and effort to rethink their course in this manner, making this change can pay dividends in better representation of the subject matter, better fulfilling the mission of the university, strengthening the credibility of the course, and — most important — contributing to better social leaders.

REFERENCES


Ethical Foundation for the Basic Course


**BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL**


ENDNOTES

1 By skills-based, I refer to courses that focus on the mechanics of giving a speech—how to learn about an audience, what factors are part of a polished delivery style, how to use emotional appeals, etc. The characterization of the basic course as commonly being skill-based, comes from two major sources noted in the article. First, content analyses of textbooks by Hess and Pearson (1992) and Hess (1992) suggest that introductory public speaking texts focus most heavily on the essentials of effective content and delivery. Further, these analyses reveal that ethics receive comparatively little attention in texts, although it should be noted that today's texts seem to devote considerably more attention to ethics than their early-nineties editions did. Second, regular surveys of the basic course (e.g., Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1985; Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1991; Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999) reveal that topics such as informative and persuasive speaking, audience analysis, delivery, outlining, and listening are reported as most commonly receiving the most attention in class. Although this finding does not serve as indisputable proof that ethics is not a major focus in many classes, the omission of ethics from reports of topics receiving class time prompted Gibson, Hanna, and Huddleston (1985) to comment that its conspicuous absence. They noted that its omission “...provide[s] interesting, if not puzzling, questions about instructional priorities” (p. 287).

2 It would be difficult for any change in the course to lead to the perception of public speaking as a course in applied ethics, because the skill component of the course is too essential. Adopting an ethical perspective provides a richer perspective, but it is still a perspective about a certain skill.

3 For example, in the honors sections students are required to match topics with another speaker on the persuasive speech so that someone else will give an opposing perspective on the same topic. This requirement not only motivates students to prepare their speeches more thoroughly, but it also eliminates “easy speeches” on topics that have no real opposition (e.g., wear a seatbelt, do not drive drunk, practice safe sex, etc.).
APPENDIX

Philosophy Statement for Communication 75

In Communication 75, we want to offer the highest quality introduction to public speaking possible. It is our belief that a combination of textbook readings, speaking practice, and analytic/critical reflection exercises give students the best opportunity to make progress towards improving their knowledge and skills in public speaking.

Just as a speech must be guided by a sense of purpose, so too must our class. This purpose addresses three basic questions: (1) Why do we set the course up this way? (2) What should the substance of the course be? (3) How do we translate these ideas into action? In our class, this purpose is as follows:

| We want our students to develop excellence as both producers and consumers of public speaking. This excellence is defined by three characteristics: ethics, effectiveness, and enjoyment. Students are best served in Communication 75 by pursuing excellence through an incremental approach and by developing good habits. |

Objective: Excellence as both produce and consumer

Many public speaking classes are designed to teach students to be good speakers. This is indeed a necessary
component of a public speaking course, but it is by itself insufficient. Our mission at the university is to produce competent citizens capable of governing themselves in a democratic manner. Because public speaking is so central to the process of governance, it is one of the most vital elements of a publicly-subsidized education. However, as responsible citizens in a free society, we must be first and foremost capable consumers of such rhetoric. We need to listen to political statements and other available information and then enact appropriate responses, whether that is communicating with legislators, voting, or taking some other action. Without a sufficient population of people with such skills, a democratic society cannot survive. It is our mission in the public speaking classroom to help instill a sense of this responsibility on students and help them develop the skills necessary for them to do this.

Pursuing excellence as a producer of public speeches involves all the usual elements -- audience analysis and adaptation, appropriate ethical knowledge, research skills, organization, delivery, etc. Pursuing excellence as a consumer of public speeches entails good listening skills, critical thinking, evaluation of content and sources, ability to respond in appropriate manner, and other related skills.

**Focus: 3e's of excellence**

Helping students achieve excellence in public speaking requires them to master three elements: speaking ethically, speaking effectively, and enjoying public speaking (the order of listing is not accidental). An explanation of each follows:
Ethics. Ethicists typically differentiate a moral question (e.g., "Should I lie to my teacher?") from an amoral question (e.g., "Should I eat my french fries before my hamburger, or should I eat them together?") based on several factors, most notably choice and effect. If the issue affects at least one other person and if the actor has a choice in the matter it is typically considered to be a moral question. Public speaking, by its nature, effects many people, and speakers have a range of choice about how to prepare and deliver their speeches. Thus, ethical issues are at the forefront of all aspects of public speaking.

But ethics are more central to public speaking than just the fact that a speech is a morally-charged entity. Ron Arnett, in a complex and intriguing argument (Arnett, 1990) argues that communication ethics is the foundation of our discipline. Communication ethics, he notes, is a practical philosophy (characterized by a concern for the common good, emphasis on practicing virtuous behaviors, and worked out in specific contexts). This philosophy should guide all that we do as communicators, serving as the guideline for our choices and actions. It is this foundation in practical philosophy that protects against the danger of overemphasis on technique, or from over-reliance on style and image.

Ethics are often seen merely as rules that restrict our choices of behavior. Nothing could be further from the truth of ethics’ nature. Ethics are the ideals that allow human social organizations to exist. Shames (1989) uses the analogy of a baseball game: without the rule that you must hit the ball within the foul lines a batter would have a greater range of options in any given at-bat. But without such rules, the game could not
exist. So the rules governing the game function to make the game possible more than restricting choices.

It is of the highest importance that we help students to see the moral dimensions to all that they do as a public speaker (and how ethics make it possible for the public speaking situation to exist in the first place), help them understand how their choices should first stem from underlying philosophies of right and wrong, and steer them to ask “What should I do?” instead of “What can I do?” This is the essence of public speaking that functions for the common good, not just for the narcissistic pursuit of self-gain. We would do a far better service to produce students who are mediocre speakers and listeners but who focus their efforts on the common good, than to produce students who are highly effective speakers and listeners, but who use their skills to be manipulators of others as they pursue their own selfish agenda.

Effectiveness. Within the domain of ethical speech, the most important issue is effectiveness--how can speakers and listeners use their skills to achieve their desired ends. All the traditional elements of a public speaking course are designed to help students increase effectiveness. The central issue here is cause and effect: if a speaker or listener does a certain behavior, what effect will it have? Is that the best way to achieve the goal?

Enjoyment. While rarely discussed in a public speaking class, this element should never be left out. Giving a really good speech is a very enjoyable experience. Audience members are attentive, excited, and generate their own enthusiasm for the topic that pervades room and dominates the atmosphere. Even after
the speech is over it lives on in the audience members and has some effect on their lives, often even on the lives of people who weren't there.

Not only is enjoyment the byproduct of a good speech, it is also a component of one. Not much is worse than watching a speaker who clearly wants nothing more than for the speech to be over. When a speaker enjoys the address, however, that feeling of enthusiasm makes the audience's experience significantly better as well. We need to be constantly working at helping students see how fun giving a speech can be and to feeling comfortable enough giving a speech that they begin to enjoy it and even look forward to giving future speeches.

Implementation: Incremental method and developing habits

Two basic principles guide our method of teaching public speaking. First, students should learn the materially incrementally. Second, while students won't master everything in one semester, it is important that they develop the right habits.

Incremental method. The incremental method is based on the notion that students cannot learn everything at once and that skill development is a process that doesn't happen instantly. The course is set up to help students master portions at a time. This is reflected in several aspects of the course. First, the material (in readings, lecture, and class activity) is broken into several segments, each of which is followed by a speech that emphasizes those skills. As students proceed, the skills build on each other. The focus for each speech includes all the skills from the previous ones.
plus a new emphasis. Second, the length of speeches increases as the course progresses. This is designed not only to encourage students to develop more substantial speeches but is also necessitated by the increasing expectations. The final speech is the longest and it gives students the opportunity to wrap the class up with one final masterpiece.

As an instructor, you want to focus on helping students master the new material and on relating that material to what they've already learned. When grading speeches, you should only judge them on the topics covered to that point in the semester.

*Developing habits.* While it is unreasonable to expect students to become polished speakers in one class, it is quite reasonable to help them develop the right habits. These habits will enable them to continue to improve and refine their speaking skills as they continue to give speeches beyond the classroom. Policies you make about use of presentational aids, amount of notes, what outlines should look like, or anything else should be designed to push students to develop the habits that will serve them well in future speaking.
What's Basic About the Basic Course?
Enriching the Ethosystem as a Corrective for Consumerism

Roy Schwartzman, Ph.D.

The basic course offers an ideal opportunity to examine how the study of communication per se is justified. Since the introductory course — be it public speaking or a hybrid of public speaking and other topics — represents the gateway into communication study for students, the impressions formed in this course play a major role in how students conceive of the field as a whole. If the basic course is basic in any sense other than bearing the lowest course number, it must occupy a central place in equipping students with the skills essential to effective communication. In this last sense, it is particularly urgent to ask and answer the question: What's basic about the basic course?

Too often, basic courses are debased, sinking to the bottom of the academic hierarchy because they are considered under-theorized, "mere skills" courses, especially if they are performance-oriented (Cronin and Glenn, 1991). Thus "basic" devolves into "base." In the laudable attempt to prove the indispensability of oral communication, advocates for the basic course may buy into a commercial metaphoric framework, arguing that educators can produce useful products that have market value. This essay explores to what extent the basic course should appeal to market-based demands for...
better oral communicators. Does the attempt to “sell” oral communication shortchange some of the moral values that could invigorate the basic course as an important part of education for responsible citizenship? To narrow the territory a bit, attention will focus on the rationale for studying public speaking. The first section provides context by noting the prevalence and implications of an economic, market-centered view of higher education. Discussion then focuses on the ethosystem as a value-based framework that could supplement a market orientation and perhaps provide a fuller understanding of the educational process operant in basic communication courses. The ethosystem takes the form of moral considerations typically omitted or glossed over in communication pedagogy that relies on economically based strategies. By recognizing and emphasizing the components of the ethosystem, the basic communication course can occupy its rightful place at the core of education for responsible democratic citizenship.

MARKET FORCES THAT INFORM EDUCATION

The Lone(ly) Competitor

The image of the educated person as a lone thinker permeates American educational philosophy. Even when practical experience has been lauded, it historically tends to have been treated as individual accomplishment rather than service rendered in partnership with others. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s 1837 address “The American Scholar” proclaimed a declaration of indepen-
Ethosystem Corrects Consumerism
dence from "the courtly muses of Europe" (Emerson in Mead, 1970, p. 29). In this manifesto of free thought, the independent thinker remained detached from the social environment. Far from being embedded in a human community where knowledge claims are contested and negotiated, Emerson's scholar was a lone thinker in accord with "the new importance given to the single person" (Emerson in Mead, 1970, p. 29). Instead of emphasizing ties with the community at large and obligations to it, Emerson asked whether "the chief disgrace in the world" were "not to be an unit; — to be reckoned one character; . . . but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south?" (Emerson in Mead, 1970, pp. 29-30) While Emerson does raise legitimate fears about conformity and generalization, his remedy portrayed the scholar as a self-contained unit whose reciprocal relationships with peers and surroundings are neither discussed nor developed. Emerson's silence on obligations to the community leaves unanswered the crucial question of how intellectual pursuits can improve and be improved by the experiences of others.

Knefelkamp and Schneider (1997) identify the "solitary individual, detached from specific social contexts or obligations" as the predominant view of the learner in contemporary educational philosophy (p. 331). The individualistic intellectual ideal infuses the perspective of "weak democracy," which addresses social problems by invoking the good intentions of "the privatized individual" (Lisman, 1998, p. 94). In weak democracy, academic endeavors will be justified and evaluated
based on their contribution to "individual development at the expense of the development of community and the common good" (Lisman, 1998, p. 95). In this vein, some basic course texts list the benefits of public speaking in terms of personal enrichment. "You," presumably the singular reader, will learn techniques useful in personal relationships, acquire marketable skills, and gain confidence (eg., Gregory, 1999, pp. 2-4; DeVito, 2000, pp. 3-4). Certainly there need be no tradeoff between personal achievement and community development, yet the speaker's advancement is not measured by yardsticks that include obligations to others. Thus the tendency to emphasize personal development often bypasses the social roots of persistent problems, such as inequitable distribution of resources, that squelch some voices (Lisman, 1998, p. 7).

Focus on the individual shapes a learning environment where "an orientation toward others is necessarily discouraged" (Howard, 1998, p. 24). Free thought has been equated with intellectual independence, but the image of the independent thinker can become its own caricature: the solipsistic intellectual. Knefelkamp and Schneider (1997) caution that "an educational ethos of unencumbered individualism has a very high cost in the neglect and diminishment of democratic society" (p. 333). This high price might be exacted by framing individual success in economic terms.

**Illusory Consumer Empowerment**

Although much ink has been spilled to proclaim that students should be considered customers (e.g., Rinehart,
1993; Sallis, 1992; Seymour, 1993; Cornesky et al., 1992), less attention has been paid to delineating the kinds of customers who inhabit higher education. Student-customers rarely drive educational improvements because many are satisfied with the least demanding curriculum available for the dollar (Creech, 1994). In the marketplace, customers already know what they want. They have very clear ideas of what constitutes excellence. But some customers simply shop the sale racks, settling for the cheapest product that suits immediate purposes. Some students do shop for quality, and they know that rigorous standards ultimately equip them for challenges beyond the classroom. The bargain basement students, on the other hand, contribute little and perhaps demand even less. This attitude does “buy into” metaphors derived from commercial transactions. Since a vendor merely provides a commodity, the student need do nothing except passively receive the goods (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2).

The distinction between quality seekers and bargain hunters has other implications for educational practice. Some students, never having been exposed to substantive academic work, may equate quality with ease and comfort. The resultant definition of quality renders education a one-way street: “The burden is on the ‘vendor’ to provide customer satisfaction” (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2). Adopting the philosophy of the market, students may think “that a University education requires no more effort or involvement than making a purchase” (Rodeheaver, 1994, p. 2). Indeed, the language of passivity and spectatorship infuses talk about education. Students “attend” or “go to” college.
Ethosystem Corrects Consumerism

Rarely do discussions include how students might "contribute to" or "shape the future" of the institution. Students "get" or "receive" grades, diplomas, and degrees that institutions "give." More active verbs such as "earn" or "work for" hardly sprinkle conversations that bypass what one does to merit the rewards of an education.

Many, if not most, students want to become more active participants in their own education. But the consumer empowerment that accompanies marketplace language is illusory. Sacks (1996) contends that consumerism has transformed into "hyperconsumerism" by extending to realms heretofore unaffected by a consumption mentality, a sentiment shared by some communication scholars (Schwartzman, 1995; McMillan and Cheney, 1996; Cheney, 1998). Customer satisfaction might fuel the drive to improve quality, but the burden to adapt lies solely in the hands of the provider. Instead of a mutual transaction in the highest economic sense — with responsibility and accountability shared by customer and vendor — the market relationship becomes skewed. The designated seller constantly tries to adapt to customers, who have no obligation other than to express their preferences. In the realm of education, the model of a financial transaction translates into receipt of a product without the purchaser putting forth any effort (Sacks, 1996, p. 156). In fact, effort would reduce value because convenience counts as an advantage that makes the product more desirable. Sacks (1996) offers a vivid comparison: "Indeed, some consumers of education seem to invest no more personal responsibility in the transaction than a McDonald’s..."
customer buying a Quarter Pounder with cheese" (p. 156).

Notwithstanding value-laden mission statements, the market mentality sidesteps the sense of responsibility and commitment at the heart of communication. Instead, "Education becomes an economic transaction for immediate personal gain, rather than individual transformation for self and community betterment that, at its best, liberates the student and may produce its most powerful results long after the student has left the classroom" (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2). A market-driven model of communication emphasizes what students can "get out" of the market and other people. From its roots in the Greek *polis*, communication has attended (perhaps not exclusively, but emphatically) to how communicators can add to public life. The speaker's moral habits were a dimension of *ethos* (Bitzer, 1959), which Aristotle identified as the most influential aspect of persuasion. Additionally, *logos* infused public deliberation with rationality, transforming physical aggression into argumentation. Whatever might have changed over the centuries, these constituents of communication do and should remain. We should not harbor illusions of altruistic persuaders defying all market pressures in a capitalist society. Nor should we adopt the cynical market mentality that values lie outside marketplace transactions. A healthier view of communication would take account of "real life" market concerns and "ivory tower" moral commitments.

Paradoxically, the same metaphoric framework that touts quality and consumer empowerment ends up devaluing the educational experience. Once the market becomes the primary source of educational initiatives,
education has only instrumental value. Kant and, much later, members of the Frankfurt School condemned reduction of people to means. Horkheimer (1974) associated such instrumental reason with the reduction of people to objects who could be manipulated at will to serve the ultimate goals of the manipulators. According to the instrumental ideal, the more an educational program can promote personal career goals, the more successful its graduates can be. Responsibility to others, which should increase as one acquires more wealth and power to wield influence, rarely gets attention aside from platitudes in institutional mission statements (Ehrlich, 1999, p. 8). Attention now turns to how market-based values inform communication education.

Market Orientations Creep into Basic Communication Instruction

In his 1969 National Book Award acceptance speech, Robert Jay Lifton ominously labeled the time “an age of numbing” (1970, p. 376). His words echoed the psychological effect he identified in survivors of the Nazi concentration camps and other catastrophes: “a cessation of feeling” (p. 198) that rendered many victims mere automatons who no longer exhibited empathy for fellow humans. Although far less extreme, the “speak your way to success” ethic fails to speak to the moral duties incumbent on communicators as functional members of a community.

As long as the consumers in some sense pay for an education, they supposedly have absolute sovereignty over how to dispose of it. The decision of how, when, or whether to consume, as well as the effects on others and

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the environment, are value-neutral. Consumerism is simply amoral, with the individual consumer invested with authority to decide the ends and means of education (Cheney, 1998). The prevailing symbols of the marketplace and the consumer have become disconnected from participation in a functional democracy. In the "seduction of economic reductionism" (Cheney, 1998, p. 31), the language of economics provides a comprehensive explanation or justification without clarifying the values that might inform decisions. The basic communication course easily becomes an amoral laboratory to test techniques that can yield individual benefits rather than a forum for engaging students in the challenge to consider their mutual responsibilities (McMillan and Cheney, 1996). Consumerism finds ready company in the mentality of entitlement (Sacks, 1996, p. 161). If consumers are to be served, then they function as the recipients of whatever caters to their desires. Failure to meet these desires equates with being cheated or ill-served. The demand to satisfy individual desires leaves little room for deferring to the desires of others or recognizing that the consumer should give as well as get.

The market value of public speaking does infiltrate justifications for studying communication. Gronbeck et al. (1997) begin with an objective that promises intrinsic rather than market value: to build community and recognize diversity (pp. 5-10). Then the authors state: "Unless you have the speaking talents necessary to engage in committee discussions, presentations to clients, and interactions with your managers, you may be in trouble on the job" (p. 10). The text cites a study of "over one thousand corporate leaders" who identified
communication courses as the most useful in preparing students for a career (p. 10). The flip side receives attention as well (p. 10): “Put another way, far more people are fired due to an inability to communicate or handle basic human relations than are fired due to technical incompetence.” The first of the book’s many “Communication Datelines” highlighting research on a specific topic addresses “Communication and Your Career.” The insert points to communication as appropriate preparation for a number of careers. “No matter what you will do after graduation, think of communication skills training as training for your life’s work” (p. 19). Many students would consider the Gronbeck et al. (1997, pp. 10-11) discussion of communication’s career relevance to be more important than the more abstract principles of diversity.

Osborn and Osborn (1997) claim that the study of public speaking confers personal, social, and cultural benefits. Under personal benefits, the text lists “Growth as a Public Speaker” and “Practical Benefits.” The practical benefits include, but are not limited to, career advancement. Oral communication skills are critical to “success at work” and to “getting and holding a desirable position” (p. 7). The concepts of success and desirability remain undefined, but students presumably could equate both with financial gain, a principal sign of success.

An often cited reason to study public speaking is that effective oral communication can prove “essential for individual career success” (DiSanza and Legge, 2000, p. 3). At least one text observes, “The speaking industry is lucrative,” citing the steep appearance fees top professional speakers can garner (Wolvin, Berko, and Wolvin,
Better communicators tend to ascend the corporate ladder more rapidly. Essentially, improved speaking ability will enhance acquisitiveness and hopefully encourage inquisitiveness along the way. Indeed, many introductory texts treat communication as a way to serve the needs of the corporate environment. Public speaking skills can enhance “productivity and effectiveness” in the workplace (Wolvin, Berko, and Wolvin, 1999, p. 3). Businesses demand and reward articulate communication far more than education or hard work (Adler and Elmhorst, 1999, p. 3). Communication helps to motivate employees, adapt to organizational change, improve workplace creativity, and is central to management theory (DiSanza and Legge, 2000, pp. 1-3). Such effects can be useful and perhaps laudable, but they unnecessarily narrow the beneficiaries of communication to the individual striving to excel “in a competitive environment” (DiSanza and Legge, 2000, p. 2).

Beyond the realm of college textbooks, the market focus becomes more overt. Popular author Joan Detz (1992) entices readers to study public speaking by linking communication skills to success in the new millennium: “Now, as we move through the 90s toward the new century, the ability to give a good speech has become an absolutely critical skill — a skill that can provide business people with a competitive edge” (p. 1, emphasis in original). The competitive edge, an almost militaristic outmaneuvering of opponents in an adversarial environment, lies at the heart of Detz’s vision of public speaking. “Read on . . . make notes . . . and learn how to prepare a powerful speech that will give you the competitive edge” (Detz, 1992, p. 2, emphasis in
original). Interestingly, this comment immediately follows a remark that directs the benefits of public speaking toward the collective employer rather than toward to individual employees. Detz (1992) seeks “to show you how to write and give a speech that will produce solid, substantial benefits for your organization” (p. 2, emphasis in original). A Market (capitalized to indicate its regulative force) orientation suits the environment of economic scarcity. The Market represents the mother tongue of corporate America. To appease those who wield the purse strings, educators are implored to confirm rather than challenge the prevalent values of the Marketeers. Education thus is expected to reinforce the values and priorities of those who have economic power, and compliance is rewarded with financial support.

The educational method and ethic that informs some public speaking instruction is in effect an egosystem, a climate that focuses on individual achievement without the accompanying responsibility to others. The egosystem is an attenuated environment that makes the world of values coextensive with the self. Although the articulate speaker becomes empowered to take a stand on issues, that voice can be a solo performance (basking in the limelight) or one that invites additional dialogue.

FROM EGOSYSTEM TO ETHOSYSTEM

The ethosystem highlights the dimensions of interpersonal dialogue that can restore moral values to communication. As thinkers such as Gadamer (1975) have insisted, people cannot become detached from their
geographic surroundings, historical heritage, and personal commitments. The concept of the ethosystem is allied to its cognate, ecosystem. Like the physical environment, the ethosystem is always present and unavoidable. The individual encounters the natural habitat as a pre-established world. The world of values emerges the same way, as the unquestioned background assumptions that guide attitudes and actions. The unquestioned, however, is not unquestionable. Particular values that constitute the ethosystem can be doubted and altered but, like the ecosystem, the value-infused environment per se cannot be discarded at will. As many philosophers of science (e.g., Proctor, 1991) have observed, even the ideal of value-neutrality relies on objectivity as a core value. As discussed earlier, Emerson seems to buy intellectual independence at the price of civic engagement, perhaps because he maintains the individual thinker as his unit of analysis. Heidegger (1962) probably argues most aggressively for the contrary idea: no one is a lone individual but should be understood as being-in-the-world [in-der-Welt-sein] along with the social responsibilities that membership in the human community entails.

The following components of the ethosystem offer correctives to a narrow focus on market concerns in communication education. These emphases are far from new. In fact, they bear labels that recall longstanding rhetorical traditions. These traditions deserve further consideration because the market-based educational environment risks attenuating the study of communication to the point that its intellectual richness becomes measured by its contribution to economic profitability or immediate “consumer” satisfaction.
**Recover Ethos as a Communicative Partnership**

In the competitive economic environment, each communicator is an autonomous agent. One measure of a successful communicator may be the degree to which that person may “speak for one’s self,” thus gaining an authentic voice in the public forum. Adopting the language of management by objectives, “effective speakers make their choices strategically; through strategic planning they identify their goals and then determine how best to achieve them” (Zarefsky, 1999, p. 6; emphasis in original). Certainly a communicator wants to have a carefully crafted message, but the focus on strategic planning may obscure the audience’s role as anything other than a means to achieve an objective unrelated to the audience’s welfare. Indeed, the techniques of analyzing audiences place them in almost an antagonistic relation to the speaker who must take them into account. “Even though an audience can thus be a constraint on a speaker’s freedom, you can work with that constraint by careful audience analysis . . .,” says one textbook (Zarefsky, 1999, p. 64).

The ethosystem could enrich the relationship between communicators and audiences. These added dimensions need not be limited to public speaking situations, although the theoretical groundwork was laid in the context of public speaking. The quality of communication could be gauged by the degree to which it empowers audiences (instead of viewing communication primarily as imposing constraints on speakers). Rather than functioning as instruments of a speaker’s
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will, audiences should be recognized as potentially placing moral demands on the speaker that do not necessarily coincide with the speaker's own desires. This discovery of the audience as a moral agent compels the speaker to understand them as the end of the communicative effort, not simply the means for implementing the speaker's objectives. Such a view of the audience coincides with the interpretation Farrell (1993) offers of Aristotle. The very formulation of objectives must take into account, as a moral obligation, the recognition of others as moral agents. By recognizing the nature of the audience as something other than an aggregate of demographic and psychographic data to be manipulated, communication becomes relational. In this way, "it is rhetoric that removes us from the immediacy of familiar appearance, thereby allowing us to formulate conditions for appreciating the needs of others" (Farrell, 1993, pp. 70-71). The result is to shift the focus of communication away from the model of compliance-gaining, where the speaker tries to move an audience in the direction of a pre-determined goal. Rather than having an agenda for the audience, presuming "I know what's good for you," the audience is recognized as an extension of the speaker, capable of having the same emotional and cognitive reactions. Thus "emotions are themselves relational, allowing the sense of recognition we require whenever we are taken outside our own immediacy: from the neighborhood to the moral community. . . . Without rhetoric's intervention, we would have only the partiality of immediate interest, the familiar locale" (Farrell, 1993, p. 71).

In a market mentality, audiences are instrumental to achieving the speaker's objectives. The notion of ac-
countability reduces to efficacy — the extent to which compliance with the speaker’s desires was gained. The ability of an idea to “play” to an audience is the ultimate measure of its desirability. The market, therefore, becomes the universal arbiter of propriety. In the ethosystem, the communicator is answerable to the audience in the sense that decisions should be justified to stakeholders. Specifically, those who stand to be affected by discourse — regardless of whether they can benefit the speaker — are entitled to input. Such input goes beyond customer feedback, which applies only to those who are the objects of persuasion. In the ethosystem, accountability extends to everyone who stands to feel the impact of communication. The scope of accountability broadens considerably, thereby increasing the responsibility of communicators to multiple communities. In the marketplace, the seller’s primary obligation is to the consumer or client. In the ethosystem, the communicator is accountable in varying degrees to stakeholders who may not be shareholders. While the stakeholders encompass everyone who may be affected by discourse, the audience in the marketplace is the mechanism for achieving a desired outcome. In the ethosystem, audiences stake a claim to influence discourse because they may feel its effects, not simply because they can confer benefits to the speaker. The audience is a trusted partner of the speaker instead of a potentially hostile force to be manipulated or cajoled.

*Develop Contextualized Dialogues*

This essay has expressed reservations about the Emersonian model of the individual learner, reproduced
as the singular source in the Shannon-Weaver communication model that informs virtually every introductory public speaking textbook. One factor that contributes to communication reticence is, of course, the feeling of isolation — not liberation — that the lone speaker feels in preparing for and facing an audience. What might the ethosystem offer as a way to place communicators within an ongoing, cooperative conversation rather than a confrontation with audiences or situations and a zero-sum competition with other speakers?

Bakhtin furnishes an antiseptic against the atomistic communicator engaged in a quest to conquer the recalcitrant audience. Although Bakhtin offered his comments in relation to the novel, they bear equal relevance to oral communication, especially when he questions the value of stylistic virtuosity as “private craftsmanship” that “ignores the social life of discourse outside the artist’s study . . .” (1981, p. 259). Bakhtin suggests revisiting the principles of “oft-neglected rhetoric” to restore the rich complexity to the relationship between speaker and language (1981, p. 267). For Bakhtin, two forces influence every utterance. The drive toward a “unitary language” that is monologic, a single, standardized voice (e.g., the unitary, reliable narrator or the depersonalized voice of scientific research) coexists with “social and historical heteroglossia,” the diverse ideologies, values, and lived histories that mitigate against telling the authoritative version of a story (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272).

Bakhtin calls attention to the desirability of “dialogizing” language by restoring its interplay with radically diverse, “socially alien languages” whose con-
glomeration can enrich understanding (1981, pp. 284-285). An important caveat is that these languages (not simply different tongues but different means of expression, such as literary genres) become more nuanced and more expressive by their coexistence. “Therefore languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291), a point often lost on those who advocate a single, overarching model or metaphor as a description of communication. Heteroglossia serves as a reminder that the market is not the sole arbiter of communicative practice. The concept of heteroglossia also should raise suspicions about metaphoric bifurca, as if communication should either obey or shun a market orientation. As Cicero revealed in De Oratore, the proper practice of rhetoric reconciles philosophical rigor with practical skill, borrowing and melding the principles espoused by Crassus and Antonius.

Perhaps most crucially for teaching communication, the concept of heteroglossia extinguishes the idea that communication is value-free (as in the Shannon-Weaver view) and springs ex nihilo as original utterances of a speaker. Alternatively,

language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293)
Retaining the gustatory metaphors, the educator’s task may be to restore the flavor to communication that has been boiled down to lexical and connotative blandness in the cultural melting pot. Speaking more practically, heteroglossia can incorporate diversity as part of the method of constructing presentations rather than as the mere tokenism of ethnic-sounding names in examples. Even when addressing a totally homogeneous audience, the listeners and presenter should be aware that the perspectives in the presentation take into account the larger context of diverse populations beyond those who are physically present or who wield the power to aid the speaker. No audience exists in a vacuum; everyone is embedded in and has a stake in a multicultural community (Goldzwig, 1998). Inclusion of speeches in progress could concentrate on how the same speech would change when the audience composition changes. None of the major public speaking textbooks contains an example of the same speech revised to appeal to different audiences. As a result, sensitivity remains an abstract imperative that students may have difficulty implementing.

Beyond adapting to diverse audiences, however, heteroglossia reminds speakers that their words are embedded in histories of usage and contested meanings. Although the concept of the source of communication seems unproblematic in the apparently value-free world of information theory, students should recognize that in many nations much ink and blood has been spilled in clashes to define who will count as a citizen and thereby qualify as a public voice in many nations. Furthermore, the choice of channels to communicate messages is influenced by who has the economic and social clout to
access various media. The range of political viewpoints that can get television airtime is severely restricted by the ability of candidates to generate revenues. Even a third-party candidate such as Ross Perot was able to mount a challenge largely because his ample wealth enabled him to buy the time to broadcast his platform. Current concerns about the so-called “digital divide” rise similar questions about access to media — questions that place the elements of communication within the context of social class structure, economic empowerment, and other factors that extend beyond a single disciplinary or discursive framework.

**Recognize the Value of Silent Partnership**

Perhaps the most ubiquitous assumption that informs basic courses of every ilk can be labeled The Communication Mystique: the unquestionable commitment that oral communication is good, and the more communication the better. As Robert L. Scott (1993) has observed, the privileged value utterance has over silence may be simply cultural tunnel vision, since many Eastern cultures respect silence as a highly nuanced communicative act. The ease with which communication can be generated electronically also directs attention to message production, with silence receiving little notice. At a glance, silence seems valueless, an impediment to effective communication. Silence is often treated as an obstacle to be overcome, hence the desire of new acquaintances to “keep conversation going” at all costs (McLaughlin & Cody, 1982). The need to continue speaking induces the utterance of any comment, often without regard to its relevance or importance. Guests at
a party feel uncomfortable when the crowd momentarily hushes for no apparent reason.

Silence, however, need not be ignored. J. Vernon Jensen (1973) and Richard L. Johannesen (1974), for example, recommend devoting more attention to silence as a communicative phenomenon, and Henry Johnstone (1978) advises that silence can function rhetorically. Peter Ehrenhaus (1988) answers the plea to research silence by examining how silence functions as tribute in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Attention to the significance of silence can serve as an antidote for The Communication Mystique. Cultivating an appreciation for silence as a sign of respect and deference for others highlights the ethical dimension of listening. Rather than the mere absence of speech, silence signifies the willingness to recognize someone else as worthy of attention. The act of silent contemplation, as in silent prayer, counters the quest for power over others through words. Instead, deliberate silence acknowledges the willingness to receive the gift of another person's speech. Deliberate suspension of judgment could represent the first step toward mutual understanding because as long as the silence lasts, interlocutors need not engage in the struggle to be heard. Indeed, the rush to generate more messages, with its nadir exemplified by televised talk shows or "debates" that are little more than shouting matches, calls for some intermission. Silence offers the chance to reflect and at least momentarily allow the pace of interpretation to catch up with the frenzy of information production.

Communication teachers should encourage productive rather than passive silence. Students who sleep
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during class, for example, are not productively silent. When used effectively, silence can send powerful messages. Silent protest can show profound disagreement; silent respect may be the only proper display of awe before a higher power (as in "Silent Night, Holy Night"). Greater appreciation for silence might cast some light on the silent classrooms that teachers interpret as signs of student apathy. Perhaps this silence represents a more active refusal to partake of educational activities that seem irrelevant to student experiences and expectations. Greater fluency in the messages of silence could instill greater sensitivity toward other communicators and provide a respite from the overwhelming barrage of words. When an argument becomes acrimonious, the remedy may be a resort to silence instead of accelerating the production of words that may magnify misunderstanding.

Affirm the Practice, Not Just the Business, of Communication

During a time that language of the marketplace has supplanted discourse of the polis, when students are described as customers instead of learners (Schwartzman, 1995; McMillan and Cheney, 1996) and economic acquisitiveness overshadows intellectual inquisitiveness, it is refreshing to find some recognition of public speaking as a cooperative rather than a corporate venture. Osborn and Osborn (1997) replace the venerable Shannon and Weaver (1949) mathematical model of communication — depersonalized sources, receivers, signals, and noise — with the portrayal of communicators as climbers attempting to erode and
ascend the mountain of interference. Later, Osborn and Osborn describe students as builders who must choose the most appropriate and durable organizational structures. Finally, students become weavers of arguments as they interlace different types of proof and supporting material into a sustainable position.

Osborn and Osborn's metaphors have important pedagogical implications. In the tradition of Emersonian and masculine self-reliance, students are customarily urged to "do their own work" by crafting presentations in an intellectual vacuum. The metaphors in Public Speaking share a central quality: if taken seriously, they require students to enlist the aid of others. Mountain climbing is riskiest when attempted alone. One person usually does not have all the skills needed to build a house. Durable fabrics are woven from blends of material. Rather than dwell on the metaphors themselves, teachers and students might concentrate on the process-oriented approach to communication they imply.

Perhaps the most crucial lesson from these metaphors is that they should fuel the intellectual curiosity to experiment. Climbing, building, and weaving are not one-shot attempts. The very nature of those activities prepares us for occasional falls, structural collapses, and tearing along the way. Classrooms need to be "safe zones" where students can experiment and fail without becoming failures. A mountain climber never places all her weight on a new foothold; the speaker should experiment with different approaches before settling on one that has withstood the scrutiny of sample audiences. Textbooks can assist in this task by including more examples of presentations as works in progress.
English composition texts show draft after draft of the same essay as it evolves into a finished product. Similarly, public speaking textbooks should show the stages through which a presentation develops.

Just as a novice quilter would be discouraged by seeing only finished, exquisitely crafted quilts, an inexperienced speaker needs to discover how to approach the level of the speeches included as samples in the texts. Chapters on presentational aids, for example, might show several possible ways to illustrate a point in a speech, then explain why one option should be chosen over others. In a word, our textbooks need to foster the spirit of creative experimentation by showing how speakers might try many methods — and sometimes fail — to communicate. Perhaps the process of communication deserves greater attention by delving into the changes speakers make as their preparation progresses. If I. A. Richards (1991) accurately described rhetoric as “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (p. 106), then students need to see more of the trials and errors involved in climbing toward, building, and weaving communication. Consideration of the ethosystem serves as a reminder that communicators are in practice, not just in business.

Cultivate Communities of Caring Communicators

What measures might be taken to restore humanity to students, empowering them to be communicators rather than presenters? This distinction is vital, since the etymological root of “communication” is to contribute to collaborative human interaction. That objective
sounds quite distant from the presenter who acts as a conduit for conveying an image that will lend a competitive advantage to an individual or organization.

Success at achieving personal goals carries with it a responsibility toward others. Skill at public speaking does enable people to express themselves and to impress those who can confer material rewards such as higher salaries and promotions. Becoming a more articulate public speaker, however, also should encompass greater awareness of the populations whose interests often are not articulated in public forums. The obligations of a public speaker need not entail speaking on behalf of others, but rather to increase awareness of the often-overlooked stakeholders in communicative acts. Minimally, a communicator’s success might be judged by how well s/he takes into account people who do not have power to contribute to career advancement. This version of success invokes the virtue of caring, which is praiseworthy precisely because it is directed toward people beyond one’s own family, friends, or immediate associates (Todorov, 1996, p. 82). While solidarity with one’s family or coworkers is expected, the caring communicator extends consideration to people beyond such in-groups. Care configures people who are disempowered or overlooked as worthy of consideration by speakers, thereby recognizing and ennobling them as stakeholders who deserve to be taken into account.

Perhaps the climbers envisioned by Osborn and Osborn (1997) also should be excavators, digging to destabilize antiquated assumptions and damaging stereotypes. As excavators, students would be called upon to unearth taken-for-granted exclusion or marginalization of certain populations. In other words, communication...
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might broaden from enhancing individual careers to encouraging communities of carers.

The introductory communication course offers a forum to practice ways of interacting that yield more than individual benefits. Ethical obligations bind speakers and listeners into a community. The role of each student as classmates, trying to achieve independently or perhaps competitively versus other students, transforms into something very different in the ethosystem. The act of public speaking draws speakers and listeners into a web of mutual caring. Attention to the ethosystem could combat depersonalization by re-personalizing the communicative environment. The basic course may play an important role in repopulating the ethosystem with people who respect each other, who hold each other in high enough regard to treat them as something other than means for (or impediments to) personal advancement. The basic course classroom should be the site to build communities of communicators.

This atmosphere of caring civility approaches what Tönnies (1957) envisions as a community [Gemeinschaft], which he contrasts with a society [Gesellschaft]. Societies are incidental relationships that place people alongside each other without establishing a mutual bond. Societies are common in business, for example, and the social ties of such alliances are transitory (Tönnies, 1957, pp. 33-35). In social environments, people function alongside each other out of expediency or external necessity, such as pooling resources to accomplish a task. A society consists of people whose unity may occur in spite of their essential separateness. A community exemplifies exactly the opposite condition.
Societies often require contracts and formal rules to prevent their dissolution. Communities exist as units, their dissolution tending to result from external forces such as conquest, cultural assimilation, or environmental changes.

Tönnies (1957, pp. 42-44) identifies friendship, for example, as a kind of community that enables people who are not bound by blood ties to feel united. Friends are "united by a spiritual bond and the co-operation in a common task" (Tönnies, 1957, p. 44). Less metaphysically, friendships develop when a social situation creates a state of interdependence among people. Tönnies uses religious rites as an example because they place worshippers in the collective service of a deity. Rituals therefore are communal to the extent that all participants have roles that call for others to assume their roles that are necessary for the observance to take place. Participation in the ritual identifies the participant as part of the ceremony, not as an individual who is taking part but literally as a component of the ritual's enactment (Campbell, 1988). Thus we speak of 'communal rites.' Perhaps it is time to revive the communal rite of public speaking. The basic course could be a site where solidarity arises from mutual dedication to the moral challenges that inform public communication.

**CONCLUSION**

The terminology a field uses to describe itself says volumes about the values it embraces. The free-market competition among and within institutions of higher learning might offer a significant benefit to students by
enhancing their choices among alternatives. Theoretically, the quality of services should improve as competition increases and each competitor must outdo the offerings of its rivals. Certainly the consumer could be configured as a chooser, selecting the best alternative from the range of available choices (Gabriel & Lang, 1995). The limitation of this choice, however, is that the relationship between provider and selector presumes an economic model of consumer choice. When choosing the best value, "roles as citizens, creators, or even activists with independent will and a sense of direction" (Rushkoff, 1999, p. 109) tend to be placed within an economic framework that insufficiently accounts for educational values, objectives, and processes.

An important first step in countering the prevalence of a market orientation is to denaturalize the metaphor. Some metaphors have become so customary that their predications remain unquestioned and their employment unreflective. Any adoption of a metaphor represents one choice among many possible metaphoric and literal descriptive alternatives. Each descriptive option implicates discursive rules and practices attendant to its use. No metaphoric description is automatic. Its adoption and use are voluntary, although a particular metaphoric framework may be "given" in the sense that its embeddedness in custom may make it seem to be the "only" choice. Douglas Rushkoff, an ebullient early endorser of electronic communication as a way to create greater human community and more savvy media critics, now laments the interpenetration of commerce and friendship. With even the wide-open frontier of cyberspace succumbing to commercial appropriation, Rushkoff (1999) warns that friends may be able to

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relate to each other only as potential clients, while apparent friends may be using affability as a guise for making money (p. 62).

To escape from the tyranny of metaphors, it might help to explore alternative metaphoric frameworks. For example, Sontag's (1990) recommendation simply to stop using metaphors that glorify disease carries little force unless some other descriptive means are available to clarify whatever falls within that metaphoric domain. Greater consciousness of the language used to discuss educational practices might not constitute educational reform, but it is an important step in rethinking educational practice. Analysis of how issues such as the student's role in society are framed linguistically "can perhaps point to the need for a struggle to develop such a new 'language' as a key element in building resistance to marketization without simply falling back on tradition" (Fairclough, 1993, p. 159) and without dogmatically reasserting the immunity of education from economic concerns.

To resist the hegemony of one family of metaphors and to restore the breadth of imagination that an ingrained metaphoric framework may have narrowed, metaphors should be treated as provisional and not exhaustive. Rather than introduce alternative metaphors, the task here is to press embedded metaphors to their limits. At what point do the accepted metaphors break down as accurate descriptions? Tensional theories of metaphor stress that metaphors highlight similarities but also call forth differences between figurative language and what it describes (Wheelwright, 1962). By observing dissimilarities as well as resemblances between commercial markets and education, the
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metaphor does not become reified as a complete, literal description of reality. In this way, the almighty Market no longer serves as the ultimate arbiter of values in education. The stakes are large, especially if education is to serve as more than training to acquire money. “If the ultimate aim of education is to encourage human flourishing, the arts and sciences must embody a vision of human life that transcends the economic” (O’Donovan-Anderson, 1999). The values attendant to considering the ethosystem may open the path to such transcendence.

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Social construction of reality theory (SCT) is such a broad based theory that it approaches a philosophical view. As such, SCT offers a new way of considering one's own and others' perspectives, a valuable asset for communication students. The theory is also a useful pedagogical tool for connecting the sometimes disparate contexts within the hybrid basic communication course. The rest of this discussion will 1) explore the theory and ways of introducing it to undergraduates; 2) argue that this theory has the capability of opening minds to new ideas and viewpoints, and 3) attempt to show how it can be integrated into and integrate the often self-contained units of interpersonal communication, group communication and public speaking.

**THEORY**

Social construction theory assumes that reality is a social construction and that language and conversation are the primary tools of that construction. Berger and Luckman (1966) emphasize the importance of language and talk in the creation, modification and maintenance
of everyday reality: language is the tool for socializing the child (primary socialization) and the adult into new subcultures (secondary socialization) (p. 121), the tool for understanding ourselves (as we receive information about ourselves from others and clarify our own reality in talk) (p. 36); the tool to attain shared definitions and understanding with others (p. 120); and the tool for realizing, interpreting, and producing the world (p. 141). Their perspective centralizes communication as the process which creates, modifies and maintains reality.

Gergen (1985) further explicates the assumptions of the social constructionist movement in psychology:

1. “What we take to be the experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood” (p. 266). This statement rejects positivistic ideas about how knowledge is acquired through the scientific method. When our view of the world is influenced by our cultural beliefs and our language, we are not able to study the world objectively.

2. “The terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people” (p. 267). The second assumption reminds us that language is contextually and historically situated and, thus, is ever changing according to situational factors.

3. “The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes” (p. 268). This assumption addresses the intersubjective nature of
knowledge. As ideas are discussed and evaluated, they may be generally accepted or declined by scholars dependent on the power of the rhetoric employed rather than the facts discovered. The accepted ideas become “knowledge.”

4. “Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage” (p. 268). The fourth assumption states that reality is “constructed” by patterns of communication, not just interpreted. In short, what is done, how it gets done, our priorities, our values, indeed, our beliefs about how the world and social relationships work are socially constructed through our interactions with others in repeated patterns of behavior. Given these fundamental ideas regarding social construction theory, I have derived some simplified statements which allow college students access to this powerful theory.

USING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE BASIC COURSE: A NEW LOOK AT SOME OLD IDEAS

Introducing social construction of reality

While most entering college students are unfamiliar with SCT, they are actually already familiar with many of its tenets. For instance, most college students accept that:
1. Our access to the world is through our interpretations of our experiences (everyone sees things differently).

2. Our interpretations of our experiences are biased by past experience (If we have been raised that "time is money," we will likely adopt this attitude without questioning it's source or utility).

3. Our past experience includes our language, our culture and our family of origin, among other things.

If they accept these statements, they should accept their logical conclusion:

*Our access to the world is biased by our language, our culture and our family background* (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1985).

This conclusion is one major tenet of social constructionism. To carry things a bit further:

1. Because we view the world in certain ways, we act as if this "reality" is true (we sometimes forget there are other interpretations, plus we have little choice since we have to act on what we "know.").

2. Acting as if this reality were true can "make" it true (this is your basic self-fulfilling prophecy, i.e., because we believe a party will be boring, we act accordingly and our actions create a boring party — at least for us!).

This leads to a second major tenet of social constructionism:
Our behavior (including and especially talk) maintains what we have been taught through past experience, modifies the world to fit our reality, and creates a world consistent with our reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1985). Take for instance the “mean world syndrome” which is essentially the idea that people who watch violent television come to view the world as a mean place. These people then interact with the world as if this were fact, treating people with distrust, always alert to someone who may want to hurt them. This treatment influences or modifies others’ behaviors so they in turn react to the mean world individual with distrust and dislike. Thus, this individual has maintained his/her beliefs because they have modified the reality around them by the way they interpret and react to that reality and, in essence, created a mean world.

This simplified version of some of SCT's basic assumptions gives students an understanding of the role of communication in forming their self-concepts and their reality. Just as importantly, they have a more intimate understanding of why differences exist between people of different cultures and subcultures. When they can grasp why such differences exist, students can more readily accept that while other cultures/subcultures are different, different does not necessarily equal “bad” or “wrong.” This is fundamental diversity training.

With just this foundation in social construction and communication, the class can explore how initial realities become shared and/or modified realities within the contexts of interpersonal relationships, group experiences and public speaking.

Before exploring a specific plan for incorporating SCT into the basic course, we will look at ways in which
SCT informs the three basic contexts of the hybrid course.

**Social construction in interpersonal relationships**

Helping students understand that relationships are social constructions opens their minds to possibilities and questions. For instance, who decides if a relationship is friendly or romantic? Students dialogue about their experiences of the role played by people outside the relationship in defining the relationship. Asking the question: “Have you ever changed your mind about a friend or romantic partner based on something another friend or family member said?” is enough to help them understand how a relationship can be “reconstructed.”

The concepts of redefining, literally talking ourselves into and out of, relationships, interpreting emotions, and interpreting causes of others’ behaviors add to students’ understanding of the constructive processes of relationships. Having students compare definitions for relational concepts and roles like married, engaged, going together, dating, girlfriend/wife/mother, boyfriend/husband/father can open their eyes to relational difficulties given the different expectations attached to these “common” words. Exploring the effects of relational history (family, friendship, romantic, and work relationships) allows students to uncover the kinds of relational attitudes and beliefs they may have and how those affect their present and future relationships.

Gender and cultural differences are two more challenges to creating a shared relational reality. For instance, men and women are socialized to act differently.
in and have different expectations about relationships. Women tend to say “I love you” verbally and expect that in return but men tend to show love by doing something for their partner and expect that in return. Can we learn to live with the differences, do one or both partners need to change, or can we “reconstruct” the situation (interpret it differently)?

This co-construction of shared realities within personal relationships has been explored by scholars of personal relationships (eg., Duck, 1990; Dixson, 1995) and family communication (eg., Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, Bochner, 1995). Forming relationships with others is a process of codefining reality (eg., Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, Bochner, 1995), figuring out what things mean within the context of the relationship. Students can relate to ways of codefining such as symbols (rings, roses) and symbolic behavior (meeting parents, self-disclosure of intimate details, pet names).

Students enjoy discovering that they can co-create their own rules and meaningful symbols for relationships with their relational partners and that they can question established social norms for personal relationships. This is a good time to have students look at popular media to see how it influences their expectations of relationships.

**Social construction in small groups**

Small group communication is an area enriched by an understanding of SCT. The development of leadership, group norms, and group decisions are all processes wherein individuals try to merge their realities in order to function as a group rather than as several individ-
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duals. Traditional group concepts such as cohesiveness, groupthink, and group identity become simpler to comprehend and are instilled with more meaning within a social constructionist framework.

For instance, when a group co-constructs a reality about who they are as a group and what they should be doing (i.e., we are the team who does well and still has fun!), cohesion is generally high even if there is conflict regarding the decision(s) to be made. When the group's constructed reality includes an emphasis on the importance of the group and of getting along over individuals or decisions, groupthink is likely to occur.

Group roles are also social constructions and contribute to the creation of a shared group reality as does the co-construction of conflict behavior and conflict management strategies. For instance, whether it is acceptable to make personal attacks or conflicts must stay issue focused is the result of norms socially created by the group itself. Roles, cohesion, norms, groupthink and other group processes can be better understood and explained through an SCT framework.

In the syllabus I discuss below, team learning approaches to the course allow students the opportunity to experience group construction of reality. Students work, in the same group for several weeks, on learning projects designed to help them "discover" the principles of SCT and how to apply them in understanding themselves and their relationships. The team approach is an opportunity for students to analyze and evaluate group norms, themes, conflict strategies, identity and roles being socially constructed within their own classroom groups.

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Social construction and public speaking

Often, public speaking is interpreted and taught as a set of skills necessary to keep from making a fool of yourself. The students' attention is riveted on themselves as the speakers in front of the audience. Their concerns are with self-images and grades. SCT moves the focus from the speaker to the connection between the speaker and the audience. We talk about public speaking in terms of constructing a shared reality/understanding with the audience about the topic of the speech.

The advantage of this shift is the emphasis placed on the audience in developing the topic, choosing supporting arguments, considering delivery, choosing an organizational method and determining an effective presentational style. Of course, texts and instructors already teach this idea. Social constructionism simply helps to emphasize the connection between speaker and audience. Rather than considering, "What are the best arguments I can find?" the student thinks "What are the best arguments to persuade this audience?"

The "fit" between this theory and the content of the basic communication course offers an excellent opportunity for enhancing students' communication understanding. It also offers a way to show that interpersonal, group and public communication are very similar in that they are all influenced by the social reality and expectations of the participants.

There are, of course, many ways of using the theory to enhance the basic course. One way would be to teach the basics of the theory and then systematically explore
its applications to ideas, beliefs, and processes of self, interpersonal, group and public communication situations. A series of class discussions, small group exercises, individual assignments and journal writings could integrate this exploration with the concepts from the basic course.

Another approach, which I used, is to apply experiential, team learning exercises so students "discover" the basic tenets and explore SCT while learning the concepts required of the hybrid basic course.

**Social construction and the basic course: An example**

In a recently taught hybrid course based on SCT, the students spent several weeks in groups of four to five people working on team projects (See Appendix A for a description of all projects). The projects were designed to allow students to "discover" the basic tenets of SCT and test the ideas against their own experience. The discovery process incorporated concepts from the text and integrated the three primary contexts: interpersonal, group and public communication. The projects incorporated concepts by making the text a resource with various chapters or parts of chapters attached to each team project. Students are required to thoughtfully use five key concepts (from the list provided) in their project paper and speech. This approach integrates the contexts of communication because all projects are group/team projects. The first four require a team paper and a speech delivered by one member of the team (team members take turns giving speeches). The fifth project requires a group presentation. The content of the
projects involves looking at the social construction of self, relationships, groups, public speaking situations and societies. Thus, public, group and written communication skills are practiced in all projects. Interpersonal and intrapersonal communication are the foci for several of the projects.

For instance, Project Two discusses how who we are (our social construction of self) affects how we interpret and react to events (our social construction of reality). The project incorporates discussions of common perceptual errors and how they can affect communication in relationships, groups or public speaking. Talk about language (and its symbolic nature), nonverbal communication (and its ambiguity), and barriers to listening also pertain to this question.

Example from Project Two: Questions for students to answer: Does who you are affect your interpretation of events and how you behave (verbal and nonverbal communication)? How so? Explain and support from experience and the text the process which affects our interpretations and behaviors. What is the role of communication in this process?

Key concepts to consider: Under key concepts, instructors can include a list of concepts from their text (see Appendix, for sample terms from the Adler and Rodman text). An alternative approach is to connect each project with particular chapters from a text. Students can choose their key ideas from the assigned chapters.

While no single group will incorporate all of the key concepts listed, a required speech from each group provides the class with a larger sample of the material. If an instructor feels that particular concepts should be
considered by all, the concepts can be assigned or time can be spent formally (brief opening lecture) or informally (in discussion with each group) to insure that students are aware of the ideas.

This method does not ensure that all students will be aware of all the concepts presented in the text (although anything listed in the key concepts is testable material). Collaborative approaches generally mean a trade off between amount and quality. That students have meaningful discussions about concepts they find relevant and interesting seems to be worth the trade off. The rest of the material is accessible through the text or other groups' speeches.

As stated earlier, each team project requires an argumentative paper stating and supporting the answer to the project questions and including five concepts the students felt were important. The team speech is based roughly on the paper and allows the groups to share their findings with the class. As stated earlier, every group member is required to do one team project speech. To further develop their public speaking skills, each speech emphasizes a different aspect of public speaking: verbal delivery, nonverbal delivery, organization, material (arguments presented). This approach seems to offer better opportunities for students to learn public speaking than attempting to teach everything about public speaking before projects start.

Before the final project, the only lecture of the course pulls together what they have done so far and synthesizes their project answers into the two tenets of SCT (based on the tenets outlined earlier). A paper analyzing and processing their team project experience, incorporating text material and social construction
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theory, helps students synthesize their learning about group processes.

**Effectiveness**

An informal discussion with the class revealed a generally positive attitude about the group experience with one consistent disclaimer: five individual group projects were too many. Therefore, I combined two projects to reduce the number to four (as presented in Appendix A).

Formal student evaluations and written comments also indicated that students felt this was a successful approach to the basic course. All except one of the evaluation items were above the school means for the course (that one equaled the mean). Those items assessing learning and teaching approach are reported in Table One.

Sample written comments included: “I liked working in groups because if I didn’t understand something the people in my group could help me.” “..the group experience was very educating.” “I did learn a lot from this class, especially with group work which I hate.” “What I liked the most about this class is we could approach the subjects from different angles.” The few negative comments which need to be considered were: “I believe the group projects were hit or miss on whether you got a productive or unproductive group.” “Add a few more lectures.” “Develop a better method for writing the group paper.” Generally, consensus was very positive about the learning experience.
### Table 1
Items from Standardized Student Evaluation Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation item</th>
<th>Social construction* section</th>
<th>All other** sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates interest in course</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged me to think critically</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes relationships between topics</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate teaching strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivates me to do my best work</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains difficult material</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral assignments have instructional value</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments have instructional value</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral assignments related to course goals</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments related to course goals</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments are interesting/stimulating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course among best taken</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved interpersonal communication skills</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved group communication skills</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved public speaking skill</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 20 respondents
** 604 respondents

---

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However, whether or not students enjoy a course, while related, is secondary to actual learning. I assessed this learning with a traditional paper-pencil test. To be sure the test was a fair assessment of expected learning, I asked five colleagues who teach the basic course with the same text and guidelines to evaluate the test. Using 7 point Likert scales (1 being not well at all and 7 being extremely well with anything above a 3.5 deemed adequate), they evaluated the test's ability to measure recall (mean = 5.6), critical thinking (6), and the important concepts of the course (4.8). They also judged it to be an adequate sample of the information (4.5), not too easy or difficult (4.2 with 1 being easy and 7 being difficult) and relatively appropriate (4.4 with 1 being inappropriate). Thus, I judged the test a fair assessment of student learning of the required material.

Results of the test were consistent with student comments and demonstrated that learning had indeed taken place, with only one formal lecture! To assess student learning, I looked at each of three sections of the test separately as they measured different kinds of learning. Ten multiple-choice questions measured recall and recognition of logical fallacies, forms of reasoning, conflict styles, types of disconfirming responses and uses and abuses of language. Of the twenty-two students in this initial course, nineteen missed three or less (a C or above). Considering this is a freshman course required for every student at this almost open admission Midwestern university, this is better than would normally be expected.

Short essay questions measured students' understanding and ability to explain reflected appraisal, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, cultural or gender differences
in nonverbal communication codes, and perceptual errors and attribution processes. Of thirty possible points, seventeen of the twenty-two students earned twenty or more (passing), again demonstrating their ability to learn this material within a social construction framework and a team approach.

The third section of the text was an essay question asking them to list and explain the two tenets of SCT (as stated earlier in this paper) and discuss how their perceptions of differences between people might be changed by knowledge of this theory. While all twenty-two students could generally explain the theory and its application, they were a little hazy on the specifics. Seven students earned perfect scores, two more understood both tenets but were a bit off in their explanations. Twelve people couldn't specifically state the second tenet.

It was interesting that they did worse when tested over the only information covered by lecture. Although, clearly this could also be an artifact of the type of question used for assessing this knowledge. In conclusion, students learned the concepts we traditionally expect them to learn in the basic course. More importantly, they gained a new perspective about diversity through the application of SCT (even though they didn't remember the second tenet exactly.)

While these findings are generated from a case study approach, I have found similar results in subsequent terms teaching the course. This approach has also been successfully adopted by a number of faculty, associate faculty and graduate instructors at the author's own institution and a neighboring college.
CONCLUSION

The integration of contexts and SCT is not a radical transformation of the basic communication course. The content of the hybrid course remains essentially unchanged. Social constructionism offers a framework which can integrate the areas of the course for students in ways not adequately done by many textbooks. The hybrid course becomes more a hybrid course and less three/four mini-courses loosely attached to each other. More importantly, social constructionism offers a theoretical perspective which forces students to consider shades and tints rather than blacks and whites. If knowledge is essentially based in interpretation, then there exist few “truths.” Therefore, uncritical acceptance of important ideas is intolerable.

We do not ask students to reject or accept a particular perspective, but to question. Students who do this are, by definition, more open minded, better critical thinkers, better consumers and better members of a democratic society.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

TEAM PROJECTS

Each project requires a written argument with an answer and support from the text and your experience and an oral presentation to the class.

Papers should be 3-5 pages long, double spaced. They should address all questions asked for that project and include at least 5 key concepts. Don’t be afraid to use headings.

Speeches should be 5-7 minutes long, with notes using extemporaneous delivery style. Each member of the group is required to present once. The speech should reflect the answer in the paper but not attempt to relate the entire paper.

Each student should come to class on prep days ready to participate with note cards prepared to help the group form the arguments and prepare the paper and presentation. On any given day, I may collect and award points for prep notes.

PROJECT ONE

Questions to answer

How did you become who you are? Did any person influence you? Did any place influence you? Does historical time influence you? Determine what kinds of influences make us what we are and support your answer using your experience and the text. What is the role of communication in this process?
Key concepts to consider

Self-concept, reflected appraisals, significant others, individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures, personality self-fulfilling prophecy. Types of delivery: know characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of four types of delivery. Persuasive speaking: Persuasion, types of propositions, direct vs. indirect persuasion, steps of the motivated sequence, three rules when using evidence, deduction (syllogism and enthymeme) vs. induction, sign reasoning, causal reasoning, reasoning by analogy, three C's of credibility.

PROJECT TWO

Questions to answer

Does who you are affect your interpretation of events and how you behave (verbal and nonverbal communication)? How so? Explain and support from experience and the text the process or lack thereof which affects our interpretations and behaviors. What is the role of communication in this process?

Key concepts to consider

Perceived self, presenting self, fact, facework, front vs. back region, high vs. low self-monitors, attribution, six common perceptual errors, cultural differences in perception, language is symbolic, meaning is in people, equivocal language, abstraction ladder, stereotyping, fact-inference confusion, emotive language, euphemism, equivocation, gender differences, low-context vs. high context cultures, Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, message overload, psychological noise, physical noise, faulty assumptions; Functions of nonverbal communication: re-
peating, substituting, complementing, accenting, regulating, contradicting (mixed message); Nonverbal communication: kinesics, eye contact, paralanguage, haptics, proxemics, Hall's four distances, chronemics, territoriality.

**PROJECT THREE**

**Questions to answer**

Does who you are and how you behave affect how others behave and who they are? Explain and support from experience and the text the process or lack thereof which affects others. What is the role of communication in this process?

**Key concepts to consider**

Critical listening, seven logical fallacies, empathic listening, judging, analyzing, questioning, supporting, paraphrasing; Nonverbal communication. . . is ambiguous, is culture-bound; Seven reasons for forming relationships, interpersonal conflict, five styles of expressing conflict, gender influences, cultural influences, win-lose vs. lose-lose, compromise, and win-win; Group, rules, norms (social, procedural, task), roles (task, social and dysfunctional); Audience types, demographics of audience, attitudes, belief, value, analyzing the occasion, audience expectations; Guidelines for delivery: appearance, movement, posture, facial expression, eye contact, volume, rate.

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PROJECT FOUR

Questions to answer

Define shared reality. How is a reality co-constructed in a personal relationship? Can we deliberately co-construct a shared reality? If so, how? If not, why not? In small groups? In a public speaking situation? What is the role of communication in this process? How do we co-construct conflict? peace?

Key concepts to consider

Notes from instructor on shared reality and co-construction;

Communication as process, functions of communication, transactional model, self-disclosure, social penetration model, Johari Window model, characteristics of effective self-disclosure, guidelines for appropriate self-disclosure, confirming vs. disconfirming messages, Gibb's Categories with definitions, group, ideal group size, task orientation vs. social orientation, hidden agenda, general speech purpose vs. specific speech purpose vs. thesis statement

FINAL PROJECT: THIS IS A TEAM PRESENTATION!!

How does communication create societies (consider the effects of media for this one)? Define and discuss the ways in which societies and cultures are socially constructed through communication. Given this knowledge, what do you now know about other cultures and their...
"goodness"; "rightness" "wrongness" compared to the good ole' USA? Is the "American way" one culture?

ESSAYS

Group analysis: Analysis of team. Considerations of how well the group worked including a discussion of roles, decision making processes, norms, cohesiveness and the social reality that your group constructed. Was it a shared reality?
Communication and Professional Civility as a Basic Service Course: Dialogic Praxis between Departments and Situated in an Academic Home

Ronald C. Arnett
Janie M. Harden Fritz

INTRODUCTION

Dialogic praxis involves knowing one's own position, listening to the position of the Other, recognizing the social and historical situation within which the parties meet, and collaborative application. Dialogic praxis is given life in our personal and professional actions with others. This essay examines the construction of a service course as an act of dialogic praxis. The aim of this essay is two-fold: (a) to frame service within a dialogic communication action vocabulary; and (b) to remind ourselves of the dialogic opportunities that a service course offers. Service courses require sensitivity to the Other, recognizing that each participant brings a different vocabulary to the conversation. Service courses require us to listen and respond to an audience unfamiliar with our communicative vocabulary and ideas. We must attend to the Other, making sure that what we have taken for granted connects theoretically and practically with the life experience of a non-major.

If service courses are so pragmatically central to our departmental health, how can we frame what we are
doing within a meaningful linguistic or theoretical framework? As Robert Bellah and associates penned, our "habits of the heart" are shaped by our vocabularies about our actions. This essay offers a communicative, dialogic vocabulary for understanding and engaging a basic part of our campus life — the service course.

Teaching service courses invites conversation about resource use. Often, faculty lines are supported by student numbers in service courses. However, new faculty lines are most frequently tied to the count of majors. Service courses are both necessary to keep faculty lines and limiting as time and energy are deflected from majors, our surest connection to a larger share of university resources. Granted, some of our service work provides an opportunity to convert majors. But how are we to understand service courses that have no chance of bringing us majors? Are such service courses a burden or an asset?

This article examines how one service course that has no "major" return was turned into a dialogic opportunity for the Physician Assistant Department, the university, and the Communication Department itself. The key to this constructive understanding of this service course obligation is tied to creative connection of the mission of the two departments and the university through a unique and historically needed communication course. Dialogic praxis, in this case, involved two departments knowing their own positions (which were both connected to the background mission of the university), listening to one another, and finally constructing a course together, Communication and Professional Civility.
FINDING DIALOGIC OPPORTUNITIES IN PRAGMATIC NECESSITY

Service to the polis

Service courses are a pragmatic necessity for the health of communication departments as national demand for communication competencies increases (Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). We finance our graduate programs and many of our faculty lines with our service course commitments. The quality of our service courses is often one of the political keys to perceived worth of a department in the eyes of university colleagues seeking to meet accreditation or university requirements for communication courses or communication across the curriculum programs (Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak, & Whitney, 1993; Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). Colleagues, not abstract rules, decide the pecking order of departmental importance on a college or university campus. Being a good campus citizen is one way to assist a department’s political currency in a university community or polis (e.g., Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak, & Whitney, 1993; Cronin & Grice, 1993).

Working within a department alone is no longer sufficient in a time of limited campus resources. As the environment of higher education grows more complex and dynamic (Bridges & Husbands, 1996; Katz, 1999), with greater institutional competition from the normative sector, consisting of other institutions offering the same product or service (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), each institution must distinguish itself in order to secure recognition from potential employers of its graduates and to
attract students. We must work together as a campus community in order to be perceived as an excellent institution.

A service course grounded in the mission of the college or university offers distinctiveness in at least two ways: it strengthens and contributes to institutionalization of the mission for the internal audience (students and faculty), and it creates value for the institution and for its graduates through distinctiveness for external audiences, such as accrediting bodies and employers. The field of communication, with its roots deep in the bedrock of rhetoric, identifies audiences, addresses the needs of the historical moment, and understands persuasion. In this historical moment, we need to be of service to the university community, offering visible, persuasive evidence of our constructive citizenship in the university polis while we contribute to the ongoing story or mission of the campus. Communication departments willing to offer service courses that are situated within the university’s distinct mission serve the university, the other department or campus partner, and themselves. The following section frames the pragmatic necessity of offering service courses within a dialogic praxis vocabulary, offering meaning beyond pragmatic necessity for our service commitments.

**Service as dialogic praxis**

One Hasidic tale suggests that the table of the world is held up by three legs: prayer, study, and service. In addition to the resource implications of service, it is important to remember that all communities, indeed the world, need acts of service. It is not only permissible,
but actually a good idea to be of service to others on a campus.

Service itself can be a dialogic act. We must know our skills, listen to the needs of the Other, and then offer our knowledge to the Other while simultaneously learning from the Other. Service is a communicative act involving a giver, a recipient, and something worth giving. Dialogically, service includes openness to learn from the Other. Service is a communicative act of assisting the Other as we shape ourselves in our action together. Service courses require us to engage in dialogue together about a common mission that can guide us. Dialogue requires first knowing and standing one's own ground, sharing one's position, and listening to and learning from the other as such action is reciprocated (Arnett, 1986). Dialogue suggests that one know one's own position and share that information while listening to the position of the Other. The answer emerges between partners as each shares a position, listens, and learns. The next sections walk the reader through a description of dialogic praxis that resulted in the construction of a course entitled "Communication and Professional Civility."

**Position: The Communication Department**

The Department of Communication had to acknowledge its own position framed by two brandings: "The Ethical Difference" and "Walking the Humanities into the Marketplace." In conversation, we outlined the importance of ethics and walking our ideas into the marketplace. The Department co-sponsors a national conference on communication ethics, and we have a special
relationship with area businesses. We have one CEO and two vice-presidents co-teaching courses with our faculty. In essence, this particular communication department has a position committed to ethics and interested in contact with the professional marketplace.

**Position: The Physician Assistant Department**

The Physician Assistant Department has two major elements in its unique position. First, the department has a community focus. The majors meet as a group with the chair weekly, just for conversation and discussion about the program and the profession. Second, the department prides itself in exceeding its accreditation requirements in quality and/or quantity. One of the accreditation requirements is a communication course.

The chair of the Department of Physician Assistants stated that communication is central to students’ future professional work, essential for activities in the classroom, important for conducting the weekly student meetings, and an advantage in securing internship opportunities. However, what he discovered was that the conversation of the physician assistant students was often uncivil and their behavior uncooperative. These students, who had very high G.P.A.s and SAT scores, had poor people skills. The position of the department was that their students needed genuine help in communication.

**Between positions**

As we listened to one another, we asked the question, "What construct emerges between our two positions?" Listening to each other and discussing our posi-
tions and concerns revealed the direction, structure, and general content of the course entitled "Communication and Professional Civility." The following description outlines the issues we discussed that contributed to the emergence of the course.

Because each of the two departments was interested in professional issues and communicative application, the words "communication" and "professional" were the first we agreed on. Then we began conversation about the Department of Communication's interest in ethics in light of the larger University mission. The university's mission of Education for the Heart, Mind, and Soul, the university's commitment to ethics manifested by the campus Beard Center for Ethics, the university president's consistent call for inquiry into ethical questions, and the thoughtful missionary commitments of the Holy Ghost Fathers who own the school seemed consistent with the private interest of many health profession faculty and students who come to Duquesne to teach and study in a value-added environment. Finally, when we asked the health professionals about framing a course around communication ethics, we received unanimous support. We employed the word "civility" instead of "ethics" to connect more clearly with the professional world. Furthermore, "civility" has a traditional public discourse set of assumptions (Arnett & Arneson, 1999) that ground the Communication Department's understanding of communication in public life. Together, we moved from the general view of communication and ethics to the specific course: Communication and Professional Civility. Professional Civility connected to the mission of the university, the Communication Depart-
ment, and the professional requirements of the Physician Assistant graduates of this particular university.

We noted that professional schools must offer courses that contribute to a distinct identity. The mission or market question that must be asked of professional programs is not, "Why should I study [nursing, physical therapy]?", but "Why should I study [nursing, physical therapy] at X institution?" This question is a marketing extension of the postmodern awareness of difference and particularity. There are many academic choices. Why choose this one? Our institutional mission must answer this question for prospective students and parents. Few students and parents know the philosophical language, but they understand the market difference.

Increased complexity and competition in the health care environment (Bellack, Graber, O'Neil, Musham, & Lancaster, 1999; Schwartz, 1996) make market distinctiveness critical. For instance, health care institutions with a religious focus may articulate different values to clients and communities than those with a research focus. Catholic health care institutions, especially, are concerned with retaining their value-driven missions in a competitive, market-driven environment (McCormick, 1998; Moeller, 1995). Institutions seeking employees sensitive to a particular mission may use the type of educational institution from which a prospective employee has graduated as one of the criteria for assessing individual-institution fit, an increasingly critical concern for hiring (Kristof, 1996). Students graduating from programs with a clear and public identity are recognized by institutions seeking to hire according to the institution's identity. Employers expect students gradu-
ating from an institution with a clear mission to view the profession, indeed the world, from a distinct vantage point, or standpoint (Wood, 1997). That is, the narrative of the institution positions or locates its identity and the professional identity of its graduates within a particular story. The institution’s narrative serves as part of the student’s frame of reference. In this manner, institutional affiliation becomes part of students’ initial professional standpoint.

The title “Communication and Professional Civility” addresses a health care context where questions about patient compliance with medical directives, institutional protection from lawsuit, patient satisfaction with medical care, and the demands of team-based health care put considerable strain on communication among professionals and between professionals and patients (e.g., Cline, 1990; Dolan, 1987; Frankel, 1995; Grossman & Silverstein, 1993; Swanson, Taylor, Valentine, & McCarthy, 1998; Thompson, 1990; Zimmerman, 1994). These varied demands generate communicative quandaries that can decrease interpersonal civility (Arnett & Arneson, 1999) as people struggle to communicate and figure out what to do as professional space becomes contested terrain (Edwards, 1979). Professionals with varied roles working together in a stressful environment among co-workers and patients from multiple co-cultures and value orientations put considerable strain on health care employees’ communicative lives (e.g., Eu-banks, 1990; Geist, 2000; Hirsch, 1996; Nordhaus-Bike, 1995; Padilla & Salzman, 1997). Additionally, when diversity and difference are normative, we should expect communication to be more demanding (Lustig & Koester, 1999). We must learn about people different
from ourselves and ideas different from our own. In a previous time of metanarrative agreement, unreflective communicative practices were sufficient to guide actions (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). In an era of difference, virtue dispute, and metanarrative disagreement, we must work hard to communicate. Communication in an environment of diversity requires listening, understanding, patiently stating our position, and negotiation. The guidance must now come from working together, not from a uniform background metanarrative set of agreements. Communication becomes a learning task for communication partners, not just a task of telling. Communication as technique, as unreflective practice, no longer works in such an environment. Now, we must embrace a communication style that keeps the conversation going in an era of difference. Working together is now good politics and practical philosophy in a postmodern age of narrative confusion (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). Communication and Professional Civility announced what the conversation pointed to — a course focused on public professional communication ethics.

Professional civility is a metaphor reminding us that the practice of ethics is situated in the story of an organization’s mission (Arnett, 1992; Nicotera & Cushman, 1992), not in the personal preferences of the individual, or emotivism (MacIntyre, 1984). Persons enact the ethics of an organizational story. Individuals can assist in reshaping the story. But the publicly stated mission needs collective attention; it sets the guidelines for judgment and action. This focus on ethics and values is sensitive to Duquesne’s mission and offers a distinctive focus for the course offered to Physician Assistants.
Mid- and upper-level managerial enactment of, support for, and discourse about an organization's value system is associated with organizational members' commitment to the institution (Fritz, Arnett, & Conkel, 1999). This course functioned as a practical symbol for this Department, announcing an emphasis on professional civility anchored in the mission of the Department and University. Offering the course also provided an opportunity to articulate the concept of professional civility both theoretically and practically.

It was the role of the Communication Department to provide the theoretical grounding for the concept of professional civility. Both departments agreed that throughout the course, we should bring to consciousness an everyday understanding of what it means to behave like a professional. This common sense understanding was connected to pragmatic notions of what it means to behave in a manner that supports the face of the Other as that Other claims a particular role identity within a profession (e.g., Penman, 1991). We added to that perspective the understanding that a particular profession's standards of conduct must be shaped by the local institutional home in which one finds oneself (Arnett, 1992), in which one instantiates that professional identity. In this way, professional civility was conceptualized as spanning two cultures: that of the larger professional community (Bruffee, 1986) and that of the host organization. It was within this framework that we constructed a working definition of professional civility appropriate to organizational life: To behave with professional civility is to communicate with an Other in ways that recognize and give honor to the professional role inhabited by that Other in a fashion consistent with the
public narrative or mission articulated by the institution that constitutes the local home of self and Other.

**Summary**

The dialogic praxis that emerged between these two positions, then, involved identifying the most important commitments of each department and situating a course within the framework of the University mission. The previous discussion centers most importantly on these large issues. More specific details were addressed as well: The structure and time of the course (twice a week in the afternoon) was suggested by the Physician Assistant Department and accommodated by the Communication Department. The textbook was recommended by the Communication Department and approved by the Physician Assistant Department. Since the course was to have a writing component, both departments agreed that papers would be an appropriate method of evaluation.

**THE DIALOGIC UNIVERSITY IN ACTION: THE COURSE**

**General structure**

Communication and Professional Civility was offered in a 15-week semester format, meeting twice a week (see Appendix for weekly plan of syllabus). The course was team-taught by the co-authors of this paper: a faculty member with expertise in communication ethics and interpersonal communication and a faculty
member with expertise in interpersonal and organizational communication (see Appendix for syllabus).

**Texts**

We used two texts, one specific to the health care context (Northouse & Northouse, 1998, *Health Communication: Strategies for Health Professionals*) and one addressing issues of a local home (Arnett, 1992, *Dialogic Education: Conversation About Ideas and Between Persons*). Use of these texts allowed a dual focus on specific communication skills necessary in the health care setting and the need to enact a professional identity within a local context.

**Classroom praxis**

*Themes.* Each section of the 15-week course was guided by a major question and two or three significant concepts. Both the question and the concepts were linked back to our own common professional identity shaped by this university *polis* and how such ideas must be carefully and appropriately enacted in another organizational home. Each week brought a focus on a portion of a theme, accompanied by exercises and discussion. The following section identifies the themes guiding the course.

1. Communicative crisis: The unrestrained self. The public and private spheres require different types of discourse. Professional civility, in practice, is one's way of interacting in a public arena with colleagues. Public discourse attends to work...
rather than to complaint, focusing upon common goals and tasks rather than the self.

2. The problematic other. Problematic others raise distractions in order to mask lack of productivity, putting attention on others' inadequacies to mask their own. A Physician Assistant's "product" is human life, an important focus. One avoids being a problematic other by locating significance, ground, and reason for what one is doing. Ways to deal with a problematic other include increasing attention to one's work, limiting social conversation with problematic others, and avoiding being a problematic other oneself.

3. Organizational atrophy. Organizational atrophy happens when an organization loses its focus or common center. Symptoms of atrophy include complaints by employees, loss of a perceived common goal, and a need for managers to watch employees because there is no narrative to guide employees' behavior. One reclaims a common center by discovering constructive practices centered on the mission, locating people to help further those practices, and avoiding destructive practices.

4. Professional and local narrative. A mission statement provides argumentative limits of what the company permits. Missions are more important than ever because of a diverse work force, mergers, and increasing competitiveness. Professions have missions as well. A professional recognizes the parameters of one's profession and of one's local organizational home (Arnett, 1992).
These themes, situated primarily within the Arnett (1992) text, provided a framework or background for the health communication material. For example, the section on conflict was framed by asking students to consider how a particular institution's mission might expect employees to engage in conflict—directly or indirectly, through persuasive argument, by reference to particular rules and roles, or in some other fashion. We hoped that this framework would allow a consistent story of professional civility to emerge throughout the semester, with each section of the health communication text offering application in the health care environment. Other topics from Northouse and Northouse (1998) that were integrated included communication factors of trust, empathy, and self-disclosure; communication in a variety of health care role relationships; nonverbal communication; interviewing; small group communication; and intercultural communication.

Class procedure. Class time (75 minutes) was divided among lecture, group learning, and student performance. For example, on the first day, we lectured for about half the class period on the definition of a professional and the need for professional civility. During the second half of class, we asked students to work in groups to prepare a professional introduction of one of their classmates. Our goal was to establish a focus on public discourse and role performance, moving away from a private or personal orientation. About three quarters of the class did not understand what a "professional introduction" might be, so our first task was to clarify and give examples to students as they worked together to craft these introductions. We judged the introductions to be qualitatively different from typical
class introductions. Students’ introductions focused on professional activities, memberships, and goals and were, in our judgment, markedly more formal than those in other classes we had experienced, though we did not explicitly indicate formality as a component of a professional introduction. Two class periods were spent on this activity, followed by a discussion of the elements of these professional introductions to orient students further in the framework of the course.

To provide connection to the future contexts that these physician assistant students would encounter, we required several out-of-class assignments. For example, one of the first of these assignments was to locate a definition of the Physician Assistant profession. Another assignment asked students to locate the mission statement of a health care organization. These materials were analyzed by groups of students in class and tied to lecture topics.

About two-thirds of the way through the course, we asked students, in groups of three or four, to write scripts and enact an episode illustrating appropriate professionally civil demeanor discourse with a patient and an attending physician, and then to assess the concepts illustrated in the performance. Students also enacted an episode demonstrating inappropriate, unprofessional and uncivil discourse followed by an analysis. These performances allowed practice of communication skills and concepts of professional civility, focused on verbal and nonverbal messages, contrasted with unprofessional behavior.

Near the end of the course, the Physician Assistant Department chair brought in a panel of health care
practitioners for one class period to discuss professional life in a health care organization.

Out-of-class assignments and in-class activities served as objective indicators of participation, which accounted for a portion of the final grade.

Formal evaluation of student work two papers of about seven pages in length, one serving as the midterm evaluation and the other as the final examination. For the midterm paper, students analyzed a case study we had addressed in class, using concepts covered during the first half of the semester. The final paper asked students to discuss the significance of communication and professional civility to the profession of a physician assistant, drawing from the entire range of course material. We required students to use a minimum of 15 concepts each from the Northouse and Northouse (1998) text and from the lectures on professional civility derived from the Arnett (1992) text.

REVIEW

Course evaluation procedure

Two indicators (other than the standard university course evaluation forms) were used to evaluate the class. In order to assess the outcomes we had aimed for in constructing the course, we designed a 6-item, open-ended questionnaire addressing the reason for the course, its significance, and what could be changed (see section on course evaluation results for questions) and administered it to 12 students, about 1/3 of the class, on the last day of class. These students were ones who, in
our professional judgment, had appeared most to under­stand and engage the material. We made this judgment based on these students’ in-class comments and ques­tions, our observations of group discussions, and our evaluations of students’ midterm papers. We asked stu­dents to answer the questions independently and then to move into three groups of four students each, discuss their answers, and generate collaborative answers to the questions, a procedure that mirrored the method we used during class to do group work.

The reason we chose students who had embraced the system for this method of evaluation was to provide in­sight from those who appeared to have understood it the most, who had learned the language and, more impor­tantly, the values underlying the principles. The “evalu­ation” we were seeking here was analogous to Geertz’s (1973) notion of “concepts near,” available only to members of a particular culture. Students who em­braced the course story clearly had an insight different from those who did not; these “partakers,” with their grasp of our project, were in a position to make sugges­tions from as close to the inside as an “outsider” could be. For instance, one would not ask a person with no knowledge of the game of soccer to evaluate how well a soccer team has played. Feedback from this select group of students represents a type of qualitative internal va­lidity that resonates with Walter Fisher’s (1987) method of judging a narrative: coherence. These students would be able to suggest methods for improvement in line with the sense of the values of the course, providing a type of “narrative validity.”

For a second method of evaluation, we examined the students’ final papers explaining the significance of
communication within the Physician Assistant profession. These papers gave us an indication of how well students understood the concepts and also served as a method of external assessment following Arneson and Arnett's (1998) recommendations for narrative assessment. Narrative assessment requires that a student understand not only concepts and terms, but demonstrate a praxis (theory-informed action) means of applying concepts appropriate to a particular historical moment in specific situations.

After the class was completed, we submitted a selection of student papers that we considered representative to the chair of the Physician Assistant department. The chair provided us with a response of approval of the course learning as reflected in these final student papers.

The following section offers representative summary comments from the three student groups' collaborative efforts and from student papers.

Course evaluation results

Responses to open-ended questions

Question 1: Describe the reason for this course.

Student groups suggested that the course was meant to prepare them for miscommunication problems in jobs and life and to teach them how to behave in professional relationships, communicate with patients, and deal with conflict. They also mentioned that the course focused on the more abstract elements of their profession as opposed to the concrete material they'd had in other courses.
Question 2: What is the educational significance of this course for your future profession?

Groups indicated that it would help them to think of the concepts and possible consequences before taking action, which would be vital to their employment and their organizations' success. They expected that they would be able to deal with difference, conflict, and hierarchical roles, to avoid insensitivity, and to understand the importance of mission statements.

Question 3: How does this course offer a way to frame your degree in a unique fashion?

Groups indicated that the uniqueness of this course to Duquesne University would give them an "edge" and enable them to command more respect than those who would not have taken this course. Understanding how to communicate effectively with physicians and patients and how to be a professional would make them better qualified for jobs. They would be able to recognize, avoid, and ameliorate problems; recognize an organizational mission; and conduct an interview.

Question 4: What communication practices have you learned that you will carry with you from this course?

Groups indicated that they had learned how to be tolerant and to deal with all types of people, how to deal with conflict, how not to act as a problematic other, how to assess own and others' communication skills, and to consider the organization's mission before engaging in any action in an organization. They learned the importance of keeping personal issues
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out of the workplace and of recognizing and managing communicatively role accountability, role ambiguity, role clarity, and problematic others.

**Question 5:** What two elements of the course were the most important for you?

Groups indicated that all the concepts were important, but that dealing with conflict and problematic others, understanding the concept of a mission, interviewing, and understanding communication and interaction in general were important. They indicated that working in groups was helpful for added insight.

**Question 6:** What element of the course might you suggest be reconsidered?

Groups suggested that even more focus on the health care elements of the course would be helpful. They considered some of the concepts from the course potentially "too idealistic." One procedural suggestion was to change the group membership regularly during the semester.

In our judgment, it was clear from the final student papers that a majority of students had a clear understanding of what professional civility, as we had articulated it, entailed and appeared to be able to explain the usefulness of the concepts to the Physician Assistant profession. For instance, one student wrote, "Establishing an organizational home is the first step in creating an environment in which skillful communication flourishes. In this type of environment, people feel as though they belong, and are needed in order to help ac-

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commodate the goals of productivity . . . Organizational communication, as it relates to the Mission Statement of the institution, is necessary in achieving the ethical and fundamental goals of the health care establishment. . . . Professional Civility is an aspect . . . which involves respecting one's self and others in a way that permits diversity to coexist, mutually supporting the organization.” Another wrote, “The goals of a group may be disrupted if the members engage in too much private discourse . . . At the organizational level, the mission is the most important aspect. Before receiving a job with a specific company, the people should look at the mission. The mission will explain the values and goals of the organization. . . . Sometimes people engage in ineffective practice instead of praxis. For example, physicians assistants may observe others engaging in private discourse. Therefore, he/she may think this is all right. The practice becomes routine and thoughtless. However, this practice needs to change to praxis . . . The physician assistant needs to realize that the practice is harmful to the organization and develop a way to change this behavior which would be more helpful to the organization.” Finally, a third student wrote, “The professional/professional aspect of interpersonal communication involves two professional interacting with each other within the institution. On this level there must be a presence of interprofessional understanding. Interprofessional understanding involves being aware that in a setting such as that of a healthcare environment, each professional has an assigned role which guides their action.”

We also reviewed the qualitative comments from the standard university course evaluations. These com-
ments revealed that not all students appreciated another required course in the liberal arts. This course falls into their junior year sequence of courses. By this time in their degree program, they have become accustomed to a scientific orientation to knowledge and learning, where expectations for learning are concrete, specific, and definable. Our liberal arts orientation stresses understanding more than measurement, being flexible rather than implementing pre-formed plans, accepting the ambiguity of life rather than complaining about uncertainty. Some student evaluations revealed frustration with a course situated in philosophy, theory, and story. Some wanted a "cookbook" set of skills. The student comments expressed what we interpreted as resentment at having to take a course outside their area of expertise.

Looking back over the semester, we recalled at various points throughout the course students' reluctance to learn a different vocabulary, to operate within a new "universe of discourse" (Barnlund, 1997) represented by a liberal arts communication course. The framework of professional civility and discourse presented students with the challenge of listening to a sometimes unwelcome Other offering a new way of seeing the world and relating to others. This approach offered a "background narrative" approach to communication rather than a technique orientation, an approach, in their eyes, foreign to the scientific paradigm in which they were being trained. Their ability to apply the concepts did not imply an embracing of the story we attempted to tell.

We recognize that degree programs and departments have cultures, as do organizations and professions, which carry with them core values and assump-
tions (Schein, 1985). The process of organizational change is marked by stages representing various reactions to that change, ranging from resistance to eventual acceptance (Clampitt, 1991). The students in the Physician Assistant degree program faced an invitation to change during this course. What we need to do next time to help that change take place with less resistance is to work harder at framing the need for a background story context for the practice of professional civility. We must connect the story we are telling, with its values and assumptions, to the story the students are living within their own degree program and profession, which has values and assumptions quite different from those of the humanities and the liberal arts.

Our major change is to begin the class with professional health care colleagues from a number of settings who will outline what they consider the biggest communication problem they confront. We have been told over and over again that a lack of civility in the workplace is the most draining part of their daily work. Their story will begin our story. We also will invite these same professionals back two more times to address specific issues related to loss of civility in the health care workplace. We must remind the Physician Assistant students that in a rapidly changing and diverse world, an approach to communication that provides a background understanding of why one should communicate in a civil manner, in addition to providing skills, will be of greater value than a set of formulas or techniques for communication alone. Finally, we expect that as the course becomes an accepted tradition within the Physician Assistant program, it will be received with growing appreciation by students.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This article has offered a dialogic approach to crafting a service course. Even though communication skills are of significant value to employers (Wolvin, 1998), communication departments must still prove their worth on a campus. If a university is viewed as a political polis, then worth to the university is partially tied to responsible service to the university. Service courses have political significance for a communication department. If communication departments can craft a service course that adds distinctiveness to another program or school, responsibility to the polis is enacted, and, if done correctly, this service can invite professional friends on the campus.

Building a departmental mission upon a university mission permits construction of service courses that assist both communication departments and university communities. As Ken Andersen has suggested, we must build communication programs upon the soil our university naturally provides (Andersen, personal communication, September, 1993). Following this principle, the Communication Department and the Department of Physician Assistants at Duquesne University crafted, through dialogic praxis, a service course in Communication and Professional Civility to Physician Assistant students as their required communication course. Each department offered its commitments and perspectives at a particular historical moment, keeping the mission of the University as a background that guided both parties' positions. Between the positions of each depart-
ment, participants in the dialogue constructed a course appropriate to the resources and needs of both departments and the current historical moment. Multiple methods of assessment, including focus groups, narrative assessment (Arneson & Arnett, 1998), and standard course evaluations offered ways to improve the course and invite fuller participation in the story of professional civility. Through this dialogic activity, pragmatic necessity attained larger significance within the mission of the Communication Department, the Physician Assistant Department, and the University. This service course became an asset articulating the distinct story of the University to students in the Physician Assistant Department and, potentially, to the larger community.

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APPENDIX

Syllabus

Week 1: August 26 & 28
Introduce professors, course philosophy, syllabus.
Form project teams (teams will rotate throughout the semester).
Professional Introductions: Students.

Week 2: September 2 & 4
Communicative crisis: The unrestrained self.
(Begin reading Dialogic Education.)

Week 3: September 9 & 11
The problematic other.
(Begin reading Health Communication.)

Week 4: Sept. 16 & 18
Activities; discussion of Dialogic Education, parts I-III (chapters 1-7).

Week 5: Sept. 23 & 25
Activities; discuss Health Communication, chapters 1-4.

Week 6: Sept. 30 & Oct. 2
Organizational atrophy.

Week 7: Oct. 7 & 9
Principles of civil, productive group problem solving.
Thursday, Oct. 9: 1st paper due.

Week 8: Oct. 14 & 16
Narrative: Professional narrative.
Week 9: Oct. 21 & 23
   Guest panel
   Discussion of *Health Communication*, chapters 5-7

Week 10: Oct. 28 & 30
   Civility as dialogic professionalism.

Week 11: Nov. 4 & 6
   Discussion: *Dialogic Education*, parts IV & V (chapters 8-11); final chapters of *Health Communication*.
   Application of *Dialogic Education* principles to health care profession.

Week 12: Nov. 11 & 13
   Praxis of organizational civility: Politeness, prickliness. Introduction to Capstone assignment.

Week 13: Nov. 18
   Organizational citizenship; special reading and discussion assignment: intercultural civility and the health care professional.

November 24-28: Thanksgiving holiday

Week 14: Dec. 2 & 4
   Capstone assignment: Professional civility and the health care professional. Discussion/presentation.

   Final paper due: December 12, 1:15 - 3:15 p.m.
Author Identifications

Ronald C. Arnett (Ph.D., Ohio University, 1978) is Professor and Chair of the Affiliated Departments of Communication and English at Duquesne University. Professor Arnett is a philosopher of communication. He has written over 50 articles and 4 books and has served on editorial boards of journals in communication and in business ethics. His most recent book is *Dialogic civility in a cynical age: Community, hope, and interpersonal relationships* (with Pat Arneson) (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999).

Stephen A. Cox (Ph.D., University of Missouri, 1996) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Organizational Communication at Murray State University. His primary research agenda focuses on employee exit, employee voice, and interpersonal communication in organizations.

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John Warren (Doctoral candidate, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) has taught the introductory communication course, the introductory performance studies course, and served as the Assistant Director for the Introductory Communication Course. His research includes cultural studies, performance studies, and communication pedagogy.
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Manuscripts published in the *Annual* are not restricted to any particular methodology or approach. They must, however, address issues that are significant to the basic course. Articles in the *Annual* may focus on the basic course in traditional or non-traditional settings. The *Annual* uses a blind reviewing process. Three members of the Editorial Board read and review each manuscript. However, manuscripts without a focus on the basic course should be submitted to other journals. The Editor will reject a manuscript without review if it is clearly outside the scope of the basic course.

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All complete submissions must be received by MARCH 1, 2001 to be considered for publication in the next *Basic Communication Course Annual*. Submissions received after that date will be considered for subsequent issues.