Revising Public Speaking Theory, Content, and Pedagogy: A Review of the Issues in the Discipline in the 1990's

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Revising Public Speaking Theory, Content, and Pedagogy: A Review of the Issues in the Discipline in the 1990's

Nancy Rost Goulden

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Public Speaking Reform

In the 1990's the on-going trend to redefine the curriculum and scope of the discipline was reflected in departmental name changes, new course and program offerings, and most tellingly, the deletion of the word "speech" from the name of our national organization. In spite of these evolutionary developments, basic public speaking courses have not been abandoned as an outdated area for instruction, but have remained firmly situated at the heart of what we teach. The latest national survey in 1996 of the basic communication course (Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999) shows that public speaking is still the dominant (55%) introductory course offered at the responding institutions. The basic public speaking course continues to generate large numbers of students and teaching hours while also consuming large amounts of personnel time and departmental resources. It often is the course by which outsiders identify and define the discipline.
Public speaking continues to hold a central position as a university course at a time when new theories and pedagogies are stimulating reexamination of what and how we teach. Not only has the communication discipline been strongly influenced in recent years by perspectives related to constructionist view of social interaction, feminist and intercultural issues, and power, but these same topics have promoted introspection and change in higher education in many other disciplines. Because of the importance of this introductory course both within and beyond the communication field and because our discipline and higher education are both undergoing a period of reinvention, this is a particularly apt time to review the thinking of public speaking scholars who are speaking out about what they see as inappropriate or outdated assumptions and practices related to public speaking course content and pedagogy.

**Approach to the Study**

The purpose of this study is to locate and organize these public calls for change found in journal articles and conference papers from approximately the last ten years in order to answer the question: What are the primary reform issues related to the theory and teaching of public speaking raised by public speaking scholars and educators in this time period? This compilation of essays is also designed to serve as a resource for those who wish to find information about specific issues and for those who are interested in current emphases and status of public speaking reform initiatives in general. Making this body of literature more readily accessible
promotes validation for those who are in harmony with the authors in their beliefs about how the basic public speaking course can be adapted for changing times. The collective power of the unique ideas and arguments in the essays reviewed may also provide impetus for promoting reasoned change in our understanding and teaching of the basic public speaking course.

The first search for reform articles was conducted using the ERIC Database for the 1990's. Then all issues of *Basic Communication Course Annual* 1990-1999 and the bibliographies of materials located in the ERIC search were scanned to find additional items. Sources that primarily focused on how to implement teaching techniques (e.g. use of technology, adaptation of the course for special groups) or specific programs were excluded, as were sources dealing with change issues related to basic communication courses as a whole and administration of a basic speech course.

The types of sources of the remaining 27 essays were then noted. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the "position" papers were originally written and presented orally as convention papers, a format that by combining written and oral presentations lends itself well to the reformer's pleas. Of the print publications, many are from *Basic Communication Course Annual*, with a small representation of articles published in *Communication Education*. Some articles included an empirical study, but the more common format was to make an argument supported by authority, often from outside the discipline.
The central issues from each essay were identified and categorized into appropriate categories. These categories ultimately are based on what the reformers believe about the theoretical nature of public speaking and public speaking instruction. Therefore, before the issues themselves are presented and discussed, the background of public speaking theory and the sources of that theory are explored.

Theoretical Background and Nature of Public Speaking Courses

Individually and collectively public speaking courses operate under accepted theoretical templates made up of a basic theory and two corollaries that follow from the foundational theory. The theoretical base for all public speaking courses begins with beliefs about what composes effective communication (Hess & Pearson, 1992; Lucas, 1999). Most public speaking practitioners have standards of what makes a good speech and claim they recognize the features of a "good speech" when they hear it and see it. Using this basic theory of the speaking characteristics that succeed with audiences, educators in public speaking take the next logical step by determining theoretical corollaries of what content and skills should be taught and how the content and skills should be taught so students will be able to enact the features of effective speaking.
Revising Public Speaking

There are three major sources that influence basic public speaking theory and the two theoretical corollaries. These are: tradition, textbooks/publishers, and practitioners/scholars.

Tradition

Hess and Pearson (1992) trace the foundational theory of the nature of effective speaking back to Aristotle's *The Rhetoric*, move on through Modern Rhetoric of the 19th century and into the present era, noting that for the past 80 years there has been little significant change in the theory. They acknowledge there have been minor trends that reflect adjustment of the basic theory, but for the most part it has remained intact. And since content of courses is dependent on the theory of what makes effective speaking, course content has also been relatively constant and highly dependent on classical beliefs about effective speaking and what should be taught (Hugenberg & Moyer, 1998). Public speaking as a course usually remains centered around Aristotle's three kinds of proof and some version of the classical five cannons. The content may have been streamlined; the labels and organization of the content may have changed; informative speaking, inductive reasoning, perhaps Monroe's motivated sequence and a recognition of diversity in audiences have been added, but at the center, today's public speaking teachers for the most part teach what public teachers have traditionally taught.

In all probability, this stability of public speaking theory of effectiveness and closely related course content
is not solely dependent on the habit and weight of tradition alone, but may also come from the general satisfaction and belief in the validity of the theory. Throughout time, the majority of those who determine public speaking course content have believed the traditional features are legitimately the most important attributes for successful speaking and the best topics to include in the course. Hess and Pearson (1992) support this view. "[T]his special theory is certainly well-constructed and very useful" (p. 19).

**Textbooks/publishers**

The resistance to change is reinforced by the practices of textbook authors and publishers. Yoder and Davilla (1997) point out the influence of textbooks on course content and procedural decisions. "Course objectives, assignments, activities, and tests are developed in tandem with the adopted textbook" (p. 12). Of the large number of public speaking texts available, many, if not most, are remarkably similar. In their study of six public speaking texts, Berens and Nance (1992) reported that although all the texts were "not identical" (p. 13), they were "quite similar in their scope (topics covered) and pedagogy" (p. 14).

Hugenberg (1994) explains that we have almost constant replication of virtually the same public speaking texts because authors consciously or unconsciously recognize that the safe way to have a successful public speaking text is to stay very close to the model of the top selling books in the field. Market-conscious writers and publishers respond to peer reviewers' (Sproule, 1991)
Revising Public Speaking

and teachers' messages that discourage major changes in texts. Yoder and Davilla (1997) in their survey of students' and teachers' responses related to textbook features reported that "consistency of the text with their current course design" (p. 29) was one of the top three factors that influenced teachers in their selection of public speaking textbooks.

Radical new approaches by authors are often discouraged or ignored by the publishing companies (Sproule, 1991). In their content analysis study of 12 popular public speaking textbooks, Hess and Pearson (1992) discovered these texts all conformed to similar content coverage. They conclude, "[t]his finding suggests that even though writers may not always be in agreement about the facts, pressure to standardize may keep them writing about the same concepts" (p. 27). Hugenberg (1994) substantiates this belief: "[e]ditorial staffs of publishing companies follow a golden rule when preparing a textbook: The book must be 80% old and 20% new. And they cheat on the 20% new because they are more comfortable with 10-15% new material" (p. 22). And so, because of tradition, merit, and publishing conservatism, classical theory and content remain in a predominant and fixed position of public speaking theory and content today.

Practitioners/scholars

The primary voice for change is that of teachers and course directors of public speaking. From their observations and hands-on experimentation, educators develop their own theories both about the salient features of ef-
fective speaking and what course content and pedagogy should be. They may create a minor theory that is only a slight variation on the standard theories they have been exposed to in their training and in textbooks, or they may have an epiphany that leads to a major shift in focus for public speaking theory. The literature search on this topic confirms that in the past ten years a significant number of scholars were compelled to explore the state of public speaking and publicly call for change.

**ISSUES FOR REVISION FROM THE 1990'S**

This survey of the beliefs of those who write and speak about the theoretical and practical aspects of the public speaking course demonstrates that there is no unified position among reformers, either about what the nature of public speaking should be or how it should be taught. The tendency of the writers is to focus on isolated issues that are most resonant for the individual. The common thread is that something should be different from the way the writers perceive it to be at this time. Consequently, the proposed changes range from a return to the past to a major casting off of traditional thinking and practices. However when one looks at the collection of all the essays, there are patterns and trends that give some shape to the reform movement and appear to reflect related changes in thinking about public speaking courses.

These diverse issues are discussed by categories and are also presented in a graphic scheme that provides an overview of the issues and their categories. (See Figure 1.) The dialectic nature of reform (status quo as opposed
### I. Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dogmatism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Choice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Absolutism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relativism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Textbooks; Berens &amp; Nance, 1992; Hugenberg &amp; Moyer, 1998)</td>
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### II. Basic Theory of Effective Speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classical Characteristics</th>
<th>Research-Determined Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking Skills</strong></td>
<td>Thinking Skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Russ &amp; McClish, 1999; Hess, 1999; Macke, 1991)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Written practices</strong></td>
<td>Oral Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Textbooks)</td>
<td>(Haynes, 1990a, 1990b)</td>
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### III. Course Content/Skill

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<th>A. Needs</th>
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<td>(Benttschnelder &amp; Trank, 1990)</td>
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<td>(Buerkel-Rothfuss &amp; Kosloski, 1990)</td>
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<td><strong>External Basis</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Speaker</strong></td>
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## B. COURSE CONTENT/SKILLS CHOICES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Speech Content</th>
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</thead>
</table>

### Prospective
- Descriptive
  - (Textbooks from Foss & Foss, 1994, Zeman, 1990)
  - Hugenberg & Moyer study

### Form
- Creativity
  - Osborn, 1997

### Traditional
- Alternative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes/Assignments</th>
<th>Purposes/Assignments</th>
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### C. SPEECH TYPES/ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Transmission</th>
<th>Learning Facilitation</th>
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<td>(Grupas, 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Teacher as Authoritarian</th>
<th>Teacher as Facilitator</th>
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<td>(Buerkel-Rothfuss &amp; Kasloski, 1990)</td>
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<th>Receptive Student Behavior</th>
<th>Experiential Student Behavior</th>
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<th>Single Learning Style</th>
<th>Multiple Learning Styles</th>
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<th>Exclusive Teaching Methods</th>
<th>Inclusive Teaching Methods</th>
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<td>(Grupas, 1996, Hayward, 1993)</td>
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### Figure 1. Summary of Continua for Public Speaking

Theory and Pedagogy
to change) suggested a graphic representation that uses continua anchored at each end by opposing terms, showing the traditional viewpoint identified first (it falls at the far left of the continuum) and the progressive viewpoint presented second, representing the far right end of the continuum. The labels for the continua presented in this study were for the most part suggested by the language and concepts presented in the articles. Although the continua poles represent extremes, individual and institutional beliefs and practices may fall anywhere along a given continuum, and in some cases, beliefs and practices may embrace both end positions.

The issues and their representative continua are presented in the following order: (1) issues of perspective; (2) issues of theory of effective communication with an audience; (3) issues of corollary of course content/skills; and (4) issues of corollary of instructional approaches.

**Issues of Perspective**

The willingness or refusal of educators to change elements of the public speaking course depends heavily on one's epistemological orientation about the "truth" of what they already believe about public speaking. There appear to be at least two major perspectives that influence many of the specific beliefs related to what we "know" about public speaking. The first set represents an overarching pair of divergent epistemological views, **Dogmatism** and **Choice**. The second similar, yet slightly different, pair includes **Absolutism** and **Relativism**. Both "dogmatism" and "absolutism" suggest a
very high level of confidence that what one believes is the one and only "truth." The distinction is that "absolutists" insist that their belief covers all circumstances equally well. The terms used for the poles of this second continuum are taken from Brummet's 1986 essay that laid out a model representing public speaking students' attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral growth from an absolutist-operating stance to a relativist stance. Brummet notes that use of the model is not limited to public speaking students and their classroom behavior.

It is not unusual to hear course directors and instructors of public speaking make dogmatic and absolute remarks about what they see as essential public speaking behaviors such as, "If the speaker does not have an explicit preview of the main points in the introduction, it's all over. It just cannot be an effective speech" or "A speaker who says 'um' repeatedly distracts an audience so much that nothing else in the speech really matters."

Perhaps the best examples of dogmatism and absolutism are found in public speaking textbooks. In their 1992 textbook study, Berens and Nance observed that the common approach in the six texts they analyzed was to present students with a "list of things to do" (p. 4). Hugenberg and Moyer's 1998 study of five successful public speaking textbooks continues and expands the evidence for dogmatism and absolutism using as examples pages of statements taken from the texts that are overwhelmingly dogmatic in nature. Repeatedly textbook readers are told this is the behavior you must adopt to walk on the path to public speaking success. Hugenbarger and Moyer (1998) point out that the textbook authors' instructions, like true dogma, are
largely unsupported and simply proclaim. "Since many [of] these claims are not supported, it is inconceivable to us that they are advanced as if they were fact. They are not fact; they are mere conjecture seemingly based on tradition and historic practice" (p. 166).

What Hugenberg and Moyer (1998) are recommending is that textbooks should instead present recommendations that represent the other end of the continuum, Choice. "It would be better to admit that these ideas are simply pieces of advice based on the rich tradition of teaching public speaking and/or a wealth of practical experience" (p. 166).

Dalton (1997) shifts the focus from dogmatic texts to dogmatic classroom approaches that insist students must function as unthinking machines who are required, without question, to accept and carry out the beliefs of the teacher. She asks for a perspective that includes student choice. "It is imperative from the very beginning, that teachers of the basic public speaking course inform their students that they do not have to think like their teacher, but they do have to think!" (p. 5). In addition to these concerns about dogmatic practices, many of the reports found in the content and pedagogy sections are directed toward moving away from the absolutist view to a relativistic view that would guide selections of content and pedagogy based on the composition of the student population and their needs.

These issues of perspective generated some of the most passionate responses found in the essays. Making a decision between the authoritarian approach of dogma and the more democratic approach of choice is foundational to all teaching, and later in the essay, ad-
ditional sub-issues related to these perspective are presented. Unfortunately, there are practical considerations that discourage the abandonment of dogmatic and absolutist practices in public speaking texts and classrooms. Many students, and teachers also, seek the security of one set recipe for effective speaking. The concept of teaching public speaking without the security of "one right answer," while not new, is truly revolutionary. It is encouraging to see scholars from our discipline embracing such a fundamental change related to student learning.

Theory of Characteristics of Effective Communication with an Audience

Not surprisingly, the first continuum that represents the basic public speaking theory of effective speaking characteristics has Classical Characteristics as the left side traditional focus. The partner on the right side is Characteristics Determined by Current Research.

In the classical camp are the great preponderance of advocates who support the traditions of Aristotle, Socrates, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian. The Hugenberg and Moyer (1998) and the Berens and Nance (1992) textbook studies endorse the opposite end of the continuum recommending Current Research to determine the elements of effective speaking. It is a little difficult to know where to locate the stance of Russ and McClish (1999) who propose that the basic public speaking course be designed around Plato's Phaedrus. Although they advocate a text from the Classical Era, the theory
of effective speaking characteristics they promote seems to represent a progressive rather than traditional basis. They write, "we recommend assigning a public speaking text that was written not to describe the minute details of the art, but to inspire students to rethink the generalizations and assumptions they bring to the podium" (p.320).

Russ and McClish 's (1999) rejection of the external, prescriptive approach to speech preparation and presentation ("minute details of the art") leads to a second dialectic related to the basic theory of what makes effective speaking. The suggestion here is that the effective speaker does not so much need skills of composition and delivery, but instead requires critical thinking skills that develop from personal reflection. This continuum is labeled Speaking Skills and Thinking Skills. Hess (1999) reports that he has moved the course he teaches away from the external skills that evaluators or audiences see and toward the internal thinking skills. In his scheme, the general areas of personal cognition and student speaking practices are guided by the framework of an ethical perspective. Hess states, "Rather than teaching the students how, this approach teaches the students why, and the how naturally follows" (p. 319). Macke (1991) reaches a similar conclusion that the effective speaker is not a performer but an alert, aware person who is actively thinking. He states, 'The question of what should be included in the 'basic course' of speech instruction should, thus, not be 'What can we teach students to 'do' with themselves?—how can we fill up their notebooks with information?,' but 'How can we teach students to think about, to think of themselves?'" (p.140).
Most of the scholars whose work and ideas are shared in this essay are asking for fairly limited modifications to beliefs about, and methods of, teaching public speaking. In contrast, Haynes (1990a, 1990b) in his landmark proposals for moving from a writing based approach for public speaking to a true oral base has proposed a fundamental redefinition of what public speaking is in an electronic media age and what characteristics are needed in contemporary society for effective speaking. The continuum that represents this major departure from traditional theory of the characteristics of effective speaking is labeled Written Practices and Oral Practices.

Haynes (1990a, 1990b) claims that the traditional approach to public speaking relies on writing-based thinking. Notice that his label of “writing-based thinking” refers to structured patterns that direct speaker thinking about speech composition rather than the personal reflection and exploration Russ and McClish, Hess, and Macke promote. Haynes supports the writing composition connection by pointing to a common characteristic of public speaking texts: "enormous effort goes into describing the process of constructing speeches that is remarkably like the writing-based rhetoric of freshman composition courses" (Haynes, 1990b, p. 92 ). Haynes (1990a) further illustrates the prevalence of the writing mode model in public speaking instruction by noting the current emphasis on "division of the world into dichotomies" (p.90). Examples of this emphasis on order and structure are: typical public speaking class activities designed to test arguments and evidence, the conventions of using stock organizational patterns, the oral sharing of speech organization, including the sub-
structure of the speech, with the listening audience. Haynes (1990a) contrasts these left-brained writing behaviors to speech-based thinking and discourse, characterized by natural flow or continuity rather than deliberate structuring and a lack of methodical examination and testing of ideas and strategies before presentation.

An additional difference between the pre-set writing approach of creating texts to be presented orally and the spontaneous, flexible oral approach is further highlighted in the partnership of writing practices with a reliance on "absolute truths and falsehoods," (Haynes, 1990a, p. 90). Haynes (1990b) points to the trap of inconsistency dogmatic and absolutist public speaking texts fall into when they leave no room for deviation from the set speech. [Textbooks] "mention the importance of adapting to feedback from the audience early on but then devote their efforts to teaching the construction of fixed texts that deter if not preclude such adaptation." (p. 92).

In the "oral practices" approach as proposed by Haynes (1990b), the primary efforts of the speaker would be to become so thoroughly immersed in the speech subject that, in effect, at the moment of speaking, the speakers could pull from their files of knowledge and compose the best speech for that specific audience. No longer tied down by the paraphernalia of fixed text such as manuscript and extensive notes, the speaker would be free to carry on authentic interaction with the audience. The characteristics of the effective speech in the electronic media age would focus on conversational, intimate, almost communal, sharing of knowledge by the "expert" speaker.
Haynes’s sketch of this new model of an effective speech is a logical extension of the shift in emphasis from conventional classroom public speaking behaviors to the emphasis on thinking proposed by other scholars in this section. The idea of changing the paradigm of speech preparation to focus on the interior rather than the exterior, to give speakers the freedom to create unique messages for specific audiences at the time of presentation rather than relying on external rules and templates is exciting, provocative, and somewhat frightening as are most major changes. This is unexplored territory, and there is the whispered fear that public speaking teachers either will not know how to teach “oral practices” or there will be nothing to teach. Fortunately, for the educators who have the courage to move toward this new theory of speech characteristics in the electronic era, several of the writers who address the issues related to the corollaries of content and pedagogy have been thinking along lines that may be helpful in teaching a new kind of speechmaking.

Corollary of Content/Skills That Contribute to Students Becoming Effective Speakers

Although the group of essays in this section, generally, deals with more specific and concrete issues than the essays that focus on theory, the section begins with consideration of the abstract criteria that inform the process of making decisions about content and skills.

Determination of whose and what needs to address. The first continuum reflects what practitioners believe the criteria base for content decisions should be,
either an External Basis or Student Communication Needs. These two poles are suggested in Bendtschneider and Trank's 1990 survey of instructors, students, and alumni that was designed to discover how successfully topics and skills taught in the public speaking course met the often divergent needs of the respondents.

The traditional approach at the left side of the continuum, related to the dogmatic bias, is External Basis. This represents the situation when the course content is set by textbooks, teacher preference, departmental policy, post-graduation employment preferences, and civic speaking expectations rather than the opposite pole based on specific knowledge of the communication needs of the students enrolled in the course. An alternative wording for this dichotomy is found in Buerkel-Rothfuss and Kosloski's 1990 essay in which they look at organizational theories as a means to evaluate and identify possible research questions related to basic communication courses. Three of the theories they put forth essentially partner task or work concerns (the analogue of External Basis) against human concerns (Student Communication Needs).

Within the grab bag of External Basis, Sproule (1991) speaks up for privileging society's need for speakers who can carry on a "reasoned discussion of civic issues" (p.1) in public life over the trend of producing speakers to fulfill the needs of the world of commerce, another external need. He suggests that what could be interpreted as a student needs focus, the need for career success, is driven by the historical trend of teaching a model that fits the needs of the professional and business world.
Jenefsky (1996) supports an **External Basis** for course content decisions similar to Sproule's. She sees the objective of learning to be the production of effective speakers in the public sphere who meet the needs of addressing social injustices. In her vision of the ideal classroom, however, the strong source for content decisions would be the **Student Communication Needs** for self-expression. She believes that by speaking "with authority about their own lives both within contexts that feel like home and those that feel alienating" (p. 352), students will become empowered and be able to become spokespersons for social change.

A second area of concern related to the needs-basis for content decisions focuses not on interested parties' competing goals but on which set of student needs should determine the content of the course. In his essay, Matula (1995) introduces the terms "outcome paradigm" and "ritual/process approach" that are borrowed for this continuum. Inherent in the two poles of the **Outcome** and **Process** continuum, which may be the operationalization of the **Speaking Skills/Thinking Skills** continuum discussed above, is the question of whether student needs are best fulfilled by focusing on the outcome of speech performance or on the "communication processes such as devising ideas for speeches, writing the speech, and thinking about the speech afterwards" (p. 4). Matula champions the process approach and its benefits by recommending that public speaking classes need a better balance between the product and the process, including evaluation of the process.

Matula's ideas about outcome and process are also supported by Dalton (1997) when she writes, "I argue that the main point of public speaking is not structure"
or performance, but rather communicating something meaningful, developing ideas, justifying and providing rationale for arguments, and bringing community together" (p. 6). Dalton's understanding of the elements of the process also have implications for the next needs area—the opposing forces of needs and concerns of the speaker as opposed to the needs of the audience.

Michael Osborn, one of the co-authors of a widely-used public speaking text, in his essay (1997) reflects on the metaphors he discovered embedded in the textbook following the production of a new edition. One of the metaphors is that of "student as climber." He observers that both speakers and listeners build barriers through their fears and suspicions that form a mountain between them and that part of the process of learning about public speaking is that both speaker and listeners can learn how to climb to the top of the mountain and meet each other. Recognizing the needs and concerns of both speaker and audience forms the continua simply labeled "Speaker" on the left and "Audience" on the right.

Rowan (1995) expresses concern about the dominance of speaker-needs over audience-needs perspective advocated in public speaking texts. This unbalanced focus is especially troublesome when students are instructed to develop goals, purposes, and objectives for their speeches that overlook the role of the audience. Perhaps Osborn's "top of the mountain" and Rowan's balanced focus represented the ideal shared social construction of meaning in the middle of the continuum.

Choice of course content and skills. Issues related to what content or skill areas are necessary or desirable in public speaking courses follow from decisions
related to needs. The perennial question for speech educators who teach a traditional speaking skills course is whether the primary efforts in the course should focus on Delivery or Content. Siddens (1998) explored teacher beliefs about the relative importance of the two areas in his survey of teaching assistants and faculty at two universities. His results appear to confirm what is suggested by the relative coverage of "delivery" and "content" in public speaking texts. Most teachers responded that they believe both are important, but if they have to choose one over the other, content is the overwhelming victor.

This dialectic has some relationship with the dialectic Speaking Skills and Thinking Skills discussed in the section "Theory of Characteristics of Effective Communication with an Audience" where the writers (Russ and McClish, 1999 and Macke, 1991) suggest that speaking skills grow out of thinking skills rather than through a mechanistic drill approach to delivery. Such a stance also places the views of these educators in the Content area of the continua.

The next course content/skills continuum is closely related to the conflicting perspectives of dogmatism and choice. The labels Prescriptive and Descriptive reflect the two approaches of telling students exactly what to do in speech preparation and presentation as opposed to providing students with stimuli or a menu of choices from which to make independent decisions about their speeches.

As pointed out earlier, the textbook studies of Berens and Nance (1992) and Hugenberg and Moyer (1998) confirm the dominance of prescriptive content in influential textbooks. In contrast, a few texts such as the

It is not merely self-determination that the advocates of the descriptive end of the continuum advocate, but also self-exploration on the road to making one's own choices. Zeman (1990) centers this self-discovery on the cannon of invention. He looks at and rejects the prescriptive content of several public speaking texts and replaces it with prompts that allow students to center on their own unique discoveries rather than just follow a formula, a process that parallels the emphasis on thinking skills as opposed to speaking skills in Haynes' *Oral Practices* model.

Osborn (1997) introduces the dichotomy of Form and Creativity, two content/skills areas closely related to Prescription and Description. He first asserts that students need to be taught form. This is a comforting argument for those who in their imaginations are projecting the great "content vacuum" of Haynes' vid-oral style. Osborn supports this claim by arguing that people have a need "to shape the world around us to our needs and purposes—to impose order and purpose upon the chaos or sensations that surrounds us . . . . [W]e need to give our students the gift of a sense of form" (p. 3). Osborn balances the two end points of the continuum by supporting what he considers a neglected content focus in public speaking courses, creativity. "I would emphasize that public speaking nourishes—or ought to nourish—creativity in students . . . . Creative speaking encourages originality of language, thought, and expres-
sion as students explore themselves and their world in classroom speeches" (p. 5).

**Types of speeches and speaking assignments.** One of the most pervasive and enduring prescriptions related to the content and skills of public speaking courses is the division of all speaking into Persuasive and Informative speeches (Zeman, 1987). Although occasionally ceremonial speeches and speeches to entertain are included in courses and texts, the prescriptive codification of the course usually forces course organization and assignments to fit into the two major categories. The obvious continuum to begin this section of types of speeches and speaking assignments is Traditional Speech Purposes/Assignments as opposed to Alternative Speech Purposes/Assignments.

Under the Traditional category are both the speech contexts/purposes from the classical era and the division of speeches by informative and persuasive purposes. Two of the reform articles in this section want change that would locate speech assignments more closely to the classical contexts/purposes of speaking than to the more contemporary purposes that often call for practical speeches designed for the business world. Both Horne and Mullins (1997) and Sproule (1991) support the belief that students need to be prepared to speak in the civic and ceremonial settings as classical orators were trained to do. In addition, they claim greater emphasis on epideictic and public-issue-oriented speech assignments would provide cultural and societal benefits, namely "clarifying and transmitting cultural values" and "instigating civic virtues in modern societies" (Horne and Mullins, p. 5).
Sproule (1991) traces the steps by which "discourse has atrophied in a social climate that provides little space for reasoned discussion of civic issues" (p. 1) as he reviews the movement since the time of the Civil War away from the classical purpose of public or civic speaking to speaking for personal success in the business world. He claims, "speech educators can accomplish all their current goals as well as some other useful objectives by giving students a wider context for visualizing themselves as speakers. By providing a broader model of public life it may be possible to strengthen the public sphere at the same time that we build more confident and competent speakers" (p. 11).

Two prominent public speaking textbook authors remain in the Traditional Purposes/Assignments camp with their support of the status quo division of speeches into those that have as their purpose "to inform" and "to persuade." Verderber (1991), when writing about what should be included in a basic public speaking course, states that speech assignment should be based on the informative and persuasive categories. Lucas (1999) does admit that there are alternatives to informative and persuasive speaking assignments, but his acknowledgment is more an afterthought to the central assumption that these are the two categories to be used for speaking assignments.

On the other hand, Zeman (1990) argues that there "is no real functional reason" (p. 1) for this traditional division of speeches into persuasive and informative sets and recommends that we break with this empty ritual and adopt what he terms the "propositional approach." He brings up the familiar argument that all communication is designed to influence and so a dis-
crete informative category may not even exist. Further support for this view comes from Dalton (1997) who concludes, "The distinction between informative and persuasive speaking is anachronistic at best" (p. 20).

Rowan (1995) gives further examples of the confusion that results from trying to force speeches into the informative classification. She claims part of the problem lies with a historical lack of clarity of what informative discourse even means. Sometimes it refers to subject matter, sometimes an arrangement form.

Based on his stance of supporting a theoretical shift away from using only writing-based features to including vid-oral based features, it is appropriate that Haynes (1990a) recommends that narrative speaking, an alternative speech assignment, be given a more important position than the traditional argumentative speaking. Dalton (1997) also recognizes the need to include oral-based thinking to reflect the place of orality in the culture. She sees using narrative speaking in the public speaking classroom as an appropriate and helpful response to these realities.

**Corollary of Instructional Approaches That Contribute to Students Becoming Effective Speakers**

In addition to considering improving the public speaking course by revising the basic theory and the content choices, scholars are also concerned with how the course is taught. Individual teachers probably have more latitude in this area than those of theory and content. Textbooks can shape or perhaps limit a teacher's
Instructional approaches through the use of material that lends itself well to a particular methodology, but most textual elements can be ignored or supplemented. Hence, this corollary is determined more by practitioners and scholars than by textbooks. Tradition, however, does play a role, in this case through the models of teaching in higher education that have been practiced in the past and that are widely retained today. Reports on papers that focus on pedagogical issues are arranged by (1) overall instructional perspective and (2) teaching methodologies.

**Overall instructional perspectives.** Teachers or course directors may not consciously decide and articulate their broad beliefs about teaching, but instead gradually make small decisions that form a perspective. The first of these overall perspectives about teaching is represented by the continuum set Knowledge Transmission on the left, opposing Learning Facilitation on the right. Grupas (1996) uses these terms to emphasize how instructional orientation affects a teacher's decisions about a course and day-to-day conduct of the course. The historical view that the instructor's primary job is to disseminate information, hopefully leading to knowledge, is still very common today. In many university and college classrooms, the picture is of the professor in the front sending words, often dogmatic and prescriptive, out to the students in their seats. Grupas (1996) is supporting changes in instructional practices that originate in teachers' perceptions that their main task is not to broadcast information, but to find and implement strategies to help their students learn the material and skills of the course.
The next continuum is logically related to educators' views of their teaching mission discussed above since it deals with the role of the teacher, this time in regard to authority. The tradition pole refers to the Teacher as Authoritarian and the progressive pole identifies the Teacher as Facilitator. The choice here is between the role of absolute ruler of both knowledge and classroom protocol or a role as an overseer who provides needed information and structures to enable the classroom to run smoothly so that learning may flourish. Although Buerkel-Rothfuss and Kasloski in their 1990 essay do not take a stand that supports any specific point on the continuum, they do provide a discussion of the variety of attitudes and behaviors a teacher may adopt relative to authority and rules, such as explicit and implicit rules, negotiable rules, and the syllabus as a source of rules.

The third general teaching perspective is based on the issue of whether students learn best in a classroom based on Receptive Student Behavior or Experiential Student Behavior. The picture above of the knowledge-transmission teacher requires Receptive Student Behavior. The contrasting picture of a busy classroom of students talking, working in groups, speaking, and demonstrating, represents Experiential Student Behaviors. Lucas (1999) strongly endorses this latter perspective. "[L]earning [public speaking] skills is an experiential process that requires extensive practice and repetition" (p. 78).

The fourth and final continuum that guides instructional decisions is based on the assumption of either a Single Learning Style or Multiple Learning Styles. Traditionally teachers have conducted their classes as if
all students learn in the same way, usually the preferred learning style of the teacher. Schaller and Callison (1998) call for the recognition that students have different comfort levels and different levels of success depending on whether or not the instruction is based on their preferred approaches to learning. They propose that public speaking educators base their planning on Gardner's seven intelligences and select activities and assignments that reflect a wide variety of intelligences and corresponding learning styles.

Grupas (1996) selects two opposing learning styles, the analytic learning style, the approach often used by those who base their instruction on a single style, and the relational learning style. The analytic learning style is based on the presumption that students learn best when material is highly organized, there is one "true" answer, and authority or research supports the information presented. These features are affiliated with what have been labeled as a “masculine teaching style” and “preferred male learning style.” In contrast the relational learning style is more in harmony with the terms “feminine teaching and learning styles.” In the relational learning style, students cooperate with each other and the teacher to learn. There is a lack of emphasis on hierarchy or status. Student experience is a source for learning and knowing. Multiple views and answers are possible. Grupas' (1996) extensive study was undertaken to create a plan for integrating women's preferred learning style into a public speaking class. She obviously supports a pedagogical view that, at the least, includes a relational learning style.
Instructional methodologies. The beliefs about roles and learning styles discussed in the previous section lead to instructional methodologies that are consistent with the course director or teacher's belief preferences. The papers that focus on how to best teach public speaking use a variety of labels for methods that are closely related and often used in concert. For the continuum, the umbrella terms for these methodologies are Exclusive Teaching Methods and Inclusive Teaching Methods. Under the Exclusive Teaching Methods, fall the traditional lecture method, the masculine teaching method and teacher-centered methods. The Inclusive Teaching Methods include experiential learning methods, active learning methods, feminist pedagogy, connected learning methods, and student-centered methods. Two authors (Grupas, 1996; and Hayward, 1993) champion the Inclusive Teaching approach and give arguments supporting their views in their papers.

DISCUSSION

Overview of Results

It is interesting and rather reassuring to see that in the nineties, scholars have produced work that covers all four theoretical categories used to organize the data in this study: perspectives; basic theory of what constitutes effective public speaking, course content and skills, and instructional approaches. The areas that receive the most attention are instructional approaches and selection of content and skills.
Figure 1 provides a way of looking at the planks of this reform platform both individually and collectively. But unlike political platforms that are worked out in face-to-face negotiations, this plan has been assembled out of the individual pieces that were independently and separately chosen and constructed, without deliberate intention of contributing to a larger program. Nevertheless, as a group, the work of these writers and speakers, forms a beginning foundation of contemporary theory and pedagogy for the basic public speaking course.

As one explores the reform literature, it is clear that although the approximately 25 writers have independent agendas, they are working from a shared set of values and influences. Although the paper topics vary, the reader keeps bumping into reform recommendations that challenge rigidity and old prescriptive formulae and recommendations that reject one way as opposed to multiple ways. The writers shift the spotlight from performance to process and from teacher to collaboration. These theoretical and pedagogical changes the writers discuss represent a new understanding of what constitutes public speaking from a social construction perspective in the electronic age, with redefined roles for speaker and audience and for teacher and student. One source of stimulus for these changes may well be the two essays published early in the decade by Jo Sprague (1992, 1993) that not only issued the challenge for rethinking and revitalizing the instructional communication and communication education research agendas, but also provided a summary of the educational and communication theoretical backgrounds that support new ways of thinking about what and how we teach.
DOMINANT ISSUES AND CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

The most obvious trend found in the reform literature is the general proposal for policies that abandon or alter the traditional positions at the left of the continua in favor of progressive positions on the right. The really big news that comes from the combined voices of these progressive reformers is that our discipline has the opportunity and means of revising the traditional theory of effective speaking from a focus on external speaking skills to one of thinking skills, the key to a contemporary model of a public speaking. Whether the traditional theory of public speaking is significantly altered depends on the willingness of the communication education community to make changes in the perspectives and pedagogy related to teaching public speaking. For widespread acceptance of this major paradigm shift, communication educators would have to surrender dogmatic, absolutist attitudes that stifle change and discourage responses to the varied backgrounds of students, the current culture, and disciplinary trends and research. To support the implementation of new public speaking theory, classrooms would be required that utilize the alternative pedagogies the reform writers advocate. These would be public speaking classes characterized by more flexibility, openness, responsiveness to the needs and nature of contemporary students and audiences in a diverse society, featuring high levels of democratic student participation.

These are changes that in most cases will occur slowly and incrementally. There will not be a revolution.

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We will not get up some morning next year and discover that public speaking as we have known it has disappeared forever. Hopefully, though, the discussion will continue. The essays reviewed in this study demonstrate that change is in the works. These essays are the descendents of earlier discussions about revision and improvement. That's how it works. We explore how things are going, ask questions, search for ideas that fit the current situation, and then make changes in our individual classrooms, courses, and curriculae, and share our beliefs and practices with the larger community.

Looking at this body of literature as a whole stimulates the asking of more questions and reveals areas where future research is needed. Since this report is based on the views of a limited number of leaders for change, it may present an incomplete picture of the beliefs and attitudes of speech educators throughout the nation about how public speaking can and should be updated. A study based on a national survey, specifically soliciting attitudes related to reform, would expand our initial understanding of revision issues. We also need studies that tell us more about the proposed changes and their impacts. Although some of the recommendations by reformers reviewed in this essay have been empirically studied, notably the teaching methodologies, many of the proposals are based on reasoning and anecdotal evidence. Multiple reports of field experiences and testing of how to teach public speaking by the "thinking leading to doing" method and "oral practices" approach would seem to be an essential starting point. Explorations of a workable balance between prescriptive and descriptive instruction and sources would also be helpful.
Any healthy discipline needs those who are willing to reexamine "how we have always done it" and look for ways to improve our academic endeavors. That tendency is alive and flourishing in the study of public speaking courses. May it continue and expand as the discipline confronts the challenge of creating a modern theory of public speaking.

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