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2
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I'd like to take this opportunity to make a few comments after finishing my final year as Editor of the Basic Communication Course Annual. I'll begin by offering my sincere thanks to the folks who have helped me with this task, then, by providing a preface to the essays in this 15th edition of the Annual, and, finally, by offering some final personal comments.

First, thanks to the members of the NCA Basic Course Commission for entrusting me to this assignment. The past three years have been quite a learning experience for me; one that I've enjoyed a lot. I hope I haven't let you down. Second, as always, thanks to each member of the Editorial Board for the time and energy spent reading and thoughtfully critiquing the essays. It really is your work that makes each issue of the Annual what it is. Finally, thanks to the authors for their careful attention to the reviewer suggestions when revising their manuscripts. It can sometimes be a daunting task. You have done well and your essays are now even more helpful to the field!

In the first essay, Judy Sims challenges our thinking about the use of video streaming to improve student speeches. Her results are valuable; particularly those she didn't anticipate finding. Her article points to the need for instructors to do more than merely consider using technology in the basic course; it is time to implement it if we claim to be student-centered.
The second and third essays ask us to reconceptualize our definitions of “at-risk” and “educational risk.” Deanna Fassett challenges us to redefine the inevitability of educational failure as an important human accomplishment. She argues, essentially, that educational success, failure, and risk are phase-like and a result of conflicting ideologies. As such, she urges us to consider how we define “at-risk,” as well as the strategies we implement with our students as a result. John Warren continues to challenge us by examining the complications of a performative pedagogy in the basic course. He, too, asks us to re-conceptualize what constitutes “educational risk” and “at-risk-ness” in the classroom.

In the fourth essay, Dwyer, Carlson, and Dalbey examine the important role of a public speaking curriculum to reduce communication apprehension. What makes their article unique, however, is that they focus on the impact of high school preparation on oral communication apprehension among college students. Although we might presume such an impact, it had not been validated in a scholarly study until now. Hence, their findings will be helpful to us as we find ourselves justifying the important role of public speaking fundamentals in the general education of students.

Finally, Turman and Barton offer an answer to the pressures of servicing large numbers of students in public speaking courses on a tight budget. The concept of using undergraduate instructor assistants to help in this regard is not new. However, their examination of the efficacy of using them might prove helpful to basic course directors who attempt to justify such an approach to administrators.
I have to say that 2001-2002 has been quite a year. The events of September 11th, the volatility of the stock market, and the reactions of the American people to these events show a real change in the cultural atmosphere. That change is reflected in this year's Annual, as well. The essays are certainly not "typical." And, yet, they certainly do yield interesting insight to the field. I might even go so far as to say that this issue reflects an educational risk, a departure from the norm of academic scholarship. This seems fitting in a year when what was "taken-for-granted" is no longer. I hope you enjoy what you read. But, more than that, I hope it challenges you to think differently about the basic course, about journalistic scholarship, and about the way we—the professorate—relate to our students and with each other.

Sincerely,
Deanna Sellnow
Streaming Student Speeches on the Internet: Convenient and “Connected” Feedback in the Basic Course ........................................................ 1
Judy Rene Sims

Undergraduate students enrolled in three sections of a basic speech course over a period of three semesters were surveyed regarding their evaluations of the video streaming of their speeches on the Internet as a method of feedback. Streaming video refers to motion video with accompanying audio that is delivered live or asynchronously and is available at the click of a mouse on a website. Students reported the viewing of their streamed speeches on the Internet to be a convenient and effective medium for feedback and an experience in connected learning that allowed them to share their speech with friends and family. To research this topic, speeches were videotaped and posted to a protected Internet site. Students then had the opportunity to access the site, view their speech, prepare a list of speech goals based on their viewing, and later evaluate the experience by means of a questionnaire.

On Defining At-Risk: The Role of Educational Ritual in Constructions of Success and Failure ................................................. 41
Deanna L. Fassett

By adopting an ethnomethodological approach to the analysis of focus group interviews with undergraduate students enrolled in and teachers of the introductory course in speech communication, this essay demon-
strates that what we understand to be a stable, objective aspect of reality—i.e., the inevitability of educational failure—is in fact a human accomplishment, the result of concerted, though unreflective, social action. This paper explores the ways in which students' and graduate teaching assistants' espousal of educational rituals may create and sustain their (or their students') risk of educational failure. Furthermore, the implications of such a perspective for graduate teaching assistants of the basic courses are examined.

Performative Pedagogy, At-Risk Students, and the Basic Course: Fourteen Moments in Search of Possibility .................................................. 83
John T. Warren

This essay sketches out the complications of a performative pedagogy in the context of a basic communication course, specifically examining how the course negotiates and constitutes what communication scholars have called “educational risk.” To do this, a collage of narratives are provided—a series of images which, when seen in totality, might generate a conversation about how communication studies could address the intersections of risk, critical performative pedagogy, and the classrooms of our basic communication courses. To initiate this conversation, the essay is grounded in the work of communication studies, education, philosophy, and performance studies. Taken together, the collage seeks to ask questions, pose problems, and initiate dialogue about how we might begin to re-conceptualize the issues of ‘at-risk-ness’ in our classrooms.

Impact of High School Preparation on College

viii

Published by eCommons, 2003 9
Oral Communication Apprehension .................................. 117
Karen Kangas Dwyer, Robert E. Carlson
and Jennifer Dalbey

This study examines the impact of high school public speaking skills training and public speaking experiences on college overall communication apprehension (CA) and public speaking context CA. The results show that public speaking skill-training in high school is significantly related to lower CA levels for students upon entering a college-level basic speech course. In addition, students who report more public speaking experiences both in the high school setting and outside the high school setting, tend to report lower overall CA and lower CA in the public speaking context.

Stretching the Academic Dollar:
The Appropriateness of Utilizing Instructor Assistants in the Basic Course .................................. 144
Paul D. Turman and Matthew H. Barton

As more universities across the country are feeling the pressures of providing an increasingly rigid financial accountability to tax payers and state legislatures, speech and communication departments find themselves in a precarious position. Namely, how can communication departments teach the budding number of students enrolled in their courses with little increase in budget, while continuing to produce effective speakers? One common answer to this dilemma involves the use of graduate students, and in some cases undergraduate students, as teaching assistants in the basic course. This study examines the efficacy of using undergraduate instructor assistants in the basic course at a large Midwestern University and addresses potential stumbling blocks in training, such as speaker
order and rater error. Thirty-eight undergraduate instructor assistants were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups and asked to grade four 10-minute persuasive speeches following their eight-week training course. An ANCOVA was used to examine significant differences across presentation grades for speakers in each group, while an ANOVA was used to determine differences in the quality of comments based on speaker order. No significant differences were identified in either analysis suggesting that when properly trained, undergraduate instructor assistants can grade consistently across multiple groups regardless of speaker order.

Author Identification .................................................. 169

Index of Titles .......................................................... 173

Index of Authors ......................................................... 186

Submission Guidelines .................................................. 189
Communication educators in both traditional and non-traditional classroom settings can benefit from knowledge about new teaching strategies and effective methods of feedback for their students. As Quigley and Nyquist (1992) claim, "providing feedback is central to the process of communication and central to instructors' efforts to facilitate student learning" (p. 324).

The traditional basic speech course that is offered in many universities provides practical instruction in techniques and skills to enable students to speak more effectively in public settings. Typical assignments in such courses require students to prepare and deliver speeches (see for example, McKerrow and German, 2000, p. 11; Jaffe, 2001, p. 18). In order to provide feedback, some instructors present students with only a written evaluation or rating instrument, while others may audiotape or videotape the speeches and accompany the tapes with some sort of written feedback (Hinton & Kramer, 1998; Quigley & Nyquist, 1992; Bankston & Terlip, 1994).

Indeed, one of the most effective forms of feedback may be for students to see themselves on tape. Video-self analysis has been used for feedback in a number of areas; for example, it has been used by instructors to evaluate their own teaching performance (Hougham,
1992; Krupnick, 1994; The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, 2002), conductors to improve their conducting techniques (Byo, 1994), golfers to perfect their golf swing (Guadagnoli, Davis, & Holcomb, 2002), tennis players to improve their serve (Yandell, 1991), and even by cyclists to gain valuable information about their riding techniques (Cuerdon, 1990).

Courses in disciplines other than communication also have used video-self analysis to provide feedback to students. According to Quigley & Nyquist (1992), the University of Washington School of Law used “collaborative video critique to assist students to practice advocacy skills in a simulated judiciary setting” (p. 326; Quigley, 1986). Social work classes also have used video in “the teaching of interviewing and counseling skills, such as using open-ended questions, paraphrasing, and summarizing” (Quigley & Nyquist, 1992, p. 327; Quigley, 1986). And, the use of video feedback in a dentistry course has provided students with the opportunity “to learn about the importance of specific verbal and non-verbal behaviors in their communication with patients” (Quigley & Nyquist, 1992, p. 327; Davis et al., 1988).

There are a number of ways in which course instructors can provide students with audio or videotaped copies of their performance. For example, basic course instructors can require students to bring a tape to class for each of their speeches so that the students then can have their own copy. Although this method can be effective, it does have its drawbacks. For example, a student may forget to bring a tape to class; in addition, the process of switching the tapes between speeches can utilize valuable class time. Instead, instructors can videotape the speeches consecutively on one or more tapes and
then make the tapes available for viewing in the campus library.

Although video self-analysis can be used for feedback in the basic speech course, some students consider it inconvenient in our fast-paced society to take the time either to find a VCR to playback their speech or to visit the library, cue up the tape, and view themselves. A solution to this problem of inconvenience may reside in a new technology known as streamed media. Streaming video or web-casting generally refers to motion video with accompanying audio that is delivered live or asynchronously and is available at the click of a mouse on a website. Although the screen size used to observe streaming video is considerably smaller than the screen size used for the viewing of traditional VHS videotape, streaming video offers numerous benefits including convenience, privacy, and the attractiveness of modern technology. This paper thus examines how the Internet-based resource of streaming video can be used by communication educators as a method of feedback for students in the basic speech course.

In order to understand the effectiveness of streaming video as a method of feedback for students in the basic course, it is useful to review the literature concerning (1) the pedagogical benefits of video self-analysis in the basic speech course, in communication labs, and as a component of the Speech Portfolio, (2) the pedagogical benefits of computer use and online instruction, (3) research regarding the use of streaming video in the basic course as a teaching strategy and method of feedback for students, and (4) other current uses of streaming video.
PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS OF VIDEO SELF-ANALYSIS

Quigley and Nyquist (1992), who describe video as a "tool with considerable power," examine the opportunities for learning that video can create in the performance course (p. 325). The authors suggest that the use of video feedback provides potential benefits including the opportunity to (a) "adopt a role similar to that of observer, (b) to identify or emphasize particular skills, (c) to receive feedback about specific skills...and (d) to compare different performances" (p. 325; see also, Frandsen, Larson, & Knapp, 1968).

Quigley and Nyquist (1992) also report that "research supports the idea that video technology is effective [in the basic speech course] when used in conjunction with an instructor's constructive feedback" (p. 325; Deihl, Breen & Larson, 1970; McCroskey & Lashbrook, 1970).

According to Hinton & Kramer (1998), research conducted by Bankston and Terlip (1994) revealed that the use of videotape feedback in the basic communication course appeared to have "positive effects on students' perceptions of the quality of their speeches, and resulted in perceptions that more closely matched instructors" (p. 152).

Research conducted by Hinton and Kramer (1998) examined whether having students privately watch their own videotaped speeches affected their self-reported levels of communication competence and speaker apprehension. Results from the data, which were collected from students enrolled in six sections of a public
speaking course, indicated that the videotape feedback "helped those with low competency levels to gain more confidence in their communication skills than those with high competency levels" (p. 158). According to the authors, "those with the most to gain (low competencies and high apprehensives) reported relatively larger improvements while those with the least to gain (high competencies and low apprehensives) reported limited improvements or even declines" (pp. 157-158). As the authors state, "this suggests that the basic course, and the use of the videotapes, provides [sic] the most benefit for those with the most need" (p. 160).

A review of the literature also revealed the use of videotape feedback in university communication labs or speech centers designed to assist students in the development of their public speaking skills. For example, in the University of Richmond, Virginia speech center, student speeches are video-recorded, and the tapes are reviewed later with the student by a consultant (Hobgood, 2000). Students are encouraged to videotape their presentations to develop a kind of visual resume of their speeches. According to Hobgood (2000), "as the student compiles...speeches over the course of an undergraduate career, it becomes possible to track progress, and note the need for improvement where necessary, according to the student's own aims for proficiency" (p. 346). Thus, as speech centers and communication labs integrate the use of video self-analysis as part of their program, the practice clearly offers some benefits for the students.

Jensen and Harris (1999) discuss the use of videotape and video self-analysis as a component of the Public Speaking Portfolio. The authors conclude that using videos alone or in combination can encourage students
toward mindfulness — that is — a state of mind in which the student actively draws distinctions, makes meaning or creates categories (Jensen & Harris, 1999, p. 211 and 225; Langer, Chanowitz & Blank, 1985).

PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS OF COMPUTER USE AND ONLINE INSTRUCTION

A review of the literature regarding the benefits of computer use and online instruction for students suggests that computer use may actually help motivate students (Morris & Naughton, 1999). And, Mills (1998) claims that “online students show better motivation, better learning, and higher optimism than onground students” (Shedlestsky & Aitken, 2001, p. 212).

STREAMING VIDEO IN THE BASIC COURSE

The literature, however, revealed a lack of research about the use of streaming video (web-casting) as a teaching strategy and method of feedback for students in the basic course. Research in the use of such educational technology is needed. In fact, a Web-based Commission that included representatives from the U.S. House and Senate, as well as educators, met in 2000 to study Internet-based education and called for expanded research on educational technology (Woodall, 2000, p.1). The Commission concluded that “the power of the Web to transform learning [is] so vital to the nation’s economic future that the country should resolve to provide schools with high-speed Internet access with the same determination that fueled the space race” (Woodall, 2000, p.1).
OTHER USES OF STREAMING VIDEO

The literature did reveal numerous other current uses of streaming video including the web-casting of county board meetings (Linn, 2001), travel destinations (Williams, 2001), instruction (Berger, 2001; Creighton & Buchanan, 2001; Gussow, 2001; Hanss, 2001; Hochmuth, 2001; Van Horn, 2001; Bates, 2000; Mortensen, Schlieve & Young, J., 2000; and Saxon, 1999), British political speeches (M2 Presswire, 2001), historical storytelling (Business Wire, 2001), corporate messages (Foley, 2001), press conferences (Goldman, 1999) news clips (Lasica, 1998) and a university commencement (Dupagne, 2000).

In sum, the literature suggests numerous pedagogical benefits of video self-analysis for students enrolled in a performance or basic speech course, as well as motivational benefits associated with computer use and online instruction. Although the literature addressed numerous uses of streaming video, no studies were found exploring the use of streaming student speeches as a teaching strategy and method of feedback in the university basic speech course. Such research is needed and could provide university educators and others with valuable information concerning the nature and effectiveness of Internet-based education. As many universities are currently positioning themselves to provide digital media solutions campus wide, this research complements such efforts.

The present study therefore was designed to explore the nature and effectiveness of the video streaming of student speeches on the Internet as a method of feed-
back in the basic speech course. The following research questions thus were posited: (1) What percentage of students in a basic speech course would choose to view their speech on the Internet, if given the opportunity? (2) Of the students who would choose to view their speech on the Internet, where would they view it, e.g., a computer lab on campus or home computer, etc.? (3) If students had the opportunity to view their speech on the Internet and on a VCR in the campus library, which medium would they prefer? (4) Which qualities (28k to 56k vs. 100k to 768k) of streaming video would the students use? (5) Of the students who choose to view their speech on the Internet, what do they think about the effectiveness of it as a method of feedback?

METHOD

Participants

The population for this study was composed of a total of 80 undergraduate university students enrolled in three sections of “Fundamentals of Speech,” a basic speech course¹ at a mid-western university; all 80 of the students had an equal chance of being included in the research study, which was conducted over a period of three semesters. Of the 80 students, 73 students (91%) chose to participate — that is — complete a question-

² The basic speech course, “Fundamentals of Speech,” is defined in the university catalogue as “Fundamentals of effective public speaking from both speaker and listener perspectives. Preparation, presentation, and evaluation of student speeches. Special attention given to topics related to cultural diversity” (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 2002-2003 Catalogue, p. 86).
Streaming Student Speeches

The random sample thus included 25 students from a summer 2001 basic speech course, 21 students from a fall 2001 basic speech course, and 27 students from a spring 2002 basic speech course. The sample consisted of 46 (63%) women, 25 (34%) men and two students who did not report their gender. The sample included 68 Caucasian-Americans, two Hispanic-Americans, two According to Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000), "random sampling involves selecting a sample in such a way that each person in the population of interest has an equal chance of being included" (p. 126). As all 80 students in the population of interest were provided with the opportunity to participate in the research study, that is, complete the survey questionnaire, then the sample can be described as random. All members of the population of interest were administered a questionnaire; all 80 members of the population had an equal chance of being included in the study. The students were informed that they were not required to participate in the study. Only seven of the 80 students chose not to participate.

The sample included 63% women and 34% men; these percentages closely resemble the parent population of the students enrolled in three sections of the "Fundamentals of Speech" courses from which the data were gathered during the three semesters when the research was conducted. Sixty-five percent of the parent population were women and 35% were men. It should be noted, as indicated previously, that two (3%) of the students in the sample chose not to report their gender.

The percentage of women and men in the sample also closely resembles the percentage of women and men attending the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UW-Eau Claire) during the time when the data were gathered. According to Gilboy (2002), 1723 women and 820 men attended the UW-Eau Claire during the summer 2001; 6395 women and 4241 men attended the UW-Eau Claire during the fall 2002, and 5837 women and 3926 men attended the UW-Eau Claire during the spring 2002. Thus, when the data were gathered, a total of 61% of the students who were attending the UW-Eau Claire were women, and 39% of the students were men.
Streaming Student Speeches

cans, one Latino (Colombian), and two Asian-American (Hmong).  

All of the students were treated in accordance with the ethical standards outlined by the university's Institutional Review Board; the students were briefed about the research and provided with a consent form. Issues concerning anonymity and confidentiality were addressed. The students were informed that the Internet site to which their speeches would be posted was protected and could be accessed only with a password and web address. Students from the fall 2001 and spring 2002 courses also were asked to sign a form in which they granted permission for their speech to be posted to the protected Internet site.

Apparatus and Procedure

A VHS video camcorder, located in the back of the classroom, was used to videotape the speeches from the first assignment of the semester; the assignment required the students to deliver an informative speech of self-introduction. The speeches were recorded consecutively on one or more tapes.

The videotapes were then delivered to the university's Web Development office, where a student worker digitized, compressed and posted the speeches to the protected web site, which was developed especially for the speech course. The posting process usually required at least one day. The speeches were posted in two different qualities of streaming video, including 28k to 56k

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4 Data concerning the race and ethnicity of the subjects were gathered from the students speeches, as well as from university records sent to the instructor.
Streaming Student Speeches

and 100k to 768k. A separate file was created for each round of speeches. For example, a file was created for the first seven speeches, and a new file was formed for the next set.

After the speeches were posted, the students had the opportunity to view their speech on the Internet by accessing the web site. In order to access the web site, the students were provided with a password and the web-site address. Students with passwords were then able to access the site and see themselves, as well as the other student speakers in the class. The students could access the Internet from a computer lab on campus, their home computer or a computer located at another location.

It should be noted that each videotape also was dubbed at the campus Media Development Center, and each copy was placed on reserve in the campus library. Students were informed that they could view their speech on videotape in the library or by means of the Internet.

Students were advised that some of the best feedback they could receive would be for them to see themselves. Students thus were told to view their speech — on the Internet, in the library or both — and then prepare a list of at least three speech goals, based on their viewing, that they would like to work on during the semester. The goals were to address specific speech behaviors; for example, posture, diction, and eye contact. Students were notified that their goals would be distributed to the class on a list to be used later by their peers and the instructor during speech critiques (see Appendix A). It should be noted that the students also were provided with written comments about their speech from the instructor; the feedback, prepared in
the form of a rating instrument, was presented to the students in the class period immediately following their speech.

At the end of the semester, the students were administered a survey questionnaire (see Appendix B). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data to understand the effectiveness of the streamed speeches as a form of feedback and to gather data regarding their attitudes, opinions, and behaviors related to the video streaming of their speeches. The questionnaire, which was composed of ten questions (open-ended and close-ended), required only about five minutes to complete. Students were given the option of completing the questionnaire in class or at home.

Summary statistics (e.g., frequency counts and percentages) were used to calculate the data collected from the closed-ended questions. The qualitative data were reviewed and grouped according to common themes.

RESULTS

Of the 80 students who were administered the questionnaire, 73 or (91%) responded. The results below are organized according to the research questions.

1. What percentage of students in a basic speech course would choose to view their speech on the Internet, if given the opportunity?

According to the survey results, a strong majority or 62 of the 73 students (85%) chose to view their informative speech on the Internet. The 11 students (15%) who did not view their speech on the Internet explained their behavior with one of the following reasons: (1) "I
couldn’t get it on my computer, so I went to the library to view it there,” (2) “I don’t have a computer,” (3) “I tried, but I didn’t know how to use it; it was confusing,” (4) “I wanted to see it as soon as possible, so I went to the library,” (5) “My password would not work,” (6) “I ran out of time; I did not view it at the library either,” (7) “Technical difficulties associated with the Internet prohibited me from accessing my speech,” and (8) “I don’t have a computer in my room, and I did not want to view it in the lab.”

2. Of the students who viewed their speech on the Internet, where did they view it, e.g., a computer lab on campus or home computer, etc.?

One-half (50%) of the students who viewed their speech on the Internet indicated that they had watched their speech from a home computer, and 44% indicated they had observed their speech from a computer on campus. The remaining 6% of the students indicated an “other” option and explained their behavior in one of the following ways: (1) “I viewed my speech at home and on campus,” (2) “I viewed my speech from a computer in my boyfriend’s home,” (3) “I viewed my speech on the computer in the dorm.”

3. If students had the opportunity to view their speech on the Internet and on a VCR in the campus library, which medium would they prefer?

Students had the opportunity to view their informative speech on the Internet and on a VCR in the campus library. Of the 73 students who completed the question-
naire, a majority (71%) reported that they chose not to view their speech on a VCR in the campus library.

As indicated previously, 62 of the 73 students (85%) viewed their speech on the Internet; of the 62 students, only 20 students (32%) viewed their speech in both places (the library and the Internet). Eleven of the 20 students (55%) who watched their speech in both places preferred the Internet to the VCR in the library. Four of the 20 students (20%) who viewed their speech in both places, did not have a preference. None of the students indicated that they preferred only the library; the remaining students did not respond to the question.

Those students who preferred the Internet focused their comments on accessibility, ease of access, and the opportunity to share their videotaped speech with their family. Examples of their comments included the following: (1) “Much easier access through the Internet and a lot less hassle,” (2) “I preferred the Internet because it was more easily accessible, and my family members could watch my speeches and critique me, as well,” and (3) “It is more accessible than going to the library.”

4. Which qualities (28k to 56k vs. 100k to 768k) of streaming video would the students use?

One-half (50%) of the students who accessed their speech on the Internet stated that they had viewed their speech using 100k to 768k. Twenty-four percent of the students indicated that they had viewed their speech using 28k to 56k, and 21% of the students indicated that they “did not know.” The remaining 5% of the students clarified that they had used both qualities of streaming.
5. Of the students who choose to view their speech on the Internet, what do they think about the effectiveness of it as a method of feedback?

The participants who observed their speech on the Internet were asked to comment about the effectiveness of streaming video as a method of feedback. The predominant themes expressed in a majority of the comments focused on convenience, ease of access, and privacy. Examples of their comments included the following:

- "I think this is a very effective method. For me, it was more convenient to get online than to check out a videotape at the library. Without this, I most likely would not have watched my speech at all" (Geissler, 2001).
- "I liked it because it was fast and easy. I could do it on my own time, whenever it was convenient and wherever I had computer access. I have a child, and it is difficult to find time to go to the library; I really liked the fact that I could view myself and others from my own home" (Sisson, 2001).
- "I found streamed speeches to be a very effective method for feedback because it allowed any number of students to view the results at the same time. Also, the fact that they are available for

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The survey questionnaire, which requested the student's name, also requested approval to use their name with their comment. If a student did not wish to have his or her name associated with their comment, they had the option of checking "no."
viewing 24/7 with no time limit is very beneficial” (Pazdernik, 2001).

• “I thought the Internet viewing was beneficial because it was convenient, efficient in timing (posted soon after speeches given) and nice that we could use our technology to its full potential” (Reichenbach, 2001).

• “It was nice to be able to just log on and view my speech. There was less hassle involved and made me more likely to view my speech” (Johnson, C., 2001).

• “I had never used the Internet for a purpose such as this! It was great to be able to see myself and learn from my performance. It was a very accessible and reflective way to better my speaking skills” (Blommel, 2001).

• “I think it is a good tool for feedback. It’s great to get it from professors and students, but personal feedback works the best” (Day, 2001).

• “It is easy to access. It allows students to watch themselves and become more aware of their speaking habits” (Erickson, 2002).

• “I liked the fact that it was very accessible. It was neat to see myself on the computer, and it was much easier than to track down a tape and cue it to the right spot. With the Internet, all I had to do was type in an address and password to view myself” (Curran, 2002).

• “I enjoyed being able to view it at home with no one else around. It was much more convenient, and I may have not viewed it, if I did not have that option” (Meindel, 2002).
Streaming Student Speeches

- “I thought it was a very effective method of feedback. I was able to see and hear things I was unaware of doing, as well as view what my teacher and classmate critiqued me on” (Mensing, 2002).

- “I believe that viewing yourself on the Internet is very effective. Often times it brings to your attention speech behaviors — positive or negative — that you did not know about. Also, because computers are highly available, Internet streaming is convenient” (Wells, 2002).

- “I really liked the convenience it provided for me, rather than having to go to the library to pick up the video and viewing it there” (Vue, 2002).

- “It is much more convenient to watch it on the Internet, because you can do it at home and not have to hassle with the Center for Reserve and Instructional Media in the library” (Moser, 2002).

- “This was an extremely convenient form of feedback. It allowed me to view my speech in privacy, without having to be self-conscious about those around me” (Lutz, 2002).

- “It is nice because you can view it in private and get to hear and see yourself talk. It helps to eliminate your own view of yourself and replace it with what others see” (Seider, 2002).

- “I believe there is great value in being able to access my speech so easily. This method of feedback is very effective, because it was so easy to access. I learned a lot from watching myself speak” (Hattara, 2002).
Additional data concerning the effectiveness of viewing one's speech on the Internet as a form of feedback was provided when the students were asked, "What, if any, other comments would you like to share about streaming student speeches on the Internet?" Two major themes emerged from the data; the students frequently revealed their pleasure in being able to share their speech with their parents, and they commented on the value of using new technology as an educational tool. Examples of such comments include the following:

- "It is a great idea. I even sent my mom the link so she could see what I am actually doing in college" (Kopietz, 2001).
- "Streaming students speeches on the Internet gave us the opportunity to share the website address with our parents so they could view them as well. Personally, my parents thought it was great to watch me give a speech; they were very proud" (Musil, 2001).
- "Keep it up! My mom enjoyed watching my performance, also!" (Blommel, 2001).
- "I believe that this practice fully utilizes all tools that are available to the university in a technologically advanced society. It's great!" (Tollison, 2001).
- "It is important for students to interact with different technologies" (Baily, 2001).
- "I think it is an excellent idea. It offers a relatively convenient way to view speeches and — unlike a video — it is accessible at all times" (Nordrum, 2002).
Streaming Student Speeches

- "For students with little free time while on campus, the streaming is extremely convenient. That way students can watch themselves while they are at home, school or any place that has Internet access" (Erickson, 2002).
- "I have viewed speeches from previous classes on tape and found it to be very helpful. But being able to view them on the Internet was a lot more convenient" (Mensing, 2002).
- "I was able to show my family the speech as well, and they were glad to be able to see something I was doing at school" (Wells, 2002).
- "Rather than having to fast forward to view myself, I could just click on the speaker number and avoid any hassles with videos" (Vue, 2002).
- "If you are like me, you would rather be at home than in the library. If you are at home and have the Internet, you can watch yourself at your leisure and see what you need to improve on for the next speech" (Moser, 2002).
- "This is a great way for students to view themselves. It is an intimate and inviting way for individuals to critique their speech, without being intimidated by having peers look on" (Lutz, 2002).
- "I think all the speeches should be available on the Internet" (Lichty, 2002).
- "I think it is a good idea as long as the student has the option of putting their speech on the Internet. It was a big help for future speeches" (Guspiel, 2002).
The participants also provided additional data concerning the effectiveness of viewing one's speech on the Internet as a form of feedback when they were asked if they "agreed" or "disagreed" with the following statement: "Students in future speech classes should be given the opportunity to view their speeches on the Internet." According to the results, a strong majority or 70 students (96%) of the participants "agreed" with the statement. The remaining 4% of the participants did not respond to the question.

DISCUSSION

Validity

As Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000) make clear, "the most important characteristic of a sample is not its size . . . but its similarity to its parent population (p. 125). Seventy-three of the 80 members of the parent population in this study chose to participate in the research. As all members of the population were administered a questionnaire and were afforded an equal chance to be included in the study, the sample can be described as random." And, as a random sample is the best guarantee of a representative sample, then evidence exists to claim the sample is representative of the parent population (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p.126).

Evidence of representativeness also is evident in the percentage of women and men in the sample. The sample included 63% women and 34% men; these percentages closely resemble the parent population of the stu-

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See footnote number two.

BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL

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Streaming Student Speeches

dents enrolled in the "Fundamentals of Speech" courses during the three semesters when the research was conducted.7

The percentage of women and men in the sample also closely resembles the population of students enrolled at the university during the time when the data were gathered.8 Thus, as evidence exists to claim that the sample is representative, this proof can be used to argue that the research meets some of the requirements of an externally valid study.

The study also is strong in measurement (content) validity, as the measurement instrument — the survey questionnaire — reflects the attributes of the concepts being investigated. All of the questions — "on the face of it" — accurately reflect the concept being investigated (see Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 116). That is, the questions appear to inquire about the students' experience with the video streaming of their speeches.

LIMITATIONS

The sample size (73) is not large; however, as indicated above, the most important characteristic of a sample is not its size but its similarity to the parent population. And, as stated previously, evidence exists to argue that the sample is representative of the parent population.

It also should be noted that the study did not assess the students' predispositions toward Internet use. As some students are more computer literate than others,
Streaming Student Speeches

it is important to consider the potential effect of this variable on the results of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the results of this study that a majority of students enrolled in basic speech courses from which the data were gathered chose to view their speeches on the Internet, when provided with the opportunity. Even when offered the option of viewing a speech on videotape in the campus library, students favored watching their speech on the Internet.

Previous research has suggested numerous benefits associated with video self-analysis as a method of feedback in the basic speech course; indeed, one of the most effective forms of feedback may be for students to see themselves (Quigley & Nyquist, 1992; Frandsen, Larson & Knapp, 1968). If that feedback can be provided via a medium that students find easy to access, convenient and stimulating, and, if that feedback can be used in conjunction with constructive instructor comment, “connected” critique from friends or family and some kind of self-critique or goals assignment, then the potential for the effectiveness of that feedback should increase. Students, in fact, may prefer the accessibility, convenience and stimulation of streaming video on the Internet to videotape for that feedback.

The medium of their generation, the Internet is convenient and easy for students to access. As Shedletsky and Aitken (2001) suggest, “of the benefits for online instruction, one of the main advantages for students is the flexibility of online instruction” (p. 210). And, as Jadali
Streaming Student Speeches

(1991) claims, students can learn any day, any time, anywhere. Students are stimulated by and enjoy utilizing new technology as an educational tool, and when that technology also is flexible and convenient, as is the Internet, then the possibility for learning is enhanced.

The most remarkable finding in this study was the discovery that the students chose to e-mail the web address and password to their parents, friends, and family members so that others could share their experience. This kind of "connected learning," in which students can learn from sharing their performance via the Internet with others, obtain critique from those others and then make connections between that feedback and the comments they receive in class, is an excellent example of a classroom with no boundaries, a classroom of the future. Bill Gates, Chair and Chief software architect of Microsoft, envisioned such a classroom of the future. Gates described the future classroom as one without boundaries and one that invites a sense of involvement; Gates explained it as "'connected learning,' where it's parents, students and teachers, not isolated from each other the way we are today" (October 29, 2001, p. 61).

Although the students in this study agreed that the video streaming of their speeches served as an innovative and effective method for feedback in the basic course, the streaming process requires considerable preparation and technical support. As Shedletsky and Aitken (2001) maintain, "Support staff are in control . . . and where technology is concerned, technical support staff can determine whether or not faculty are able to teach successfully" (p. 213). Certainly, in order to successfully stream speeches, faculty will need campus technical support from web development personnel and
computing and networking services. Someone knowledgeable in web development must create a protected Internet site, provide the students with passwords, create the files, digitize the material, post the speeches to the Internet in a timely manner, and post them with the best quality for student viewing.

Cost issues must be taken into consideration, as well. One could use a digital camera to record the speeches, which would allow the files to be compressed efficiently. One also could digitize the material directly to a CD for each student, rather than stream the media over the Internet. However, the cost of digital cameras and CDs for each student would likely exceed most departmental budgets.

Issues related to differences in compression rates that affect the quality of the streamed video also must be addressed. "Higher compression involves eliminating more bits of data so that it can be sent over low bandwidth connections; lower compression eliminates fewer bits of data" (Hillis, 2002). The best and more continuous image is produced by the lower compression rate of 100k to 768k; break-ups and a jerkier image are frequently associated with the higher rate of 28k to 56k (Hillis, 2002). Because the university web development personnel pay particular attention to the sound quality of the streamed media, the audio synchronized well with the video at both rates; thus, the audio did not prove to be problematic.

It is important to understand, however, the factors affecting access to the different compression rates. The lower compression rate (100k to 768k) cannot effectively be accessed from an off-campus computer via a dial-up connection; one must have a cable connection — either
Streaming Student Speeches

on campus or off-campus — to successfully access the streamed media at the 100k plus rate. Although a limited dial-up connection is available at no cost to the students, a fee is required for a cable connection. One-half of the students in this study stated that they viewed their speech at the lower compression rate (100k to 768k). Students who were required to dial-in to connect with the Internet were forced to view their speech at the higher compression rate (28k to 56k); fewer than one quarter of the students reported that they had viewed their speech at the higher rate. Although the students in this study did not comment negatively on the quality of the streamed video or the difference in the compression rates, the economic factor cannot be ignored. Differences in compression rates and speeds, however, most likely will change as the technology develops.

Clearly, the issue of privacy will remain one of enormous concern. Faculty must take action to protect themselves and their students. Signed consent forms are essential and must be obtained from each student. Protected web sites with individual passwords must be created, and it is imperative that students be informed of the limited nature of the protection; that is, although the site is not indexed, not searchable, and can not be reached via any links, the password and web address are information that can be shared with others (Hillis, 2001). Unquestionably, as was evidenced in this study, the protected sites were not entirely protected; the students e-mailed the web address and passwords to others for viewing. It should be noted that one solution to the privacy problem would be to split the speeches into separate files and deliver only the specific speech to the student who performed it; the speech could then be de-
livered via email or on a CD or floppy disk, if the file size were manageable (Hillis, 2001). Although this method would be more time consuming for the person posting the speeches, it would solve the security issues. The student would still be able to share their speech with friends and family; the difference would be that the students would not be able to access the speeches of their peers.

In addition to issues of privacy and controlled access, one also must be aware of the university’s policy concerning online copyright and ownership, an area that still is evolving (Shedletsky & Aitken, 2001; Maxwell & McCain, 1997; Salomon, 1999). Although the university at which this study was conducted does not have an online intellectual property policy, some universities may have a campus network policy stating that anything posted on their system becomes the property of the institution. One must clarify, for example, through a signed consent form, the ownership rights of the streamed speeches. As Shedletsky and Aitken (2001) warn, colleges “may or may not allow faculty to protect copyrighted materials” (p. 208).

Modern classrooms reflect the technology of the times. Smart classrooms — equipped with camcorders and computer workstations — allow students to be videotaped with ease, prepare and deliver Powerpoint presentations, and more. Instructors will continue to realize ways to constructively employ use of the Internet in their classrooms. Such use is increasing; the percentage of teachers using the Internet for lessons in 2000 was slightly above 50% (Johnson, D., 2001, p. 56). As many universities are positioning themselves to provide digital media solutions campus wide, streaming
Streaming Student Speeches

Speeches on the Internet can be an effective teaching strategy to use in the basic course. It is convenient, has the potential to promote connected learning, and is strongly endorsed by the students.

When used in combination with connected critique from friends or family, constructive written feedback from the instructor, and some type of self-critique or goals assignment, streaming speeches increases the possibility of stimulating behavior change. Future research should explore in greater depth the ways in which streamed speeches foster connected learning between the student, their friends and family. Future research should explore how, if at all, the use of streamed speeches in the basic course improves students' communication competencies. Although this study was not designed to measure improvement, it did appear that students began to consider more seriously their own impression management and improve their delivery skills. Research measuring the relationship between viewing streamed speeches and improvement in public speaking skills is needed; it could provide university educators with further information concerning the effectiveness of web-casting in the basic course, and it would contribute well to the literature regarding e-learning and Internet-based education. Future research must continue to assess the use and effectiveness of new technologies such as streaming video in the basic course. As participants in a 1990 meeting on the introductory communication course suggested, “technology should not be avoided,” and users should “constantly assess their effectiveness and adapt them to [the] changing needs and skills of the students” (Hugenberg & Yoder, 1991 in Hinton & Kramer, 1998).
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Streaming Student Speeches


Streaming Student Speeches


Streaming Student Speeches


APPENDIX A

Speech Goals

Students were told to view their speech — on the Internet, in the library or both — and then prepare a list of at least three speech goals that they would like to work on during the semester. Students were informed that their goals would be distributed to the class on a list to be used later by their peers and the instructor during speech critiques. Note: “XX” has been used to replace the student name.

• XX
  ◦ Don’t talk so fast.
  ◦ Don’t just look at one person.
  ◦ Try and stay still while giving my speech.

• XX
  ◦ Slow down! Speak more slowly.
  ◦ Decrease to use of “ums” and “ahs.”
  ◦ Incorporate pauses in my speaking.

• XX
  ◦ Don’t move around so much. Keep my feet planted and don’t rock as much.
  ◦ Look less at my visual aid and more at the audience.
  ◦ Be more confident and use fewer “powerless” words and phrases.

• XX
  ◦ Not shift my weight and move my body as much.
  ◦ Speak more clearly with a more interesting voice with pauses and excitement.
  ◦ Use my hands more to draw interest and excitement.

• XX
  ◦ Talk a lot slower.
  ◦ Enunciate my words more clearly.
Streaming Student Speeches

- Stand up straight & don’t lean on one leg.

- XX
  - Limit my “ums” during my speech.
  - Improve my grammar.
  - Stop moving in an inverse wave (forward and backward).

- XX
  - No more “ums” and “ahs.”
  - Don’t look at the poster as much.
  - Look at the class more using the “Z” method.
  - Don’t use notecards as much.
APPENDIX B

Questionnaire: Streaming Student Speeches on the Internet

Check ONE response and provide a comment if appropriate.

1. What is your name? ____________________________

2. You may quote me in a scholarly journal article.
   ______ Yes       No ______

   ______ Yes       No ______

4. If you viewed your speech of self-introduction on the Internet, which of the following “qualities” of streaming did you use? (check one response)
   ___ 28k to 56k quality ___ 100k to 768 ___ Don’t Know

   Comments?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

5. If you viewed your speech of self-introduction on the Internet, where did you view it? (Check one response)
   _____ Computer lab on campus
   _____ Home computer
   _____ More than one place
   _____ Other (please explain) ____________________________
6. If you viewed your speech of self-introduction on the Internet, what do you think about the effectiveness of this method of feedback?


7. Your speech was available for viewing in the UWEC library. Did you view your speech in the library?

   ___ Yes   ___ No
   If “no,” why? ____________________________

8. If you viewed your speech in the library and on the Internet, which did you prefer? (check one response)

   ___ Library
   ___ Internet
   ___ No preference
   ___ I did not view the speech in both places

Comments?


9. Students in future speech classes should be given the opportunity to view their speeches on the Internet.

   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree

10. What, if any, other comments would you like to share about streaming student speeches on the Internet? e.g., suggestions?


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On Defining At-Risk: The Role of Educational Ritual in Constructions Of Success and Failure

Deanna L. Fassett

Late on a Wednesday night, in one of the graduate teaching assistant focus groups, Laura says, “I was told coming in from a different adviser I had at my other school that this is what’s going to happen to you: They are not going to care that you have a family. Your family is now second. You get used to that now, so that when you get there [you’ll be ready]; I didn’t know where I was going [for the Ph.D.] at the time. Now, I haven’t experienced that completely here, but it creeps out. It creeps out that you are not allowed to go through crisis, I mean, tough shit, move on.” I look up from my notes to see the entire group, all graduate teaching assistants, nodding and muttering brief whispers of support. John adds, “Yeah, it’s kind of like save the crisis for the holidays,” to which Laura replies, “I don’t know about you, but I can’t do that.” I think about this for a moment, and I recall preparing for my preliminary exams (i.e., the exams which determine whether a doctoral student may become a doctoral candidate); I attended class, taught classes of my own, read and wrote papers and managed to maintain all of my scholarly obligations—all with a raging fever from strep throat and an ear infection (which went on to become two ear infections, a burst ear drum, eye infections, temporary hearing loss, and financial crisis
Defining At-Risk

from payments to an ear, nose and throat specialist). Fortunately, spring break wasn't far away, so I could have a luxurious week to recover (and to write a paper for the regional conference). I look up to see all of the participants nodding, sympathizing. I sympathize as well; as I rub the permanently swollen glands in my neck, I begin to question whether researchers understand educational risk at all.

When I was a student, I felt as though I understood something about educational risk. I can remember little details from my educational past: like when I failed an exam because I spent the night before the test in the local burn unit with my best friend who had fallen into a bonfire, or when one of my teachers in college told me he thought I should drop out because I was incapable of anticipating the next step in his Socratic teaching style and, thus, incapable of critical thought. At any of these times, I either risked my sense of self to stay in the academy, or my career in the academy to preserve my sense of self. And still, this says nothing about all the days I went to school sick or hungry or worried; nor does it say anything about all the days I made decisions about my relative worth as a human being on the basis of a grade. Yet I stayed in school and, if we decide not to debate intellectual pedigree or theoretical orientation, I am, in a conventional sense, an educational success.

This study, therefore, begins from this complicated position: While I am an academic success, I attempt to explore the likelihood of educational failure as a social construction. Yet, if I have family, time, money, health and, for the most part, hegemony (i.e., racial/ethnic, economic, heterosexist, and ageist) on my side, can I really know anything about the likelihood of educational...
Defining At-Risk

failure? Yes, if I deviate from the more commonplace understandings of educational risk as the presence or absence of individual traits (such as non-White ethnicity or lower socioeconomic status). In this paper, I do not wish to neglect the various factors that appear to make some students more likely to fail than others (e.g., that students may have profoundly different educational experiences as a result of inequitable federal, state or local funding, or that students of racial or ethnic minority groups still encounter racism in their educational and social lives). However, I do intend to suggest two things: First, the risk of failure does not manifest like a zero-sum game—there is a multiplicity of circumstances that may exist in any person’s life that may make her/him more or less likely to fail in education. In this sense, risk, if we are to continue to use such a metaphor, ebbs and flows like a tide; each of us may be at risk, to greater or lesser degrees, of different things and at different times in our lives. Second, any aspect of one’s identity is only a predictor of the likelihood of educational failure (or success) in as much as it exists in relation to a given classroom (or other institutional) ideology. In this sense, educational risk is a very complicated phenomenon—not static as some scholars would have us believe, but active and shifting.

By adopting an ethnomethodological approach to the analysis of focus-group interviews with both undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants who were enrolled in the introductory communication studies course, and two groups of graduate teaching assistants who were teachers of the introductory communication studies course. The

1 This paper reports focus group data from a larger study (comprised of both focus group and individual, in-depth, interview data). For this study, I recruited and engaged two groups of undergraduates who were enrolled in the introductory communication studies course, and two groups of graduate teaching assistants who were teachers of the introductory communication studies course.
graduate students and graduate teaching assistants at a mid-sized Midwestern university, I demonstrate that what researchers teach us is a stable, objective aspect of reality—i.e., the inevitability of educational failure—is, in fact, a human accomplishment, the result of concerted social action. By exploring the emergent definitions of success and non-success of undergraduate students and their graduate student instructors, we can discern how everyday talk helps to shape who is “at-risk” and who is a success. In effect, if educational success and failure are social accomplishments, then they

average size of the groups was eight participants. I asked participants a series of eight questions, including, for example: How would you describe a successful student? How would you describe an unsuccessful student? What are your educational goals? What sorts of support have you received in achieving your educational goals?

Focus groups are a particularly useful method for culling stories regarding participant experiences, beliefs and values. In addition to eliciting information in response to the interview protocol, the focus group interview also affords researchers an opportunity to observe communication behaviors in process (e.g., the ways given groups function, the ways people employ language to facilitate sense-making, and so on). Focus groups have been widely used in a variety of academic disciplines, including sociology (Jarrett, 1993 & 1994; Morgan, 1992), education (Flores & Alonso, 1995), health (Plaut et al., 1993), and communication studies (Albrecht et al., 1993; Johnson et al., 1995; McLaurin, 1995; Proctor et al, 1994). To name just a few advantages to focus group research, focus groups: (1) can be flexible and open-ended, allowing data, the participants' own words, to give rise to scholarly insight, (2) permit the researcher to interact in the creation and interrogation of research questions, (3) help the researcher determine whether s/he is pursuing a fruitful line of inquiry, and (4) may be cost-effective (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). While not entirely naturalistic in orientation—participants are brought together, perhaps in an unfamiliar setting, to answer questions posed by the researcher—focus groups are less structured and more open to participant-generated meanings than conventional experimental research designs.

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Defining At-Risk

are communicatively constituted; to this end, teachers and students, even in our most introductory communication courses, must pay careful attention to how their own insights and goals shape their understandings of and expectations for themselves and each other.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL RISK

Several educational scholars have attempted, through elaborate historical analyses, to articulate the ways some of our most foundational assumptions about educational phenomena are socially constructed. For example, Sleeter (1986) describes how "learning disability" emerged during the post-Sputnik American push to redefine educational expectations and standards. Sleeter demonstrates that the learning disability label, in this context, served to explain why white students were failing educationally in light of these shifting standards. Ultimately, Sleeter notes, this label was intended to help these students by protecting them from the stigma of failure. In another, more recent study, Smith (1999) uses a cultural cartography metaphor to provide contrast to and demonstration of the ways medical metaphors have shaped and constrained our conventional understandings of developmental disability. Yet another extensive analysis, Sherman Dorn's (1996) work, Creating the Dropout: An Institutional and Social History of School Failure, demonstrates how the
value North Americans place on a high school diploma is, in large measure, the result of economic conditions. Still other education scholars attempt to shift their focus from historical social construction to the mundane, discursive construction of educational phenomena. Although an education scholar, Lynda Stone attends to issues of particular import to communication scholars in her essay “Language of Failure.” She describes how everyday discursive practices influence the ways understandings of success and failure become normative. Stone traces the history of the dunce, the classroom failure, in order to illustrate her concerns about the ways in which discourse comes to shape understandings of success and failure. Influenced by her reading of Foucault, Stone suggests developing a field of “failur-

2 Dorn's (1996, 1993) work shows that, prior to World War II, few educators were terribly concerned with high school dropouts. Indeed, the term “dropout” did not emerge with any consistency until the 1960s (Dorn, 1993, p. 354). Dorn demonstrates that economic conditions, specifically widespread concern for (a) large numbers of child laborers and, that (b) automation would replace many unskilled laborers, helped to incite student enrollment, creating and reinforcing the value we place on a high school education. Dorn notes that this increased enrollment, in a sense, created a self-fulfilling prophecy; he writes, “A higher proportion of teenagers today graduate from high school than in the 1960s, and, partly because of that, we still expect the vast majority to acquire diplomas” (1993, p. 357). And today, in the context of the dot.com bust and the Enron scandal, college students may be asking themselves about the relative worth of their educations; who among us has not heard a college student lament that her/his diploma has the value of her/his parents' high school diploma? Given this, it may be worth asking: Are we focusing on “at-risk” students when we should be focusing on unjust economic conditions?
Defining At-Risk

ism"—in short, an archeological, in the Foucauldian sense, study of how, historically, discursive practices have worked to connect classroom failure with personal shame (p. 18). As an example, she traces how the meaning of the dunce has changed over time, from its original connection to English philosopher and theologian Thomas Duns to the Dickensian sense of the dunce as a “blockhead, incapable of learning” (p. 16). Sensing such patterns leads Stone to pose the question: “To name or not to name? From what kind of ethic may a caring and committed educator work?” (p. 23). And, though it remains implicit in Stone’s essay, there is a third question: Because we are always already enmeshed in discourse, can we choose not to name?

As Stone suggests, language is complex, enigmatic, and often taken for granted. That what we have come to understand as the problem of educational failure remains with us, despite our best efforts, is testimony to its discursive slipperiness. There is no universally agreed-upon understanding of “success” or “failure”; such understandings will shift from person to person, from context to context, and from era to era. For example, in his interviews with 100 “dropback” students (i.e., students who left school but later returned for their graduate equivalency diploma), Altenbaugh (1998) found that a student’s success in school is determined by whether she or he has experienced caring relationships with teachers. In another study, Peters, Klein and Shadwick (1998) found that student success involves more than simply remaining in school; a student’s success depends upon image-management and self-determination. Peters, Klein and Shadwick, concerned that students’ success may falter as they come to consider
themselves as a problem to be solved, interviewed forty special education students. They conclude that the “problem” does not reside in the students, but rather within the discursive practices that help create school culture, expectations and opportunities to learn. In exploring learning disability as a social construction, Peters, Klein and Shadwick reconceptualize students with learning disabilities not as problems or victims, but as streetwise philosophers, image-makers and jazz-improvisationalists. This shift, they note, highlights that student resilience is only partially academic; it is also a matter of self-concept and self-esteem. What is particularly unsettling is the relative silence of communication scholars in regard to the social construction of educational outcomes, especially given the plethora of research in communication education that aims to respond to the needs of “at-risk” students.

While some communication scholars (i.e., Garard, 1995; Garard & Hunt, 1998; Johnson, 1994; Johnson, Staton & Jorgensen-Earp, 1995; Souza, 1999) have attempted to explore more holistic understandings of educational risk, the overwhelming majority of published research in the field relies upon a medical or deficit model of educational failure. Recent studies published in Communication Education by Chesebro, McCroskey, Atwater, Bahrenfuss, Cawelti, Gaudino, & Hodges (1992), Rosenfeld and Richman (1999), and Rosenfeld, Richman and Bowen (1998), rely on earlier studies, such as those conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, as a means to measure a student’s risk of failure. As a result, these studies further reinscribe the prevailing normative assumption that educational risk is a matter of fulfilling demographic criteria.

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AN ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Ethnomethodology emerged during the 1960s as a re-specification (a revision or new way of seeing) of sociology. This "alternative sociology" began with Garfinkel's critique of Parson's understanding of rule-governed behavior—a foundational and still widely-held perspective (Button, 1991, p. 7). Rather than accepting the pervasive belief that people simply act on the basis of some externally imposed rule, Garfinkel argued that people create and recreate the rules they use to move through the world (i.e., the reasons behind their actions) within and through their actions. This is to say that what appears to be a stable, objective aspect of reality is instead a human accomplishment, the result of concerted social action (Garfinkel, 1968, p. vii). Thus the aim of ethnomethodology, according to West and Fenstermaker (1995), is "to analyze situated conduct to understand how 'objective' properties of social life achieve their status as such" (p. 19).

Historically, ethnomethodologists from a variety of disciplines have explored normative institutional structures, traditional research methods, and aspects of personal identity, looking for the ways the participants in those structured processes organize themselves to appear as though they are obeying an order (either natural or imposed). For example, West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that gender is not a simple matter of biology, but rather a complex, though routine, accomplishment through social interaction. Later, West and Fenstermaker (1995) built upon this argument by applying it to
race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and other traits of "difference." These authors take an ethnomethodological stance, focusing on the local, situated aspects of interaction in lieu of the "objective" markers of race (i.e., skin color), class (i.e., level of income), and gender (i.e., the presence of particular physiology). Their aim is a respecification of the normal or typical way of understanding human traits. The authors view each of these characteristics of difference as a mechanism for, or the site of, interactional processes more than as a role or a trait (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 21).

To suggest that aspects of identity "difference" are created in and through social interaction lends a new dimension to the study of at-risk students. At-riskness may be less a matter of predictive variables such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status, and more a matter of work done by students, educators and the concerned population to render those categories stable and predictive. This is to say that educational risk may be constituted in interaction, a series of ritualized social actions that take on the appearance of normativity over time. In short, what we have come to understand as educational risk (i.e., the presence or absence of particular traits) elides a more complete understanding: we are all at risk at some time or another, with more or less severe consequences.

In the following analysis of interview data, I trace recurring themes in participants' emergent definitions of success and non-success. In particular, I describe how participants understandings are shaped by their own educational experiences and goals, identify two prevailing understandings of success/non-success, explore how such definitions are contested, and finally, consider
Defining At-Risk

how such insights might shape how we nurture both our students and our graduate student teachers.

EDUCATIONAL MOTIVES

Although all participants I interviewed for this study were students, either undergraduate or graduate, several key distinctions exist between the two groups. Many of these distinctions are demographic; on average, the graduate teaching assistants in this study have been in school longer, are biologically older, and have a somewhat different relationship with education as a result of spending more years in school than their undergraduate counterparts. The students and graduate teaching assistants in this study, with few exceptions, identify very different educational goals for themselves. When I asked undergraduates what they identified as their educational goals, they typically responded with specific, concrete or quantifiable goals that reflect normative criteria of academic success. For example:

My individual goal is to get my bachelor's and then go on and get a job for a while. Then maybe have them pay for my master's. And then, about ten years down the road, try to get my license in architecture. (Gwen, 31 March 1999)

3 I invited participants to propose pseudonyms for themselves as a means of protecting their anonymity. This is in accordance with guidelines established by the university's Human Subjects Committee. For each excerpted participant comment, I have indicated the participant's pseudonym and the date of the interview. Furthermore, where there is underscoring in participant excerpts, it is to call the reader's attention to specific details of that excerpt, not to indicate participants' own emphasis.
I pretty much learned everything I need to know for my field [music or writing], so I just want to get out of here with a degree. (Chase, 31 March 1999)

I guess I just want to graduate with a high GPA. (Justin, 7 April 1999)

In fact, most undergraduate participants note the desire to graduate as their most pressing goal. Some undergraduates modify this goal with others—e.g., the desire to find employment, the desire to make money, or the desire to graduate with high grades or other honors. And, whereas the majority of undergraduates simply state graduation or earning a high salary as a goal, a few undergraduates share the reasoning behind their goals—e.g., to support parents, to motivate their children, to help other people. These goals, however, exist in marked contrast to those expressed by the graduate teaching assistants I interviewed.

The overwhelming majority of graduate teaching assistant participants identify more nebulous, life-long goals. This is consistent with the needs and experiences of a group of people who have chosen to enroll themselves in schooling for long periods of their lives. The majority of graduate teaching assistants express the belief that education could transform them or make them better people. For example:

...one of my goals in education...has been increasing my ability to understand the types of forces and things that effect my life and the lives of people around me... I feel like the more I learn, the more classes I’m in, the more knowledge I can accumulate. The more connections I see, the better that I am able to do that. But I’m also—more recently, since gradu-
ate school—...very interested in increasing my ability to communicate and critically engage these things, particularly things I see as constraints in my life and things that I think are kind of screwed up. (Leo, 10 March 1999)

My goal as a student is to keep learning more and more, as much as I can, to fill the base education that I've got. Sort of helps me to see how the world really works. (Francis, 10 March 1999)

For me, it's to have a sense of wonder and joy about something. (Felix, 10 March 1999)

I do it because I love this world. I think that I am a better person in this world than I am in any other milieu I have ever been in. And I think because I am a better person here that I become a better person in the world. I think because this world enables me to be that person, I can help more people. I can make the world a better place than I would from other positions I could take. (Wendy, 24 March 1999)

This is not to suggest that only graduate teaching assistants have, perhaps, more altruistic motives than undergraduates, and that undergraduates have only practical, credentialing goals at heart. Certainly, there are exceptions to this distinction. For example, Nastasja, a more experienced undergraduate by virtue of completing ten semesters of coursework at different schools, describes her goal as: "I'm just trying to learn as much stuff as I can. That's me. I mean I take stuff that I don't even need for my degree, and I just take it just because, I mean, if it was up to me, I'd probably be like the perpetual college student, not just because like I was lazy, but because there's always something else I
Defining At-Risk

want to do” (10 March 1999). And there are certainly graduate teaching assistants who are following a path clearly defined by others; for example, John, who is working toward his master’s degree, explains his goals in this way: “My father has his master’s. My mother is working on her master’s. My grandfather has his master’s. My uncle has his Ph.D. Several masters in my family. I kind of felt like I really have to do it or be the black sheep of the family” (24 March 1999). But, for the most part, the graduate teaching assistants I interviewed appeared to be motivated by something more than credentialing or convention.

In some aspects, the interview participants shared both educational difficulties and educational support. One of the most significant difficulties or impediments to their educational goals for all participants was a lack of money or financial security. Another shared difficulty involved the intrusion of family or personal crises (i.e., death in the family, getting sick in the middle of a semester, difficulties with roommates or partners, homesickness). Moreover, both groups described these crises as difficulties both for the disruption and pain that result from such events, but also for the ways in which these events have caused them to be disadvantaged by teachers they perceive to be uncaring or unsympathetic. For example:

If you have a personal crisis, tough shit, move on. *Compartmentalize it and move on.* (Laura, 24 March 1999)

*It is kind of like save the crisis for the holidays.* (John, 24 March 1999)
Defining At-Risk

[When] my grandfather died, I had to go Germany, you know? I was gone for two weeks. And a couple of my teachers understood and let me make up the work, and a lot of my teachers were like, well, you knew it was due and, you know, but I didn't have time. So I didn't get any sympathy from a couple of my teachers. (Chris, 7 April 1999)

Some teachers don't even care if you broke your leg... Some people don't even care if you have a 110 fever. You barely trying to get out of the bed. Paper due still, paper due. Ten points off, twenty points off. (Jada, 7 April 1999)

As the comments of these participants suggest, deaths in the family or personal health crises are not always met by teachers with understanding and sympathy. It is interesting to note, however, that many graduate teaching assistants not only expressed their frustration at how personal crises are treated by their teachers, but also they indicated that such events often engendered personal frustration at their inability to, as Laura describes, compartmentalize the crisis, to put it aside and focus on the tasks at hand. For example:

I have to be honest and say that I have internalized that expectation of myself, I was angry when something occurred in my life that I couldn't compartmentalize. I was like, why can't I do this? I should be able to do this. And when I couldn't, I was very disappointed in myself which only, of course, added to the whole shebang. (Wendy, 24 March 1999)

Laura's and Wendy's comments do more than suggest an educational difficulty. Their comments also suggest the more painful constraints of pursuing an educa-
Defining At-Risk
tion. For instance, Wendy's disappointment in herself for not being able to set aside a matter that affects her deeply and personally may in fact be the logical extension of the caution Neil issues in an earlier group interview—i.e., what damage is done to a student's self-esteem when she or he interprets her identity almost exclusively as a student? While this is certainly a possible concern for any sort of student, it is only the graduate teaching assistants that foreground this difficulty, this struggle to background their personal interests and needs in light of their academic careers.

In their own way, undergraduates articulated what they perceived to be a difficulty in satisfying the demands of significant institutional figures, whether teachers, departments or schools. For example:

I mean, you may be the best in what you do, but if the teachers don't like you, there's no way you're going to get through school. (Gwen, 31 March 1999)

If the teacher doesn't like your ideas, if he doesn't like you, then you're just bound to fail anyway... (Andi, 31 March 1999)

I had problems with my department when I transferred over here. I mean, it wouldn't transfer any of my credits, and, you know, cause I was from up in Chicago. I had a girlfriend who took the exact same classes at Reed Lake College and they accepted her since she went to, you know, the department. Then I went to the academic dean, and then I went to the vice chancellor. I'm like, hello. [Knocks on the table]. This isn't fair. This is favoritism. When you see that people really don't care, that really kind of irks you... (Nastasja, 31 March 1999)
Defining At-Risk

...I went to Indiana and took all these core classes. I was going to be done with them. My PE course didn't even transfer down here. I had to take PE volleyball again. I had to take calculus, physics. *All those classes I took my first semester to get them out of the way, I had to take them all over again.* (Paige, 31 March 1999)

I flunked out of school, and it took me five years to get back in. I almost didn't get back in here. So far, every semester, I have been on the dean's list here. *You don't know how hard it is to try to get back into a school, let alone another school if you have a bad record because it's gonna follow you wherever you go. It is like—it is a major pain in the ass because you almost don't get a second chance...* (Liam, 7 April 1999)

Each of these undergraduates expresses a difficulty in meeting the established standards of an institutional gatekeeper. Gwen and Andi had troubles with pleasing particular teachers; both suggest that if a student can't satisfy the teacher, then she or he may as well change majors or schools. Nastasja and Paige's attempts to pursue coursework at other schools were thwarted by what they perceived to be unnecessary matriculation agreements. In Liam's case, the institutional half-life of poor academic performance is nearly long enough to preclude what appears to be a well-deserved second chance. However, most undergraduates did not express as keen an awareness of institutional stumbling blocks; for the most part, their difficulties were personal in nature.

Although both undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants struggle to maintain a balance between the demands of their personal and academic lives, the two groups differ significantly in terms of what they
consider to be a difficulty. For example, undergraduates often identified what may be perceived to be difficulties with mundane matters. This is not, however, to suggest that these are not genuine difficulties, but rather to suggest that the undergraduates have, on the whole, greater difficulty with managing their day-to-day existence while in school. For example:

*Freedom is a big thing.* You have been with your parents for so long under rules, and you come here, and it is parties, parties, parties, parties, parties. (Penny, 7 April 1999)

Waking up on your own... Usually if you was livin in your mother’s house, she would have woke you up. School start at eight o'clock. You getting up out the bed by seven. You get up here, your class starts at nine. You hear the alarm going off, but you don't feel like getting up. You're going to sit there. You got nobody to wake you up out the bed. (Tysha, 7 April 1999)

Whereas undergraduates often identified difficulties that are consistent with recent home-leavers (i.e., struggling to set aside time to study, working with roommates and strangers to pay for the rent, or even to wake up in time for class each morning), graduate teaching assistants identified a series of difficulties that are more consistent with people who have what may be characterized as a love-hate relationship with their long-term educations. For example:

Faith, *lack of faith*... [Lack of] personal faith in my ability to do the system and personal faith in that I can keep my integrity and do the system. (Lucas, 24 March 1999)
Defining At-Risk

Patience—not having enough of it. Wanting to get it and get it now. I don’t want to wait two years and say, oh, that’s what that was all about, which is what’s happening. (Lazarus, 24 March 1999)

Just stamina. You have been at something for so long and so hard and you start off just like a roller coaster or something like that, or you start off so tense and now it is going down, and it is just weary. (Daphne, 24 March 1999)

These people are attempting, in a sense, to make school their lives. Indeed, given the amount of time these graduate teaching assistants have spent in schools already, they are living lives where school figures prominently. So, they identify their attitudes toward that process as a potential and past difficulty—i.e., keeping the faith, cultivating their patience, maintaining their energy.

Graduate teaching assistants, unlike their undergraduate counterparts, also identify specific weaknesses as students as difficulties that interfere with their ability to achieve their educational goals. For example:

Prior education. It has been a roadblock because I don’t feel my reading skill is probably what most other graduate students, where theirs is at, and how do you relearn all that after the education I got in a small city school? How do I make up for that lost time? I feel I have to work harder than anyone else does to achieve half as much. (Francis, 10 March 1999)

Well, I had a really hard time learning how to study in college... I had to teach myself how to read and write and study over. The mechanics were all there,
but really being able to get it took me four years of undergrad and two years of a master's program. And once I started teaching, I really learned how to learn a lot better. (Felix, 10 March 1999)

...Writing has always been a big issue for me... I don't know if I ever really got very good help on how to write... You just had to figure it out on your own, which took me a long time. (Leo, 10 March 1999)

Time is a big problem for me. Not time management, not juggling between family and school, but the way courses are structured... I like to argue a lot, these are things that are important for me to explore... The teacher says cut. And I say, that's just when I am warming up... The way the university—the way the courses are structured, you don't really have enough time to explore really, really important things. (Frank, 10 March 1999)

It is as though, because the graduate teaching assistants have achieved a certain mastery of the mundane matters of daily life—e.g., paying bills or finding time to study, they are open to exploring the ways they might improve as students. Perhaps, however, it is more a matter of how a participant's own educational goals help to construct what she or he perceives to be difficulties. If an undergraduate's chief goal is to earn a diploma and find a job, then she or he will be very frustrated by institutional guidelines that govern the transferability and worth of courses taken at other institutions. If a graduate teaching assistant's chief goal is to endlessly accumulate knowledge, then she or he may be more frustrated by her or his own reading or writing skills.
Defining At-Risk

One might expect that these differences in experience and worldview would have profound consequences for classroom interaction: Would teachers find students who fail to espouse similar views to their own make it difficult for those students to achieve their own goals? Despite their apparent and seemingly obvious differences, the undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants interviewed hold several interests and concerns in common.

"WHOSE PERSPECTIVE?" SLIPPERY DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS, NON-SUCCESS AND STUDENTING

I think it is a different definition for everybody...one person's idea of success is different than someone else's. (Dean, 7 April 1999)

A recurring theme for both graduate teaching assistants and undergraduates in this study involved the difficulty of establishing set definitions for success or non-success. Rather than demonstrating that success and non-success are clear-cut absolutes, proverbially black and white in certainty, the participants in this study articulate understandings of educational goals and expectations that are simultaneously personal and provisional, systemic and absolute. Of particular concern to participants was the perspective from which they should attempt to answer the interview questions. While, as interviewer/moderator, I attempted to underscore that I was interested in how each group, or each interviewee, defined the successful (or unsuccessful) student, participants struggled with the ways a variety of different forces may affect the meaning and/or truthfulness of
their definitions. For example, in the following three excerpts, Neil, Daphne and Joe, all graduate teaching assistants, point to the conditional nature of success and failure, to the way in which it is an assessment made in accordance with a particular perspective or interest in education.

Who's determining what's success? (Neil, 10 March 1999)

And I think in order for us to define what is a successful or unsuccessful student, it depends on what your definition of success is. How do you measure success? Is it measured by completing the course? Is it measured by completing the university? Is it measured by your ultimate fulfillment as an individual? And then that is something we can’t really get at because each individual has his or her own level of what constitutes personal fulfillment or personal success. (Daphne, 24 March 1999)

So the researcher, in sorting all of this out, has got the problem, I think, of figuring out whose perspective?... If we want to change the question and say what success is from our personal perspective as teachers, I think we would come up with a much different answer than as civilians, as part of the community at large. (Joe, 24 March 1999)

In a sense, this further discussion of and concern for perspective may be a reaction to the seeming simplicity of the interview protocol questions. For example, across each of the focus group interviews, but especially in the graduate teaching assistant interviews, participants commonly trouble or de-stabilize their co-participants'
and their own responses. This is true of participants' concern for the parameters of the definitional questions.

At the level of definition, participants articulate a concern for the ways in which, in their respective interviews, they sometimes or mistakenly or unreflectively conflate "good student" with "successful student" or "successful or good student" with "successful or good person." Sometimes participants embed this concern within their comments, such as when Nastasja corrects herself to use "student" instead of "person" when she says, "To me, the unsuccessful person, or student I should say, is just the student who doesn't give a damn" (31 March 1999). But, more commonly, participants address their definitional concerns more explicitly. In the following examples, Neil and Paige are concerned with drawing a distinction between the successful student and the successful person. Neil specifically reminds his group to be careful not to conflate the two terms because the consequences for students' identity may be severe.

You want to draw a distinction between the successful person and a successful student. If the person, a student is really student-identified, you know, they are kind of narrowly—they're assessing their own success...just in terms of their student identity. I mean, that's kind of a narrow—for some people, that's a pretty narrow range to evaluate yourself. So I mean, you might be a successful person relationally, and in all these other ways, but you're still not getting the grades. (Neil, 10 March 1999)

In this next excerpt, Taylor, Gwen and Paige are discussing what a student must do to be unsuccessful. Earlier in the interview, Gwen has argued that an un-
successful student is someone who "has their priorities wrong." She specifically mentions going to parties as a misplaced priority.

Taylor: If they [a particular student] came down here to be social and to be the most popular person on campus, and they achieve that goal, then they're being successful in what they came to do. Is that the right thing to come down here and do?

Gwen: It is your view.

Researcher: Does that make them a successful student?

Paige: In the sense that they are talking about, it makes them a successful person, but it really doesn't seem like a good student. (31 March 1999)

In both excerpts, the participants struggle with whether individuals are able to self-assess their academic success. Neil's comments, in particular, also point to the ways in which one must consider her/his own assessment; without such an internal measure, a student risks neglecting other, equally important facets of her/his experience (e.g., being a parent or child or friend, preserving one's sanity in the face of academic pressures, and so on.). This is a subject which appears in many forms throughout the interviews; both undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants often find their role as student eclipsing what they perceive to be more healthy, or perhaps more complete, and equally significant social roles.

I also encountered slippage between the terms "good" and "successful" or "bad" and "unsuccessful," as
participants applied them to students. For the most part, this slippage appeared to be an unreflective transposition of terms. However, some participants, as in the following example, pointed to and made meaning of the distinction in conversation. For example, Wendy notes that, for her,

...a student who doesn't turn things in or who doesn't come to class a lot or who doesn't come to do their speeches—I'll go out and say that's probably not the most successful student in my class. It doesn't mean that they are not a good student, it just means they are not succeeding at that point in time. (24 March 1999)

In the above excerpt, Wendy calls attention to what she perceives to be the phase-like nature of academic success. Much like Neil, Wendy resists a narrow definition of success, choosing instead to explore the ways in which people typically slide in and around seemingly discrete categories. John, another graduate teaching assistant, expresses a different perspective, but one that is nonetheless similar in its attention to the potential division and re-vision of what, at first blush, appear to be simple categories:

One can be a successful student and a good student to me, but you don't always have to be both. I have a student in my class who uses every loophole. She is very successful. She is doing well in my class, but I can't say that she is an incredibly good person to teach. (24 March 1999)

For John, the successful student is someone who is able to accomplish various assigned tasks; even if she or
he must resort to loopholes and technicalities. While John's successful student is competent, she is not really a pleasure to teach. Instead of a phase-like sense of educational success, John seems to advocate a definition of success as meeting some minimum standards of compliance.

Participants also questioned the boundaries of roles such as student and teacher. Both undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants acknowledged teachers who were not formally of that vocation, as well as the on-going and all-encompassing nature of learning. For example, Frank describes his family as a significant influence on his understandings of success in the following way:

I personally also have certain role models in family situation—uh—family members who are not formal, they are teachers, but not formal teachers, but teach me how to do that and how to do that. (10 March 1999)

Whereas Frank expands the notion of a teacher, in the following excerpt, Chase, one of the undergraduate focus group participants, clearly articulates the notion that a student, or the role of a student, may take many forms and occur in many different spaces. This excerpt is a continuation of the above excerpt where Taylor, Gwen and Chase are still debating whether a student's self-assessment of her/his relative academic success is meaningful.

Taylor: I don't know. I'm thinking, ok, well, this successful student, ok, maybe we can't characterize them as unsuccessful, and we think that they're total losers,
but when graduation time comes, and it is time for us to be shifting out into our own jobs and to do our own thing, what the school actually characterizes as a successful student is really all that matters. So it really doesn't matter what they thought was successful, if they thought they should come down here to, you know, be the spotlight, if they thought that was the successful thing to do. And when time to graduate comes they have a 0.0097, but they're in every club on campus, do you think they're going to get hired? I mean, do you really think—

Chase: You also have to think about it like this. They could also get favored from their friends. Plus, like I said, my dad didn't do good in school at all. People who got straight A's, they are working less than my dad is. It's kind of like because he actually wanted to do something. The things he learned from school weren't in the classroom.

Taylor: I understand that to a degree, but if you come down here, and say you're in aviation and you have like a 1.002, do you think American Airlines—I don't care if your dad is the head pilot—if you have not learned anything while you've been in aviation, do you think they're doing to put you as a pilot with other people's lives at risk? I don't think so.

Chase: Ok, but the question is: Do you have to be in school to be a student? Not necessarily. The whole point of being a student is to learn something. It doesn't matter if you learn it in the classroom or not.

Gwen: But she said coming down here as a student.

Chase: If you come down here, you're a student. (31 March 1999)
Chase expands the notion of studenting in two significant ways. First, he argues that students are, in effect, learners—an activity that can happen anywhere, in or out of the classroom. Second, he argues that a student learns more than academic subject matter in school; the student learns to establish social relationships as well, relationships that may well matter more than what may be learned, formally, in the classroom.

The above excerpt is illustrative of many of the emergent themes in the focus groups. First, the participants were somewhat at odds on just how to define the (un)successful student. Taylor and Chase clearly articulate individualistic understandings of success. Taylor does this when she argues that a student has succeeded in her/his individual goal to be social in school, even if that success means missing class and assignments; Chase does this when he argues that “everyone kind of has to judge themselves.” It is interesting to note, and very much characteristic of nearly all the interviews, that Taylor advocates a different understanding of success at the end of the excerpt: “...when graduation time comes...what the school actually characterizes as a successful student is really all that matters.” This latter perspective is suggestive of a more system-oriented assessment of academic success; here one’s individual assessment is held in tension with or, as Taylor’s words suggest, overcome by others’ (i.e., the school, the job market, American Airlines) assessments.

In many ways, Dean’s observation in the epigraph to this section is truthful to participants’ opinions regarding success and non-success—“one person’s idea of success is different from someone else’s.” However, it is important to note that interview participants’ thinking re-
Defining At-Risk

garding definitions of educational success (or the lack thereof) coalesced along two identifiable themes: (1) success is determined by an individual, internal assessment of whether one has achieved personal fulfillment, or (2) success is determined by an external, imposed assessment of whether one has achieved someone else's standards—perhaps those of a teacher, a school, a segment of the job market, or, more nebulously, "the real world." In effect, participants alternatively accepted and rejected these views—opting for one or the other, holding both simultaneously, and, in frustration, leaving some questions unanswered. Such a layering of contested definitions may well be the result of internalizing socially-established understandings of success and failure, understandings that extend, undercut and question their own personal interpretations.

Personal Definitions of Success

One of the ways the participants in this study conceptualized success was to describe it as a matter or internal, personal and private assessment. In this way, a successful student is successful if she or he believes herself or himself to be so, according to her or his unique criteria (i.e., a sense of personal fulfillment, variously attained). Participants describe this in a variety of ways:

Who's determining what's success? I mean, they can get good grades. They can have the admiration of their teachers. They can have all of that and does it still mean much to them? (Neil, 10 March 1999)
Defining At-Risk

Sometimes, to me, the good student and the successful student...and I agree with all that you've said...but the good student knows her or his own limits in terms of—they know what they can put into my class. They have a good sense of “Ok, I've got chemistry. I've got this horrible history thing and I hate history, but I've got to like pass this.” They know what they’re here for, and they know how to value the classes. So, I have a student who is getting like a C in my class, or even a D, but has, like, survived the semester and really succeeded in the classes she or he wanted to do well in. And sometimes I think all of us need to make that choice. What is going to be the priority along this line? And for some, that's just paying the bills. (Lucas, 24 March 1999)

[Being a successful student means] walking away and actually learning something. I have had classes where I pulled off an A, and I don’t know jack by the time I leave...I haven't learned anything, and to me, what good does having a degree or a diploma in hand if, by the time you get out in the real world, you are completely lost? (Nastasja, 31 March 1999)

I think it's like different for everybody, like they—one might define success differently as being content, or more the outside goals or something. (Yessica, 7 April 1999)

This understanding of academic success is characterized by personal measurement—that is, whether a person is satisfied with how she or he is achieving particular educational goals. Although this perspective was held by both graduate teaching assistants and undergraduates, the latter tended to express this perspective more frequently. However, although graduate teaching assistants often addressed a desire for various degrees
of compliance with institutional structures (e.g., submitting assignments, attending classes, adhering to grading and degree progress standards), they typically expressed their desire for this with equal concern for students’ abilities to understand and critically read the history and motives behind such practices.

**External Definitions of Success**

Participants also characterized educational success in a second, more external manner. From this perspective, success is measured by achievement in light of other pre-established criteria—e.g., progress toward a degree, high marks in a class, satisfying a given teacher or teachers, finding employment upon graduation, and so on. The following examples demonstrate the ways in which other forces, external to the individual, serve as indicators or measures of success.

It is going to be very hard for me to consider a student successful if the person fails the course. We have personal goals, and you are going to find yourself to be very ridiculous if you fail a couple of courses and got F's and say "I was a successful student" because society has a measure of success and the teacher also wants to cite you as an example of a successful student. You can be a diligent student and an enthusiastic student, but you did not make the grade. (Frank, 10 March 1999)

I derive the word success from what I know from the system. I said what's successful, well, doing well, and where do I trace that back to? Well, I trace that back to society and what's successful in society. (John, 24 March 1999)
I think it's really a matter of having that piece of paper saying you've done this and you've done that. (Taylor, 31 March 1999)

...the way the grading system is set up, it, it is pretty much just doing what you're asked to do. (Chase, 31 March 1999)

This understanding of educational success is, therefore, characterized by external assessment from any number of interested and disinterested others. Participants frequently invoke "society" in their observations, as is the case with Frank and John above, as a standard for determining one's relative success. However, in order to learn about more specific influences (e.g., the relative importance of friends or family to one's understanding of academic success), I needed to ask frequent follow-up questions (a challenge in the focus group interview, where too much focus on one person's response risks boredom—and sometimes apprehension—in other participants).

This is not to suggest that participants do not combine the two perspectives, either by holding them in tension, or by advocating different perspectives at different times in the interview. For example, when Dean states "you need to pass. You need to get that degree. You need to learn what you need to learn, but you need to learn how to apply it to what you want to do," he is combining both views (7 April 1999). He suggests that, although there are certain external criteria a student needs to satisfy (i.e., "pass," "get a degree"), the student must also pursue a personally desirable end (i.e., "what you want to do"). Similarly, when Joe states that "a student who graduates from college in a reasonable amount
of time in a major they have some interest in and gets out of here is a success,” he is demonstrating a mix of external and internal, or personal, criteria (24 March 1999). Most participants, however, seemed to struggle with reconciling the two perspectives.

Participants, in (re)constructing their definitions of educational success and non-success, articulated understandings of themselves as apart or alienated from the educational system. By this, I mean that participants did not often acknowledge their collective participation in social systems and, when they did acknowledge their participation, it was as if they wanted to convey that they were merely obeying pre-established and stable rules. One way in which participants did this was to articulate notions of educational success and non-success as a matter of individual accomplishment and perseverance (rather than as collective definition and validation). For example, when Andi (31 March 1999) suggests that a student might define success as earning average grades without working very hard, or when Francis (10 March 1999) argues that “in order to be successful, you have to want to learn. You have to want to be there,” they are focusing on how an individual’s actions or attitudes create success. They do not attend to the ways in which the individual must work in concert with other individuals to continually re-create understandings of success.

In each of these examples, the participant attends primarily to the power of the individual. This focus on the individual is not, in itself, surprising; there are numerous myths and traditions in U.S. education, not to mention U.S. American culture, to sustain a belief in the rugged individualist who can pull herself or himself
up by the bootstraps. Historically, children and adults have been recognized and rewarded by parents, teachers, and employers for their ability to do their own work, relying on their own individual merit (Kohn, 1992, 1993). What is curious is the ways participants tend to foreground individual accomplishment in one moment, and then regard an individual’s own interpretation of success with suspicion, turning to external, institutionally-posed or systemic criteria to validate that individual assessment. This may well be an instance of two sides to the same pervasive value; however rugged the individualist, she or he is only made into a hero or a martyr by others’ rewards, admiration and attention.

This tension between the individual and the system is further illustrated by the ways in which participants described themselves as individuals coping within “the system” or as referring to “the system” as the benefactor of educational standards. For example, when Lucas describes his most overwhelming educational difficulty as a lack of “personal faith in my ability to do the system and personal faith in that I can keep my integrity and do the system,” he describes himself as an individual caught up in a process larger than himself, one in which he might be lost (24 March 1999). John describes the system as a source for definition when he states “I derive the word success from what I know from the system” (24 March 1999). Both participants acknowledge the role of “the system” in their lives; they construct the educational system as a static thing, something that pre-exists them temporally, and upon which they exert little, if any, control. Defining educational systems in this way, as rigid and sedimented artifacts or institutions, appears to make it difficult for participants to
Defining At-Risk

hold alternate conceptualizations, such as a notion of educational systems as fluid and highly stylized or choreographed relationships between people. If students and teachers fail to discursively recognize that what they describe as the educational system is actually systems of, or relationships between, people, then they preclude their own ability to effect change in those systems.

IMPLICATIONS

The participants in this study do not understand educational success or failure as simply staying in or dropping out of school; nor do they equate educational success or failure with the sorts of demographic criteria that form the basis of recently published research in communication. Instead, they resist establishing definitions at all, by balking at the interview questions and repeatedly returning to issues of perspective. Still other participants articulate a notion of educational success and failure as phase-like; Wendy, one of the graduate teaching assistants, does this when she notes that one of her students is just not succeeding at a given point in time (24 March 1999). Although not generalizable, these findings are enough to cast doubt on teachers or researchers who rely upon pre-established criteria to determine a student's likelihood of educational failure. This is not to deny that certain statistical tendencies tend to hold true, but rather to say that, when researchers talk about educational risk, they are not discussing inevitable facts or natural givens, but rather
the residue of individual attitudes and assumptions regarding the value and purpose of an education.

In other words, if educational success and failure are phase-like, in that they may be co-present in any student at any time, then educational risk is phase-like as well. Unfortunately, researchers and institutions, such as universities, tend to categorize students en masse as "at risk" or not. To do so is problematic in that, when researchers and institutions define risk as an identifiable attribute (as opposed to risk defined as in flux), they fail to consider how every single student is potentially at risk: of failure, of not learning, of not integrating fully into the social atmosphere of the classroom or campus, or of sacrificing friends, family and culture in pursuit of a degree.

Of particular importance to teachers, whether basic course directors or graduate teaching assistants, is a reminder to consider how our own experiences in educational institutions and understandings of what counts as successful in education shape what we perceive to be normal or natural for our students. To return to Laura: someone advised her that, in order to succeed in doctoral work, she would need to compartmentalize her life, to place her emotional and familial bonds into an adversarial relationship against her intellectual and professional development. What consequence will such advice have for Laura? For her students? For those students' students? To what extent do graduate teaching assistants inflict the damage done to them by their professors, however well-intentioned, on their own students?

The findings of this study suggest that the introductory course in communication studies (as well as GTA bullpens and office hours) is but one of many different
Defining At-Risk

places where teachers and students may engage in discussions of what counts as successful or unsuccessful in higher education. It is worth noting that both groups, despite their differences, defer to external definitions of success, even when they hold conflicting definitions simultaneously. But whose definitions are operative in the classroom itself? Such a question is a fruitful direction for future research in that it will help to illuminate the degree to which graduate teaching assistants enforce or mask their own understandings of success and failure with their students. Indeed, it would be well-worth our time—as students, educators, mentors, and teacher or teaching assistant supervisors—to engage in frequent and open conversations about just what we value in teaching and learning, about just what we consider successful or unsuccessful, and where (and from whom) we learned such values. In this way, we will come to a more rich understanding of educational risk not as a rule or as the presence or absence of demographic criteria, but rather as a construction, as the result of conflicting ideologies.

A student’s end-of-the-semester evaluation of my class, of me, reads: “We don’t care what it was like when you went to school. We have jobs and families and can’t always be concerned with getting the reading done or getting here on time. Just because you don’t have a life doesn’t mean we should have to give up ours.” This is from a graduate student who has missed more classes than she has attended; she is a graduate teaching assistant who instructs two sections per semester. I’m not sure I like her—not just because she’s chastised me in her evaluation, but because I worry that she doesn’t take her education seriously. Graduate school means arriving on
time, attending all the professional development seminars, borrowing money to deliver papers at professional conferences. It means staying up late, sacrificing sunlight and diet to write a paper for class and carefully read and respond to your students' papers. It means bringing ice packs to class to soothe your injured back or plying yourself with Tylenol and cough drops when you're sick. It means leaving your problems until the holidays; so that your semesters and your summers comprise an odd schizophrenic lifestyle—bifurcated parts of yourself. And so I think to myself that this student isn't doing what she should to succeed. But just because I lived that life, or lack of one, is that any reason to subject others to it? Just because graduate school was so for me, that does not mean it should be so for others, or that it can not be otherwise.

REFERENCES


Defining At-Risk


Defining At-Risk


Defining At-Risk


Defining At-Risk


Performative Pedagogy, At-Risk Students, and the Basic Course: Fourteen Moments in Search of Possibility

John T. Warren

ONE

I had been sitting in a large carpeted room across campus, doing some ethnographic observations for a research project on whiteness. The instructor and I were studying how these (mostly) white students studying whiteness, culture, and education would talk about and enact whiteness even as it was the very subject matter of the course. The class was, for the most part, progressing. They had been talking about this work for almost seven weeks, reading articles and engaging in class conversation about what it means to be white in a world coded with white privilege. After class one day, the instructor approached me and asked if I would be willing to teach next week, noting that, while I was the silent observer, taking field notes and trying to get a grasp on what folks were saying in conversation, she had to be at a conference and was hoping that I could take on the task of this one class. I thought about it, remembering how each and every class had pretty much gone the same way: class began, conversations slowly started, people presented articles, class members
talked, class ended. This system, while engaging students in complex thoughts, asking them to critically think about their own implication in systems of racism, did not provide any space for students to engage this material in any other way.

When I entered class the next week, I desired two basic things, both of them forming the basis for my pedagogy—a performative pedagogy: First, I wanted students to see their communicative acts as performative. That is, I wanted them to see racial identity and racism as an on-going process of formation, not as static and unchanging (Butler, 1993; Warren, 2001). Second, I wanted students to get to that theoretical perspective through their own performing bodies (Pineau, 1994). I wanted them to perform, to move these concepts and ideas into their flesh. Such a knowing, I hoped, would change them.

I began by breaking students into groups and asked them to create a list of those issues that still plagued them. They did, and together we compiled a master list on the board. Then I grouped those issues into five main categories. Based on those, I divided the 20 students into five groups and asked each group to create a performance that tried to embody the issue—to pose a problem derived from that particular point of interest. For instance, one group struggled with trying to find a balance in their own personal self negotiation between the power of privilege and the desire to bring about change. A white woman, arms outstretched between two other people, became the rope in a tug-of-war. On the left was “Howard,” a black man, who spoke of resistance: “You can do it. Keep going!” On the right, “Sophia,” a white woman, was the embodiment of privi-
lege: "Why bother. It's too hard." This continued for a minute until the woman broke out of the tug-of-war, asking each member of the class audience for help, ending up back as the rope between Howard and Sophia. She ends the performance by looking up and, again, asks for help.

After the performance, students talked about how it felt to be in that situation: how it felt to be asked for help and not providing it, how it felt to be the rope—to feel the pull of these opposing forces, how it felt to see that struggle embodied. That day changed the tenor of the class as people began to see whiteness in their own actions, their own bodies. Each performance brought to the body the power of whiteness and made it tangible. To see themselves meant risking privilege. It meant upsetting the fragile racial center of power on which they relied, reflecting and critiquing their own bodily complicity with racism.

TWO

A dear friend of mine loves to make collages. She takes magazine pictures, ink stamps, phrases from academic texts, and other collected images and places them all next to each other, creating something new from things already experienced. The images sometimes refer to each other, while other times they constitute a question, a puzzle that demands I search out meaning from within my own life experiences. What I love about her art is that what I get is both a product of her critical and creative energies, while still existing as a space for my own thoughts and ideas. From her effort, I can make
different kinds of meanings, my own meanings within the collection of fragments she provides. Thus, I often bring my own understandings to the art and through that interaction, I discover new things about me—new ways of thinking about the ideas or arguments in the image as well as new ways of thinking about constructing art in ways that produce new possibilities. It is an art form that is interactional like no other—it is an art form like stained glass or a tile mosaic in which meaning is co-constructed through moments of engagement. Her art challenges me in very productive ways.

Her care and energy along the line of research and teaching, as well as her incessant assertion that both can be captured through collage, has influenced my thinking about how I might talk about my interests in performative pedagogy, at-risk students, and the basic course. As a new director of a basic communication course, dealing with curriculum matters and students in need, I am growing more and more convinced that the images in my mind—the fragments of meaning, the scraps of experience, and the moments of critical scholarship I have read and written—can best be articulated through a collage. That is, I think a collage of these moments, these insights, these images from the basic course, might very well make for a critical conversation that begins to address the promise and limitations of performative pedagogy in the basic course for addressing issues such as “at-risk-ness.” Thomas P. Brockelman (2001) argues that “collage intends to represent the intersection of multiple discourses” (p. 2). Perhaps through a juxtaposition of experiences and theory, we might each step back from this collage—my collage—and search out meaning and possibility. Such a mean-
Performative Pedagogy

meaningful interaction with this assembled text demands coparticipation between author and reader through a collaged narrative.

The value of the collage as an art is also a nice metaphor for my understandings of performativity. That is, just as the collage allows for a productive meaning making process to take place, performativity, as a theoretical framework, is centered on how individuals work to productively make meaning in their worlds. Butler (1990) argues that performativity is about social constitution—it is about how we use the discursive codes and material to shape and reproduce the ideologies that shape and regulate social and bodily norms. This is to say, identities like gender are not performed in a vacuum, but rather through a bringing together and reproducing of the historical ideals we, as gendered beings, were born into. Thus, Butler (1990) reminds us of Merleau-Ponty's claim that the body "is an historical idea," not a "natural species" (p. 271). In this way, our identities are not radically individualized; rather, identities are products of reproduction in which the repetitive acts we engage in (ways of sitting, walking, talking, etc.) work to recreate the very idea of gender. Butler's (1990) notion of performativity allows us to see the power of the collage—that art form that is constituted through a bringing together of historically informed and socially meaningful discursive codes and material to shape and reflect back on the ideologies that have made us who we are.

This collage, this performative interaction of meaning making, is an attempt to produce and invoke conversation about performative pedagogy—a pedagogy based in the principles of performativity, valuing consti-
tution over naturalization, participation over dominance. This collage is a putting together of experiences and observations, critical commentary, scholarly research, and images of education. This collage represents an effort to re-theorize the process of education and how that process marks and recreates identities. Further, the site of the basic communication course is important for never has there been a course that can introduce alternative ways of experiencing education than introductory communication basic courses—courses in which participation and meaning making are already so central.

THREE

It was years ago when I was a graduate student—a new Assistant Director of the Basic Course. It was years ago, but I can still remember the musty smell of that damp basement classroom in the university library.

The room was a dark, small, rectangular space carved out of the basement of the library. I was asked to be there by the instructor, a small, young, thin woman with long blond hair and fair skin highlighted by bright red lipstick. I had been the Assistant Director of the Basic Course for almost eight months and had never been asked to observe a class by an instructor who felt like she might be in danger, at risk. I sat in the center of the room, along the back wall in order to be able to see all the students. The dim bulbs above flickered, humming a white noise that lured my own body to sleepiness, even while my heart was beating loudly against my ribcage as I nervously waited for him to arrive. "Bruce" entered,
wearing a faded gray T-shirt with a hard rock logo from the eighties and torn blue jeans exposing his dirty white shins to anyone who cared to look. He sat in the far right corner of the room, leaning back in his desk. The instructor began, asking students to fill out index cards with their speech topics for the final persuasive round.

This, however, was not the first time I had met Bruce. I met him first in print, having read three essays the instructor provided me as an introduction. Each of them featuring a shade of violence and instability, each scary in its own way. In one, he analyzes an argument with his instructor—this young female instructor now under my supervision, now needing my care—where he calls her a “fucking bitch” who he “hates.” Each essay detailed an obsession with drugs, death, and suicide.

But as I looked at him, he looked pretty harmless, sitting there staring outward in what I have guessed to be a doped fuzziness. The instructor, I would later learn, read his desired speech topics: “Drugs—for it. Homosexuality—for it.” She didn’t respond, but looked at me. I could see she was afraid, knowing that this student represented a fear for her—each interaction coded with the desire to make her second guess his motives. In a later meeting with the student, the Director of the Basic Course, and myself, the student appeared so drugged he couldn’t seem to follow the conversation. Between the drug use, the threats of violence, the vague mentioning of topics that are being used to surprise and disturb the instructor, and the constant presence of hostility, this instructor desperately needed space from this student. And as the course supervisors, we had to search out ways of rendering him harmless, regardless of the risk to his own desires.
The first time I ever heard the construct ‘at-risk student’ I was talking with a colleague before the first day of class. I was in graduate school taking a doctoral seminar on communication education that looked at “special populations” in the communication classroom. Students with disabilities, communicatively apprehensive students, and at-risk students formed the basis for our course. Before class, I asked my friend about the notion of “at-risk,” noting that it seemed pretty self-explanatory—that is, at-risk students must be those in schools who are at-risk of failure. She told me that I was pretty much correct, explaining that there was even a special commission in our field whose sole purpose was to examine the needs of students who were academically at-risk.

Barbara Presseisen (1988) discusses and critiques one of the major trends in this writing: “cultural deprivation” (p. 27). She notes that many scholars label students at-risk when they lack the cultural or social opportunity to learn. Thus, programs like Upward Bound and Head Start are created and funded in order to ‘fix’ the problem. An example of this kind of scholarship can be found in the work of Glenda Gill (1992) who notes that at-risk students are “communication cripples” (p. 225). In both these works, the researchers seek to identify issues with those students who fail and find ways of either changing the ‘crippled’ student, or altering the educational process in order to accommodate for these failures. On a slightly different tack, Genevieve Johnson (1994) argues that the problem is with the differences
between home and school, in which differing ways of interacting lead to (or create the possibility of) educational risk. In all these approaches, scholars seek to explain why students are at-risk.

This was my first meeting of at-risk as an educational concept. And when I entered my first classroom as a teacher, I found myself searching for who might be the one, the one at-risk. Which one might have the “cultural deprivation,” the incongruity between home and school, the problem? And in that look, in searching for these students in this way, I became part of the process of educational gate keeping. I became, in my effort to find those people, one of the ones who got to decide if a student was or was not at-risk. I was doing, in a sense, what people had asked me to do—I was finding the problems. And once I found them, I would try to fix them. Isn’t that what I was supposed to do?

FIVE

In a recent book review essay on performative pedagogy, I called for critical performative pedagogy to operate along two axes: a performative mode of analysis and a performative mode of engagement (Warren, 1999). My vision in that essay was to define at least two modes of performative knowing: First, to have teachers see performance as a way of conceptualizing identity. That is, I want educational agents to move from a static notion of race, class, sexuality and gender to a view of identity as an historical construction that is not just socially constructed in the here and now. My argument was that the books I was reviewing were just starting to really
see the body as a performative accomplishment that carried with it the sedimented constructs of privilege, power, and domination from millions of minute acts in the past. Thus, when we talk of people, we are talking about strategic processes that continually work to maintain the illusion of naturalness (Butler, 1993). I believe that a performative mode of analysis can shift the ground in introductory communication courses. I believe that looking at communication as a constitutive way of seeing identity—of demanding that students see their everyday communication as part of a larger process that works to maintain and produce power—makes all people newly accountable. Across many campuses, introductory communication courses are viewed simply as skills courses. I am reminded of this every year when my introductory students levy the following complaints: There’s too much writing in this speaking course! Why do we have to know all this theory? What does this have to do with public speaking? The move to performativity—the connection of communicative discourse in all forms to power and identity constitution—means that our students will come to see communicative interaction as effect-causing in ways not yet realized in many basic courses. The ground shifts as students find connections between their everyday communication and the social and political relationships across the globe. Performative modes of analysis means that rather than seeing things as they are, students will look at the means of production, questioning how things got to be that way in the first place.

Second, I wanted teachers to engage in course material through a performative mode of engagement—"a methodology of engaging in education that acknowl-
Performative Pedagogy

edges bodies and the political nature of their presence in our classrooms" (Warren, 1999, p. 258). Thus, putting the material on its feet and into our bodies was, for me, a key component of critical performative pedagogy. It is to make intellectual content material theories of the flesh—a moving of schooling into a process of the body, a “body [that] both incorporates ideas and generates” the very structures and identities we take for granted (McLaren, 1991, p. 144, his emphasis). Performative modes of engagement are already a major part of most introductory communication courses. The communication discipline has long advocated experiential learning, returning to the notion that in the doing, our students come to know in more meaningful ways. The late Wallace A. Bacon (1987) probably said it best: Performance “is a form of knowing—not just a skill for knowing, but a knowing” (p. 73). Public, physical engagement has long been the hallmark of communication classes, asking students to move into speech, presentation, and performance spaces in order to engage critical issues with multiple faculties. However, while our basic communication courses demand public demonstration of knowledge, we, as a discipline, still need to develop critical tools for academic engagement with our theories. That is, how might the learning that is necessary for the public speech, performance, or other presentation be learned through our bodies? How might the basic principles of nonverbal communication, communication norms, perception, and other concepts in our courses be examined through students’ active bodies? To continue to ask students to move from their desks and into their bodies is to again shift learning to perform-
Performative Pedagogy

ance—to demand engagement in multiple and viscerally immediate ways.

Thinking back, I would probably include a call for a performative mode of critique—a critique of and through the flesh that creates a dialogic and heuristic way of engaging in students’ work. This would both make critique a method of the body, where an instructor calls upon the mode of performance as a way of talking back to students’ work, while also using performativity as a way of speaking toward the construct brought by the student. It would, as Alexander (1999) has suggested, take on a “poetic” nature, where the “breath of life” is brought back to the “process of pedagogical critique” (p. 108). To ask students to engage in creative and critical ways means that instructors should honor that work and provide reciprocal forms of commentary. What would it mean to have students, after a performance/speech round get back into the space with the instructor—to have the instructor rework, rethink, re-physicalize the moment? How might learning change? How might poetic commentaries on the creative work of students alter their understandings? The times I’ve experimented with these forms of critique, I have been impressed with the responses from the students. Students can be touched by the attention their work receives.

To change education in these ways is to ask students and teachers to take the principles of education (learning content, building skills, promoting intellectual development) and the principles of critical pedagogy (undermining hegemony, questioning power structures, seeking social change) and bring them together to the site of the body. As Elyse Pineau (1998) writes:
Performative Pedagogy

Performative Pedagogy is more than a philosophical orientation or set of classroom practices. It is a location, a way of situating one’s self in relation to students, to colleagues, and to the institutional polices and traditions under which we all labor. Performance Studies scholars and practitioners locate themselves as embodied researchers: listening, observing, reflecting, theorizing, interpreting, and representing human communication through the medium of their own and other’s experiencing bodies. (p. 130)

A critical, performative pedagogy asks students and teachers to be embodied researchers—to take learning to the body in order to come to know in a more full and powerful way. It is to liberate the body from the shackles of a dualism that privileges the mind over the visceral. It is to ask students to be more fully present, to be more fully engaged, to take more responsibility and agency in their own learning.

SIX

When I was in grade school, I always got C’s in conduct. I couldn’t quietly sit still for the whole day without erupting with energy. I would talk to my neighbor, fidget, draw, or otherwise distract the teacher or other students, calling for reprimand or overt punishment. I once had to sit on “The Bench” at recess for my excess energy during class. I suppose today I would be a good candidate for Ritalin—a child that could only learn if he wasn’t so hyperactive, so energetic, so bodily. But when I see my niece being accused of the same kinds of behaviors I had growing up and I see my relatives arguing with the school in an effort to avoid drugging a nine
year old girl who happens to be bored in school and yearns to do something with her excess energy, I think about how I could have lived my childhood years in a drugged induced docility—backgrounding the body or creating its perceptual absence by medical means. As Foucault (1977) so poignantly reminds us, "a disciplined body is the prerequisite of an efficient gesture" (p. 152). The good student is the one who sits still, keeps in place, does not speak out of turn. Yet, when I see my niece, I know she is not abnormal. She is bored. She is tried of sitting, tired of being talked at, tired of being the empty receptacle into which her teacher dumps knowledge.

And so was I. I remember sitting in class, staring up at the large maple trees planted outside the windows of my fifth grade classroom. I remember wishing I could fly, fly away into the bright blue skies far above the looming shadows of that maple tree. I remember wanting to get away from that room, those hard plastic-coated metal chairs. I remember wanting to escape.

SEVEN

There are notable others who have written on performative approaches to education and I would be remiss if I failed to mention them.

In Peter McLaren’s (1993) powerful ethnography of Toronto schools, he describes how schooling works to reconstitute identities through schooling practice. Like Paul Willis (1977) before him, McLaren (1993) looks at how schools that have predominately working class students maintain and reconstitute the very ideologies and
myths of class that have plagued working class people's educational experiences. Thus, McLaren (1993) found schools, through educational rituals and lowered expectations, maintained particular kinds of work ethics and provided a curriculum that steered students from certain class backgrounds into similar lines of work; hegemony, instituted through educational rituals, “creates an ideology pervasive and potent enough to penetrate the level of common sense and suffuse society through taken-for-granted rules of discourse” (p. 84). In this way, the process of education is a performative process—a process that helps to (re)constitute educational identities.

bell hooks (1994), critical/cultural critic, imagines education as the practice of freedom. She argues for a “progressive, holistic education” in which we strive for an “engaged pedagogy” that “is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy” (p. 15). She believes education should take into account the “mind, body, and spirit” (p. 16). In this way, the whole body of the student—the mental, spiritual, and the physical—join together to make learning an experience of the body where we mix senses and thought, creating a holistic practice that undermines the mind/body split so entrenched in our educational practice (p. 191).

Jane Gallop (1995), in an introduction to a fascinating collection of essays, describes teaching as an act of “im-personation” in which teaching always falls in the “knot of pretense and reality” (p. 16). In her conception of teaching, we, as teachers, are always in the liminal space of the “me” and the “not-me”—always a process of identity construction which is both based on acts before (of self and others in the teaching arena) and the con-
tinual imagining of who we might become (a process of materializing a possibility). We are, in the classroom, in the process of negotiating our identities in/through our performance(s) of teacher.

Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997) argues the following:

Performative pedagogy makes claims not to Truth and validity, but to viability and efficacy in relation to a particular audience and intention within a particular situation. It strives not for Truth, but political and social response-ability, credibility, and usefulness-in-context, and in relation to its particular ‘audience’ of students. (p. 162)

Here, Ellsworth frames the purpose of education as a process of intersubjectivity, particularity, and contingency. That is, knowledge, like identity, becomes a journey that is mapped in the doing, through the efforts of the classroom community. Knowledge, content, and curriculum become a meaningful negotiation where students understand not only what one should know, but how one comes to know.

Henry A. Giroux and Patrick Shannon (1997) note that performative pedagogy’s usefulness lies, at least in part, on its suggestions of hope:

this [pedagogical approach] suggests the necessity for cultural workers to develop dynamic, vibrant, politically engaged, and socially relevant projects in which traditional binarisms of margin/center, unity/difference, local/national, and public/private can be reconstituted through more complex representations of identification, belonging, and community. (p. 8)

Thus, performative pedagogy is a mode of change, a mode of possibility—through this mode of classroom praxis, one can imagine new ways of constituting our
work, our lives, and our political possibilities. It is the realm of hope that performative pedagogy can undermine the strictures that have so hindered our abilities to imagine new ways of engaging our students.

EIGHT

The other day a student accused me of "teaching politics." He couched the insinuation in such a way as to suggest that my teaching style reflected a "socialist political agenda"—that I "was very one-sided" in my educational choices. From my selection of the course textbook, articles, and other materials, this student rightly argued that my choices were informed by a particular ideology. Although I willingly accepted his charges, ready to have a conversation in class about politics and education, I admit that I first felt a bit confused. Indeed, I am no stranger to the inevitable connection between education and politics, but I had never been called a socialist, nor did I necessarily see myself advocating such a position. However, the "social nature" of my content choices stood out next to his own political orientation that he openly and competently argued in class: radical individualism. My choices read very political in his eyes—eyes that look at the world from a very different experiential perspective.

But this is not about my choices in that class, nor is it about how education is a political enterprise. Rather, this is about awareness, for in that moment a student reminded me of what happens when teachers allow students to critically engage the material. Because I prefaced the class on the first day with the recommendation
that they vocally engage the class material, I made space for a conversation about my pedagogy in that classroom—a conversation sometimes ignored in education. My own schooling vividly taught me that politics were always at play, often reifying the status-quo, while denying my dissenting voice. I recall a “Major English Authors” course where the syllabus only reflected the work done by men and, when asked, the professor abruptly noted that the class focused on major English authors. So politics (what gets put in, what is left out, who is privileged and who is neglected) is always already a part of educational practice. But schooling often ignores the recognition of the power the instructor has in shaping how education happens.

The political conversation we had in class that day—both this student’s assertion of my socialist nature, as well as my eagerness to accept that claim and problematize the educational process—shifted, I think, the nature of our classroom toward the performative. Through our conversation, I hope we changed direction away from my student’s claim about the nature of my particular classroom, to the broad process of creating the very idea of a classroom. We talked about curriculum, we talked about communicative rules and how power is asserted through space and ritual, we talked about the current charge by conservative politicians that education needs more standardization and more accountability, and we talked about the very impossibility of creating classrooms without ideology. Further, I reminded them that because I admit my politics (which I framed as critical, noting my commitment to anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-heterosexual classroom discourse), I hoped they would all ask themselves about
those teachers in their past who never acknowledged their own commitments. I gave the students a new assignment that day—they were to analyze the politics of their other classes, asking themselves what is being promoted and maintained without acknowledgement. My hope was to shift from the naturalized assumption that education should strive toward neutrality to a space where they saw the constitutive nature of education as a process of political and ideological choices. It was the power of a performative mode of analysis that made possible a conversation that, for one semester, made the basic course a space of critical inquiry. On the final exam, students were able to analyze situations on the level of the constitutive, moving toward a complex understanding of communicative behaviors. It turned a critique against me personally, into an opportunity for learning.

NINE

A performative mode of analysis will tell me that the bodies and minds of those labeled "at-risk" is a fiction. It is an illusion that has been created over time and has, for many, including those who come to claim that identity, gained the appearance of substance or naturalness. Listening to some who write on "at-risk," we might forget that these identities are created: Frymier, et. al. (1992), argue that risk is a predictable measure that can be based on students educational experiences; Chesebro, et al. (1992), argue that risk is a product of external locus of control; and Johnson (1994) says risk is a communication contradiction between differing systems in
Performative Pedagogy

education (i.e., between the students and schooling, the schooling process and family, etc.). As Deanna L. Fas­sett (1999) notes, these naturalized constructions often take the shape of either metaphors of epidemiology (diagnosis in the medicalized sense) or ecology (conflict between child and environment). Thus, they appear to be a natural consequence of either the student who lacks some quality or characteristic that might enable success in school, or the student who fails because communication across the divides between school and home are too different.

A performative mode of analysis might question the naturalness in these constructions, asking questions about how these constructs were made in the first place. It is a different kind of question, moving from the immediacy of the student here and now to the structure that generated the possibility of their failure. It is to say that rather than simply acknowledging the incredulity between home and school (especially for people of color), one must first ask about how this structure that we call education was generated and maintained. Our systems of schooling are very much a product of European based education, a training of bodies and minds to be docile receptacles waiting to be filled by teacher-experts (Foucault, 1977; Freire, 1996; hooks, 1994; Shor, 1992). McLaren (1993) argues that "there is a distinct Eros denying quality about school life, as if students were discarnate beings, unsullied by the taint of living flesh. [. . .] [S]tudents put their bodies symbolically 'on hold' upon entering the school at the beginning of the day" (p. 221). Chris Amirault (1995) notes that the ideal of a "good" student is a reproductive construct—teachers, judged successful in their educational paths, continue to
privilege the same qualities, reconstituting the categories and behaviors of success. So, if we can say that our schools privilege particular kinds of bodies (white, able-bodied, male, etc.) that perform in particular ways (docile, seated, absent-bodied, etc.), then might we also conclude that the construct of who is 'at-risk' in those classrooms might also be a construction? And if we say this, then what might be the implications for how one engages in the practice of education?

TEN

It is my first time in the lecture hall as the official professor for this "basic" communication course and my hands glisten with the dampness produced from nervous sweat. I wipe them on my pant legs, my shirt, a small packet of tissues in my pocket—all in an attempt to wipe away the nervousness I feel in this space, the terror of these 300 pairs of eyes on me. This room makes me sweat. This context makes me sweat. My eyes sweep across the bodies of my new students, only one-third the 900 total population in this (my) introductory course. As I look at them, I think back to my own college experience. I only had one lecture course in my own education—a room of 50 bored general education students staring at the geology professor as he talked about the differences between this rock and that. I imagine for many of these 300 students, I am that teacher. I am the one talking incessantly about things that do not matter, as much as I try to say otherwise, in their lives. This fact—this location as the bringer of boredom—makes me shiver, makes me cringe, and makes my hands
sweat. And the fact that I know my hatred of this room is personal—my own construction and my own pedagogical allegiances to interactive and embodied learning—makes me sweat, for I know that my resistance to this space will make this classroom situation all the more difficult for all of us.

Wiping my hands on my new brown slacks, I ask a question. This is my attempt to undermine what I feel is the teacher-centered, anti-dialogic nature of this classroom space. This is my attempt to create a sense of the process oriented focus of my class. It was just a simple question, posed for consideration to 300 students who couldn’t care less. Who just wanted to go, to go home—they knew this subjective question about power, culture, and pedagogy wouldn’t be on the multiple-choice, mass produced and computer graded test. They knew this was pointless, for they are only there to get the notes, to take the test, to pass, to move on, move on to more important things. I am an obstacle here, only an obstacle. I wipe my hands again as the persistent perspiration continues.

They look, these 300 student faces. They look at me and are silent. They don’t help me out and I stand there, mocked by their silence. And it is my fault, for I invite this mocking—it is my attempt to allow the structure to become apparent, to allow the constraints of this room to become evident to all. This room, with its computerized video projection equipment, with its bolted-down desks, with its molded chairs—each of which are designed for some mythical, idealized other who fits its image, with its stadium incline, with its stage from which I spout knowledge to this sleeping audience, all mocks me. And I ask them to do so. I ask them to do so
in order that the structure, the communication norms, all shed the normalcy engrained on us by our schooling histories. I ask them to question this situation. I ask them to question me, my place, my power. And when they mock me, I hope they see that it is the system I am asking them to mock. But as I stand there, my body only feels the mocking as it injures my sense of self, the self who hates this room, this situation, this gross injustice upon the bodies of my new students. And it makes my hands sweat—they sweat because I have offered my body up as the site of critique. My hands sweat because I know that, by standing there in front of this room, I am the representative of the educational system that renders them the passive, bored, and sleeping student. I am the paradox of tradition and critique. This paradox injures me. And I suspect it injures them, the sleeping students who know the rules, knows that soon the overhead, the notes, will appear and give them the key, the answers for the exam.

My hands sweat because I am, after all, a paradox they know all too well.

ELEVEN

Critical performative pedagogy redefines risk. By this I mean to suggest that critical performative pedagogy alters how students inhabit educational spaces to such an extent that traditional notions of 'at-risk' cease to matter in the same ways. Students in this environment encounter educational material through the mediums of their minds, bodies, and spirit, asking for reflexively visceral participation. Students who enter
the classroom with their bodies already present (via color, ability, age, gender, sexuality, etc.) are positioned differently. That is, their body is no longer to be feared and erased, but embraced as a site of critical interrogation and reflection. Additionally, those bodies that are always already absent through educational discipline and naturalization will no longer feel the effacement of schooling. Rather, the body is re-enfleshed in the classroom through a pedagogy that re-marks and remakes educational subjectivities in an effort to acknowledge the invisible forces of privilege and domination that dwell in absence. Together, educational bodies (students and teachers) enter the site of learning on contingent, shifting ground. From that unstable ground of critique, learning can be established in a cooperative and passionate engagement.

Critical performative pedagogy creates risk. By this I mean to suggest that critical performative pedagogy alters how students inhabit educational spaces to such an extent that traditional notions of 'at-risk' cease to matter in the same ways. And while this unstable ground is a productive space of inquiry, one should acknowledge that educative practices that are body-centered and critically community-based are currently not the norm in schooling. This means that when a student enters my classroom where I ask for bodily engagement, students may be rightly skeptical and educationally unprepared for this kind of intellectual labor. Many times when I conduct workshops on whiteness, I begin with a brief discussion on performative pedagogy, noting that I am working against a mind-centered pedagogical bias. I acknowledge that the moving of ideas to the body, a shift many of them consider a large and incom-
prehensible leap, demands that they be willing to try and locate learning within their own experiencing bodies. When I foreground Pineau’s (1994) framing of performative pedagogy, calling for a schooling practice that offers poetics, play, process, and power, I put students who would normally be comfortable in classrooms at risk by changing the rules. And while I suspect that everyone would gain from a pedagogy that recognizes the whole educational subject, I am very much aware that such a practice puts students at risk.

**TWELVE**

I remember sitting in the small dim room of the basement thinking to myself, “What in the hell are you going to do about people like Bruce?” Bruce is indeed a conundrum for critical performative pedagogy. He represents the worst fear of many instructors. Is he a predator? Is he violent? Is the instructor at-risk of harm in that class? How has she already been damaged from this experience? What do we do with students who usurp power in the classroom in order to instigate fear?

My first reaction to this dilemma is to turn the question around and ask, what has happened in Bruce’s education (as well as his everyday life) to cause this kind of disruption? What kind of needs does he have (for attention, for power, for help) that make possible the behaviors we see? What has education done to his body in the past that make this the place for his assertions of power to manifest? And further, how does the basic communication course meet his own subjective needs? How does the process of education, which the basic
course he is disrupting is certainly a part of, systematically produce students who cause violence and disruption in our classrooms? As a critical scholar, I can’t help but move the conversation away from Bruce and say that Bruce is only a product of an educational system that ignores the real material concerns that Bruce lives within. This is to say, Bruce has been let down by education. Schooling is decontextualized, divided into disciplinary parts that are then divided further without connections and meaningful distinctions (Kohn, 1993). Schooling is rendered artificially neutral, removed so much from Bruce’s life that he may rightly question the impact education has on his everyday world (McLaren, 1993). Schooling does ignore the body and spirit of students, privileging the mind and cognitive at the expense other ways of knowing (hooks, 1994). And schooling is conducted in a social world that demands quantitative testing, assessments, existing always in a financial crisis, especially in a society that allows politicians to use the future of children as bait for endorsements and hopeful voters (Apple, 1996). Is it any wonder that we, as a society, produce students like Bruce? Is it any wonder Bruce asserts power through the only means he has: shock and intimidation?

But I also want to make an argument that is not very welcome in critical educational literature. I want to argue that there is still a place for teacherly authority in the classroom. There is a place where the threat on my body and the bodies of other students and teachers overwhelms the needs of that particular student in this particular moment. So when I sat in that classroom and I saw how scared that young teacher was and how the other students reacted around Bruce, I was ready as the
then Assistant Director to stand and stop the class if I felt it needed to be done. I was ready and prepared to say, no more for you—you have just ended your participation in this classroom. There is a place for teacher-centered power in the classroom. When Shor (1992) notes that his goal is for students to erase him so much that his presence is unnecessary, I want to say fine, but not when the bodies and spirits of others are at risk. Not when I can do something that makes that space more livable for others. And while my first priority is making education a process that does not systematically produce Bruces through the erasing of their very subjectivity, I also understand that my job is to maintain a space that is as safe as possible for collaborative learning. When that environment is threatened by troubled students and I can’t help them individually to adjust their own interaction in class, then my responsibility to the class as a whole kicks in and I must respond.

**THIRTEEN**

Several summers ago, I went to a conference in Iowa on cultural politics. In that conference, I was privileged to meet and work with several of the top scholars in cultural communication studies. I was excited and inspired by this experience; yet, I was simultaneously amazed to hear how some critical scholars talked about education. One very well known and very prolific critical/cultural scholar noted that education should be “apolitical.” S/he claimed that education should be about “learning” and that we should never “push our own ideological agenda”
on to our students. Further, s/he argued that if students used his/her classes in order to continue oppressive acts, then that was okay because s/he was just teaching them, not telling them how to use what s/he taught. My mind spun, thinking about being accused of teaching politics at the expense of content by a student in my course. As I think about “at-risk students,” “critical performative pedagogy,” “the erasure of bodies” and “power in the classroom,” I am well aware that education is always already, in every way, a political enterprise. The teacher, as soon as s/he picks readings, activities, or very the subject of a class, is making political choices—to do this, is always a choice not to include that. Every act is a denial of other possibilities—a choice of consequences that comes from somewhere, from someone. Such choices are performative—they create the basis of conversation, the formation of knowledge, as well as the promises and limitations of possibility.

My vision of critical performative pedagogy is one that privileges the body, mind, and spirit of educational bodies. My vision includes teaching politics and giving students the tools necessary to see what forms those politics. My vision also makes space for them to see the political in every pedagogical situation, regardless of whether that teacher foregrounds it. My vision calls for a balance between democratic collaborative pedagogy and teacherly authority, allowing every educational subject to carry expertise in different areas bred through experience while not denying the teacher’s necessary role as the guardian. My vision of critical performative pedagogy values the transformative, the critical, the
reflexive, the bodily, and the belief that, with possibility, there is hope for all students.

FOURTEEN

It was after class and I was picking up my teacherly stuff—my chalk holder, my photocopied essays, my class notes, and the random pens and pencils I take to every class. The clock marked the end of my teaching day, knowing that next week the instructor would be back and I would have to resume my note taking. I was sad to see my day come to an end; however, I was glad to know that my co-researcher and I were progressing toward the end of this research project on whiteness in the classroom. In my head, I remembered Howard and Sophia pulling, tugging on the white woman in the middle, whispering their influence into her ears. I remembered her looking so confused, so tired. As I picked up the last of my materials, I recalled her during the debriefing period after the performance ended: "I wasn't expecting to feel so conflicted in the performance—I was expecting it to be pretend, to be like I was in a play. Yet, when I was being pulled by Howard and Sophia, it really felt authentic—it felt real. And it was hard to keep moving through the performance because I felt that if I made a mistake and did not anticipate the tug, they could really hurt me. It was just a few minutes, but I am tired as a result." I smile, knowing this feeling in my own body—knowing that this is precisely the power of performance. It is precisely the power of performance to highlight the tensions of our everyday lives in ways that make us understand the forces at work in our nego-
tations of race and power. I think about this woman and know, somehow know, that the next time she is in the presence of a racist comment, a comment made in ignorance or spite against someone of another race, a comment meant to push up whiteness at the expense of others, I know she will feel those arms on hers—she will feel Howard and Sophia’s grip and know that she must negotiate the tensions or risk choosing. Either choice is risky—choosing to rely on privilege with the new knowledge that such choices enact violence will risk her sense of self, her sense of right and wrong. Choosing to resist, to side with Howard, to allow the critical voice to rise within her to mark racism in action, will also be a risk. She will feel the tug and know that it is no longer an easy choice, for ultimately it is Howard at the end of that grip—it is a new friend made in this class that gets implicated in her decisions. She, after this performance, is at-risk in new ways.

I turn for the door and see her standing there. She is putting on her jacket. She looks at me and thanks me for my time in class. She smiles. “I’ll remember this for some time,” she says.
I’m sure she will.

REFERENCES


Performative Pedagogy


Impact of High School Preparation on College Oral Communication Apprehension

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Oral communication skills are needed at all levels of the workplace, from interviewing for a job, leading a training session for employees, to communicating with co-workers and supervisors. Academically, many colleges now require speech communication within their core curriculum, so their students become proficient in public speaking fundamentals (NCA, 1998b).

However, the education and training used to refine public speaking skills are not always intertwined with high school curriculum in preparation for college. Without communication skills training, communication apprehension (CA), "the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78)", may be high upon entering a college classroom and even influence a student's decision and ability to complete a college degree (Ericson & Gardener, 1992; McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield & Payne, 1989). Unfortunately, the communication fears students experience may never be addressed before college because often students are not offered classes or experiences in which public speaking skills and practice are required.

If communication skills and communication anxiety are not addressed in secondary education, the negative
impact of CA can influence a student's life, possibly forever. Those who continue to report high CA often will leave college, drop specific college courses, receive lower grades, become less motivated, and receive fewer job opportunities, interviews and promotions (Daly & Leth, 1976; Disalvo, 1980; Ericson & Gardner, 1992; Frymier, 1993; McCroskey, et al., 1989; Monroe, Borzi, & Burrell, 1992; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Richmond, McCroskey & Davis, 1982). Consequently, it seems important to help students decrease CA levels in their secondary education.

The purpose of this study is to query the relationship between student CA levels and high school speech preparation and public speaking experiences. Although past research has maintained that there is a connection between success in college and CA levels (McCroskey, et al., 1989; Monroe et al., 1992), few studies, if any, have focused on high school courses, high school public speaking experiences, and CA levels of students as they enter college.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public speaking and effective interpersonal communication in the workforce are essentials for career advancement and success in the business arena. Associations such as the National Communication Association (NCA) and the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) have created taskforces for researching how to further speaking and listening skills because of their importance in academic settings and in the workplace (NCA, 1998a).

The NCA suggests, "...educational programs for all students should be developed that enhance self-esteem, assure equal op-
portunity for career development, and offer exploratory experiences in a variety of careers" (Bresler, 1998, p. 31). Employers in business and industry insist that those they hire understand communication processes and are skilled in oral communication (Sprague, 1996).

Today, communication and teaching organizations support the need for communication skills training (Lewis & Schaps, 1995). Public speaking instruction and practice throughout a student’s elementary, secondary and post-secondary education help to define and refine the student’s knowledge and ability to speak publicly. However, in order to be competent in public speaking, students need the opportunity to learn the skills and to overcome their anxiety about public speaking.

*Communication Apprehension.* Between 15 and 20 percent of college students report an overall or traitlike CA, “a relatively enduring personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts” (i.e., public speaking, meetings, group discussions, and interpersonal conversations) (McCroskey, 1997. p. 85). In addition, over 70% of individuals report an anxiety associated with communication in the public speaking context (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998).

The problem with experiencing CA is that it can lead to communication avoidance and can negatively impact every aspect of a person’s life—school, work, and friendships (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Those who experience high CA (HCAs) are more likely to drop out their senior year of high school than those reporting lower CA (LCAs). Even though socioeconomic factors are predominant, CA scores tend to account for 26 percent of the variance in students’ decisions to leave before high school graduation (Monroe et al., 1992). In addition, CA has been “a significant factor associated with a high school graduate’s decisions about postsecondary education”
High School Preparation and CA

(Monroe et al., 1992, p. 122). HCAs are less likely to enroll in college than LCAs.

Several studies have shown that CA is related to both college retention and academic achievement. HCAs often drop a college class with oral communication requirements, even if it is a required course, and HCAs "who remain in courses with high communication requirements are likely to be absent on days when they are scheduled for presentations" (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998, p. 62). When relationships between college students' motivation to study and their CA levels were examined, HCAs tended to report less success in the classroom and decreased motivation (Frymier, 1993).

When it comes to cognitive achievement, significant negative relationships between CA and cognitive performance are consistently reported (Bourhis and Allen, 1992). HCAs tend to suffer lower overall grade-point averages (GPAs) and evaluations (McCroskey, 1977; Powers & Smythe, 1980; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Data from two, four-year longitudinal studies show that HCAs are significantly more likely to drop out of college when compared to LCAs, and HCAs tend "to drop out significantly more after only one year" (Ericson & Gardner, 1992, p. 127). Another study of undergraduate college students reports that HCAs who did not overcome their CA in the first two years of college also were likely to drop out of college (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield & Payne, 1989).

HCAs report less self-esteem and less self-efficacy (Dwyer & Fus, 1999; McCroskey & Richmond, 1975). They tend to report more reticence, less willingness to communicate, higher levels of shyness, and more audience anxiety when compared to LCAs (Burgoon, 1976;

In the work environment, HCAs tend to report fewer employment interviews; fewer job offers and fewer promotions than LCAs (Daly & Leth, 1976; Disalvo, 1980; McCroskey & Leppard, 1975; Richmond, 1998; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Richmond, McCroskey & Davis, 1982). Overall, HCAs report more job dissatisfaction and greater likelihood of getting fired or quitting (Richmond, 1998).

Communication Skills Training in High School. One way to help HCAs overcome the debilitating anxiety is through communication skills training that teaches specific preparation and delivery skills (Freemouw & Zitter, 1978; Fawcett & Miller, 1975, Rancer, 1993). As accrediting institutions and assessment processes are holding academic programs more accountable for retaining students, as well as preparing them with specific employable skills, communication skills acquisition often comes into focus. Since communication experiences in high school predict college GPAs (Powell & Collier, 1990), prime consideration should be given on how to strengthen oral communication skills. Communication skills training should start at the elementary and secondary levels (NCA, 1998c) because of its relationship to prediction of college success.

The National Communication Association (NCA) has recommended competency statements for speaking, listening, and media literacy at the high school level. The document “Standards for Speaking, Listening and Media Literacy in K-12 Education” outlines four categories of essential communications skills to be covered in elementary and secondary education including: 1) the fundamentals of effective communication (e.g., understanding of the components of the communication process, knowledge of the role of communication in relationships, sensitivity to diversity
High School Preparation and CA

and ethical issues, and appropriate and effective communication strategies to resolve conflict); 2) speaking (e.g., understanding the speaking process, ability to adapt communication strategies appropriately, and use language that clarifies, persuades, and/or inspires while respecting differences in listeners’ background); 3) listening (e.g., understanding the listening process, ability to use appropriate and effective listening skills, and manage barriers to listening); and 4) media literacy (e.g., knowledge of the ways people use media in both social and cultural contexts, the complex relationship among audience and media content, and the use of that media to communicate to a specific audience) (NCA, 1998c). Based upon the suggested competencies, communication skills training should play a major role in preparing students for post-secondary education and career success. However, public speaking or oral communication classes are often not part of the required curriculum at many high schools (Hall, Morreale & Gaudino, 1999).

High School Curriculum. Curriculum has been deemed organizational bound, meaning individual schools and school districts often adopt their own specific curriculum guidelines. This organizational-bound curriculum is a primary influence on the learning that may or may not occur in high school (Lee, 1993).

Proper curriculum tracking (core requirements for a designated emphasis) can predict how well a student will be prepared for post-secondary school or a career (Lee & Bryk, 1988; Lee, 1993; McKenna, 1994). Course tracking and track placement are the best predictors of academic achievement. This tracking is a better predictor of academic achievement then either attitudes, behavior or student backgrounds. Students who have taken more academically inclined courses such as math, foreign language, English, science, and social studies demonstrate increased learning (Lee, 1993). High school tracking tendencies are usually geared toward broad categories of learning subjects including
High School Preparation and CA

math, social studies, science, and civics (Jenks & Brown, 1975; Jenks, 1985). However, speech communication training often is not part of high school tracks (Hall et al., 1999).

Business, industry and labor are very concerned that high school graduates are prepared for work, in terms of basic skills or ability to solve problems and learn on the job. In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCAN) began defining competencies high school graduates need in order to meet the changing demands of the workplace (McKenna, 1994). Oral communication, one such skill, is considered one of the most important skills needed in the workplace (Garary & Bernhardt, 1998). Therefore, it would seem essential for secondary schools to equip students with this needed skill.

Currently studies in high-school curriculum regarding oral communication have been conducted on a state level (Chesebro & Gaudino, 1991). In 1981, oral communication was required by only 26 states as a part of a language arts curriculum (Book & Pappas, 1981). In 1994, a national curriculum survey of K-12, found eleven states had no standard for speaking and listening skills; one state had intentions of developing a standard, three states said they were currently working on their ability to assess such skills, and 21 states had begun inclusion of these skills into curriculum (Litterst, VanRheenen & Casmir, 1994).

Although the majority of states do require some training in language arts, students in 35 percent of the states are at risk of receiving none. In a 1999 survey, only 65 percent of states required communication as part of the language arts program (Hall et al., 1999). Out of the 43 state respondents, only 20 states reported standards for communication competence were required for high school graduation (Hall et al., 1999).

Since organizations call for strong communication skills for employees and most universities expect students to be equipped with the communication skills that college-level courses require,
it is important for students to receive oral communication skills training. Though both the workforce and post-secondary educational institutions have called for communication skill acquisition, communication curriculum is not always required in high schools today. In order to help reduce the CA levels students experience upon entering the workforce or a post-secondary educational institute, public speaking competencies should be an important prerequisite for high school graduation.

This study seeks to determine if there is a connection between students' reported high school oral communication training, public speaking experiences, and CA levels upon enrolling in a college introductory public speaking course. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between CA and student performance measured through a student's final grade (e.g., Dwyer & Fus, 1999), few, if any have investigated relationships among the speaking experiences of students, their high school speech preparation, and CA levels. Based on research showing the negative impact of CA on academic and career success and the NCA call for fulfillment of oral communication competencies in secondary education, the following research questions were proposed.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between students who have taken a speech course in high school and those who have not, in students' reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference between students who have learned public speaking skills\(^1\) in a high

\(^1\) Learned public speaking skills are defined for this study as follows: Learned public speaking skills include communication skills, which provide the respondents with the tools necessary to speak in
school course other than a speech course and those who have not, in students’ reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between students who learned public speaking skills in settings or clubs outside of high school courses and those who have not, in students’ reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

RQ4: Are there significant correlations between the students’ self-reported number of speeches\(^2\) given in a school setting, and the students’ reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

RQ5: Are there significant correlations between the students’ self-reported number of speeches given in settings outside of school, and the students’ reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

public competently. Because of the self-reported nature of the study the perception of what public speaking skills the respondents include may vary (i.e., outlining and formatting, voice inflections, animation, listening skills, audience inclusion methods, delivery, etc.).

\(^2\) Public speaking/speeches is/are defined for this study as follows: Public speaking/speech is the experience/s of the respondents strategically presenting information to a group of gathered listeners. For the purpose of this study, public speaking and speech/speeches are used interchangeably. Because of the self-reported nature of the study, the perception of what event the respondents consider to be a public speech may vary (i.e., formal presentation to a class or organization, presentation to co-workers, an informal toast at a wedding, a campaign address for a class-representative election, etc.).
RQ6: Are there significant correlations between the students' self-reported total number of speeches given, and the students' reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels?

**METHODOLOGY**

Questionnaires were administered during regular class time in the first week of the Fall 2000 semester at a large midwestern state university. The data was collected as part of communication department information and no student's name or social security number was reported in the study.

Respondents for the study were 705 undergraduate students (54.5% female, 39.4% male, 6.1% not reported) enrolled in 30 sections of a fundamentals of public speaking course that satisfies a university-wide, oral-communication general education requirement. These sections were chosen based on instructors' willingness to participate. The sample represents approximately two-thirds of students enrolled in this course during the fall session. Respondent's age ranged from 17 to 44 with a mean of 19.7 years.

*Measurement.* Student information regarding past speaking experience and skills acquisition was gathered using a student demographic information survey specifically including: 1) Did you take a speech course in high school? 2) Did you learn public speaking skills in any other high school course? 3) Did you learn public speaking skills in any other setting or club? 4) How many formal public speeches have you given in a school
High School Preparation and CA

setting? 5) How many formal public speeches have you given in any other setting (work, club, etc.)?

CA was measured using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, 1982). This 24-item scale assesses overall communication anxiety across four contexts, as well as anxiety in each of four contexts (groups, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking). The questionnaire has demonstrated excellent reliability, validity and predictability in CA research (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). For this investigation, we used only the overall PRCA-24 scores and the public speaking context scores because the purpose of the study focused on high school public speaking skills training and experiences related to the college public speaking course and overall communication apprehension. The obtained reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) for the scales used in this study were .95 for the overall CA measure and .88 for the public speaking context measure.

RESULTS

Research Question One asked if there is a significant difference between students who have taken a speech course in high school and those who have not, in reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Overall CA scores ranged from 24 to 116. The obtained mean scores were 62.6 (SD=16.4) for the overall CA level and 19.5 (SD=5.2) for the public speaking context level. Of the respondents, 49.5 percent reported taking a speech course in high school and 40.6 percent reported not taking a speech course (9.9 percent
not reported). Group t-tests showed significant differences between groups for overall CA ($t=-1.7$, $p=.04$) and public speaking CA ($t=-3.2$, $p<.01$) (see Table I). Those students who took a speech course in high school reported lower overall CA and public speaking context CA than those who did not take a speech course in high school.

Research Question Two asked if there is a significant difference between students who have learned public speaking skills in a high school course other than a speech course and those who have not, in reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Of the respondents, 50.8 percent reported learning public speaking skills in courses other than speech courses and 41.0 percent reported not learning public speaking skills (8.2 percent not reported). Group t-tests showed significant differences between groups for both overall CA ($t=-4.0$, $p<.001$) and public speaking CA ($t=-3.1$, $p<.001$) (see Table II). Thus, those students who stated they learned public speaking skills in high schools other than speech courses showed significantly lower overall and public speaking context CA levels than those who did not.

Research Question Three asked if there is significant difference between students who have learned public speaking skills in settings or clubs outside of high school courses and those who have not, in students' reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Of the respondents, 28.2 percent reported learning public speaking skills in other settings and clubs and 62.7 percent reported not learning public speaking skills in other settings or clubs (8.9 percent not reported). Group t-tests showed significant differ-
## Table I

Research Question One: t-test  
Speech Course Taken in High School and CA Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRC Measurement</th>
<th>RQ1 Speech Course in H.S.</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall CA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>63.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking CA</td>
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<td>343</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table II
Research Question Two: t-test
Public Speaking Skills Learned in High School and CA Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRC Measurement</th>
<th>RQ2 P.S. Skills in H.S.</th>
<th>N (N=635)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig (1-tailed)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall CA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>281</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Speaking CA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>20.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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Table III
Research Question Three: t-test
Public Speaking Skills Learned in Other Settings or Clubs and CA Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRC Measurement</th>
<th>RQ2 P.S. Skills in H.S.</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig (1-tailed)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall CA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Speaking CA</td>
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<td>18.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>-5.3</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
ences between groups for both overall CA (t=-5.0, p<.001) and public speaking CA (t=-5.3, p<.001) (See Table III). Thus, those students who stated they learned public speaking skills in other setting or clubs showed significantly lower overall and public speaking context CA levels that those who did not.

Research Question Four asked if there are significant correlations between the students' self-reported number of speeches given in a school setting, and reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Of the respondents, 75.7 percent of students reported giving 0 to 10 speeches in a school setting, 10.1 percent reported giving between 11 to 20 speeches, and 2.6 percent reported giving 21 or more speeches (11.6 percent not reported). A Spearman rho analysis showed a significant relationship between self-reported number of speeches given in a school setting and overall CA levels (rho = -.16, p<.001) and self-reported number of speeches given in a school setting and public speaking context CA levels (rho = -.13, p<.01). Thus, students' overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels were inversely related to the reported number of speeches given in a school setting; the more speeches given, the lower the overall and public speaking CA levels.

Research Question Five asked if there are significant correlations between the students' self-reported number of speeches given in settings outside of school, and the students' reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Of the respondents, 80.0 percent of students reported giving 0 to 10 speeches in a setting other than school, 2.1 percent reported giving between 11 to 20 speeches, and .9 percent reported...
giving 21 or more speeches (17.0 percent not reported). The Spearman rho analysis showed a significant relationship between self reported number of speeches given outside of the school setting and overall CA levels (rho = -.19, p<.001) and self reported number of speeches given outside of the school setting and public speaking context CA levels (rho = -.23, p<.001). Thus, students' overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels were inversely related to the reported number of speeches given outside of the school setting; the more speeches given, the lower the overall and public speaking CA levels.

Research Question Six asked if there are significant correlations between the students' self-reported total number of speeches given, and the students' reported initial overall CA levels and public speaking context CA levels? Of the respondents, 61.7 percent of students reported giving 0 to 10 speeches total, 12.1 reported giving between 11 to 20 speeches, and 7.7 reported giving 21 or more speeches (18.5 percent not reported). A Spearman rho analysis showed a significant relationship between self reported number of total speeches given and overall CA levels (rho = -.20, p<.001) and self reported number of total speeches given and public speaking context CA levels (rho = -.20, p<.001). Thus, the more speeches students reported giving, the lower the overall and public speaking CA levels they tended to report.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to determine if high school speech preparation and other public speaking ex-
High School Preparation and CA

periences are related to CA levels college students report upon beginning a college-level public speaking course. The results show that when students who took a high school speech course were compared to those who did not, there was a significant difference in reported overall and public speaking context CA levels. In addition, when students who reported learning public speaking skills in any high school course were compared to those who reported they did not learn public speaking skills in any course, there was a significant difference in their overall and public speaking context CA levels. In other words, when students reported learning public speaking skills in high school (e.g., in speech, English, or business classes) their CA levels decreased. This finding reinforces previous research that has shown communication skills training even within other coursework is related to decreased public speaking anxiety levels (Fremouw & Zitter, 1978; McCroskey, 1982).

Within the last decade, national surveys have found that less than 50 percent of the states incorporate communication skill acquisition into state standards (Backlund, Brown, Gurry & Jandt, 1992; Litterst, Van-Rheenen & Casmir, 1994) while 65% at least require oral communication as part of the language arts curriculum (Hall et al., 1999). Some high schools do integrate the NCA’s standards for speaking, delivery skills, audience inclusion, listening and media literacy for K-12 (NCA, 1998c) not only in public speaking courses, but also in curriculum-wide courses. The NCA standards include four categories of communication competencies that high schools are asked to integrate into their skill acquisition base as part of their curriculum (NCA, 1998c): 1) a demonstration of knowledge and
understanding of communication; 2) a demonstration of competent speaking techniques; 3) a demonstration of competent listening abilities; and 4) a demonstration of media literacy. This study reinforces the importance of teaching oral communication skills training and including these standards across high school curriculum.

This investigation also found a significant (although modest) relationship between the reported numbers of speeches given and reported CA levels. The more speeches students reported presenting in high school or outside the high school doors, the less overall CA and public speaking context CA they tended to report. Participation and practice in public speaking help students gain speaking confidence (Lee, 1993). Thus, practicing public speaking skills through an increased number of speaking events in high school seems to be related to decreased student CA levels.

Communicator skills training and opportunities to practice public speaking should play a major role in preparing students for life after high school (Lewis & Schaps, 1995). Thus, one important suggestion based on the results of this study is that NCA's communication competencies should be integrated into a curriculum-wide high school philosophy, prioritizing the acquisition of communication skills within each course of a student's curriculum track. The acquisition of these skills may help students make the decision to further their education and stay in college because of decreased CA levels (Ericson & Gardner, 1992; Frymier, 1993; McCroskey et al., 1989; Monroe et al., 1992). In addition, a curriculum-wide oral communication philosophy could help students who need communication skills go directly and successfully into the workforce after

This present study's findings have implications for basic course instructors and directors. Instructors will continue to be faced with teaching students who have a wide range of public speaking skills training and experiences. Consequently, pre-course assessment of communication skills may be essential to accurately determine progress during the course. It is also essential for making decisions about teaching strategies and adjusting them for a particular group of students. In addition, basic course directors need to consider and assess pre-college public speaking experience in order to accurately report the assessment of college basic course effectiveness.

Certain factors limit the interpretation of the results of this investigation. This study was based on records from one communication department at one university from a single semester of courses. Thus, research should continue to query the impact of high school preparation and experiences on college CA levels to provide more generalizations.

Future research needs to include the non-college-bound population because college students were the only participants in this study. Consequently, the students who did not go to college were not represented. Since this study reinforces the importance of high school public speaking skills acquisition, future research should query high school public skills-based training — both the curriculum and the communication skills taught throughout the curriculum— and whether students chose those public speaking experiences and courses or were forced to take them. Investigation
High School Preparation and CA

should be conducted on whether types and amounts of high school public speaking skills training have any relationship to students' change in CA level from the beginning to the end of a college public speaking course.

Future study should investigate how public speaking skills are taught within extracurricular activities in both urban and rural settings. In addition, future investigation should examine the curriculum requirements for public speaking skills at the state levels, as well as at the district and local school levels to find out why public speaking is not part of all curriculum tracks.

Finally, this study strengthens the support for public speaking skills training at the high school level. Learning public speaking skills and using them seems to be related to decreased communication anxiety speakers report when faced with new speaking experiences. As we have long surmised, the more speaking experiences and skills training students report, the more confidence and less CA they report and the more likely they are to succeed academically, socially and vocationally.

REFERENCES


High School Preparation and CA


Teaching the basic course has become a consistent and integral role for communication faculty across the nation. This role has become increasingly important because the ability to speak confidently in a public or small group setting has been consistently identified as one of the most important skills that college graduates need (Adler & Elmhorst, 2001). As the basic course has developed over time, a greater need to satisfy the private sector's demands has become more and more of an issue. Universities have responded in kind by increasing the enrollments in the basic communication course in order to accommodate some of these needs (Gray, 1989). Gray (1989) argues that this increased economic pressure has had a significant impact on the instructional format utilized to teach the basic course. Often an increase in class size has been a traditional solution to this problem, (Gibson, et al., 1980; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1985) however, increasing classroom size brings with it a number of pitfalls. First, public and legislative bodies are calling for greater accountability for money spent to fund universities resulting in smaller budgets for some academic departments and continued pressure on faculty to make every student an "excellent"
speaker. Second, and more importantly for this study, because of this increase in external accountability universities are feeling the need to service more students in a single course with fewer dollars. Thus, administrators are caught between the need to teach a greater number of students with little increase in budget, while continuing to produce effective speakers.

There are no easy answers to these problems, but one common approach that institutions are using involves an increased use of graduate students (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Golish, 1999; Gray, 1989; Larenz, et al., 1992; Myers, 1998; Roach, 1997; Rushin, et al., 1997) and in some cases undergraduate students (e.g. Humbolt State University, University College of Cape Breton, University of Denver, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Portland State University, Miami University, Hope College) to assist with instruction (e.g. grading student speeches, assisting with large lecture sections, providing feedback to students concerning speech topics, etc) in order to accommodate larger class sizes. This practice naturally begs the question; can undergraduates be effectively trained to evaluate student presentations in the basic course? While this idea has interesting promise, it is also fraught with potential peril. Perhaps two of the greatest concerns about this practice are the potential problems of rater error and speaker order effects. Thus, this investigation is designed to explore the effectiveness of utilizing undergraduate instructor assistants as speech evaluators in the basic course. In particular, this study attempts to determine whether instructor assistant (IA) grading is affected by rater error and recency and primacy effects based on the order in which students present. In addi-
Appropriateness of Instructor Assistants

tion, this study attempts to determine whether the quality of evaluative comments decreases between the first and last speakers.

GTA TRAINING

Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray (1990) argue that across all disciplines numerous institutions utilize graduate and undergraduate students to fulfill the duties of evaluating and critiquing student work at the undergraduate level. During an investigation of eight institutions, these researchers found that 53.5% of introductory courses were taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). Rushin, et al., (1997) indicated that for most institutions, GTAs have more one-on-one contact with undergraduates than professors and as Roach (1997) has argued the title of teaching "assistant" is deceiving, because most GTAs maintain complete control over their own courses with little or no training. Kaufman-Everett & Backlund (1980) found that 86% of the speech communication departments in their studies utilized GTAs for teaching autonomous sections of the basic course. Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray’s (1990) examination supported these conclusions indicating that most courses in speech communication were taught by GTAs with their own autonomous sections and that many were working on Masters rather than Doctoral degrees. As the use of graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants in a variety of undergraduate courses has increased, many researchers have begun to examine the impact teacher assistant training has on their effectiveness in the classroom. Rushin, et al., (1997) argued that
even though there appears to be a strong formal structure in place for GTA training which includes workshops, seminars, and courses, the experience is often brief and takes place at a superficial level. Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray (1990) stated that "we should applaud our efforts and then redouble them. Much of our undergraduate education foundation rests on the ability of people who have had no prior teaching experience and who have only recently left the undergraduate classrooms themselves" (p. 305).

Many Basic Course Directors working with GTAs stress the importance and value of a rigorous training program for preparing them for the classroom. Of those programs measured in their study, Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray (1990) found that the duration for training sessions ranged from one-hour to an entire semester with the average program utilizing a weeklong session prior to the start of the semester. They, however argued that it is still unclear what is appropriate to cover while training GTAs. Many programs simply address course content, grading procedures, and classroom management, while a limited number address instructional strategies for enhancing student learning (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990). Prieto and Altmaier (1994) suggested that most research on GTA training focuses exclusively on effects of training programs rather than more fundamental elements such as ensuring effective teaching and learning for undergraduates.

A significant concern for the training of GTAs is the development of grading practices. Allen (1998) reported that assessment decisions are extremely important in academic life. "If academics cannot grade work well, they will be viewed with sympathy or derision by their
appropriateness of instructor assistants

colleagues, and in either case may have their professional competence and status called into question" (p. 241). With this in mind, there appears to be a number of variables that have been determined to impact the nature of grading including: student ethnicity (Agee & Smith, 1974; Rubin & Yoder, 1985; Young, 1998), gender (Bock, 1970; Ford, Puckett, & Tucker, 1987; King, 1998), positive leniency (Bock & Bock, 1977), halo effects (Lance, LaPointe, & Fisicaro, 1994; McKeachie, 1994; Murphy & Anhalt, 1992), and feedback strategies (Book, 1985; Clauser, Clyman, & Swanson, 1999; Louden & Shellen, 1976). Another significant problem associated with rater error is the overall planning of the course. Foster, et al., (1990) discovered that student perceptions about the grading practices and grading scales used in assessment are notably different than the instructor intended them to be. For example, Quigley (1998) observed that because written and oral communication skills are so critical in the workforce, educators can and should take specific steps to incorporate these needs into the curriculum. Quigley explained that grading criteria needed to be “consistent with cultural expectations for public speaking” (p. 43). Additionally, when students are given oral assignments, they “benefit from clear grading criteria, structured practice, and specific feedback” (p. 48). Thus, failure to meet these steps in the planning process leads to poor instruction and little improvement in speaking skills. Other research has demonstrated that selecting a meaningful evaluation instrument (Carlson & Smith-Howell, 1995) can increase equity and accuracy of overall grading, but rater error remains a serious issue. Also, evaluator
training can help control for some grader errors (Goulden, 1990).

Finally, when training GTAs to grade effectively in the classroom, Basic Course Directors should be concerned about primacy and recency effects. For example, in 1925, Lund explored a theory that he called primacy, which referred to the notion that an idea presented first in a discussion would have a greater impact than the opposing side presented second (in Mason, 1976). Other research has since followed Lund's lead exploring the viability of his theory (Anderson & Barrios, 1961; Barnette, 1999; Bishop, 1987; Ehrensberger, 1945; Freebody & Anderson, 1986; Jersild, 1929; Krosnick & Alwin, 1987; Sato, 1990). Specifically relating to public speaking, Knower (1936) found that competitive speakers in first and last positions are more commonly ranked in intermediate positions as opposed to either high or low extremes and second to last speakers often score highest on final averages. Benson and Maitlen (1975) disputed some of Knower's findings as their research concluded that there was no significant relationship between rank and speaking position.

When training GTAs to utilize a standardized grading system for the basic course it is vital that basic course directors ensure various forms of rater error are not occurring. It is apparent that rater errors do exist for a number of reasons, and that further, there appears to be enough research supporting both primacy and recency effects. Because rater errors exist and most of the research suggests that training can help eliminate these problems, further research should be done in this area. One could reasonably argue that if graduate students are susceptible to the various forms of rater error, then
undergraduates are likely prone to make these same mistakes. Thus, if speaker order affects student evaluation, it is valuable to empirically test the effects of rater error on instructor assistant grading. Based on the above rationale the following research question was set forth:

RQ 1: Are instructor assistants affected by the primacy and recency effects during the grading of student speeches?

An additional challenge is ensuring that students receive the appropriate valid and reliable feedback from those that rate them during their presentations. Prieto and Altmaier (1994) suggested that most research on GTA training focuses exclusively on effects of training programs rather than on more fundamental elements such as ensuring effective assessment and development for undergraduates. One of the primary implications concerning the use of undergraduates (particularly undergraduates from majors outside the communication discipline) as raters in the basic course is whether they have the acquired skills to provide students with appropriate feedback to assist in the development of their speaking skills. Additionally, one could argue that as class size, and the number of speakers in a given class period increases; additional constraints are placed on undergraduate instructor assistants to provide effective feedback. Thus, to determine whether speaker order affects the quality of comments provided by instructor assistants the following research question was set forth.
RQ 2: Does the order in which students speak affect the quality and reliability of speech evaluation comments from instructor assistants?

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 38 undergraduate instructor assistants (IAs) currently working with the basic course at a large Midwestern University. To become an IA in this university's basic course students must successfully complete the course, fill out an application and receive a strong endorsement from their previous instructor(s). Applicants are then competitively selected for the program based on their grade point average and reported performance in the classroom. Prior to the evaluation of student speeches in the classroom, instructor assistants take part in a rigorous eight week training program which focuses on evaluation of recorded presentations and speaker outlines, discussion on the value of presentation grades, and instruction on how to provide effective feedback. Overall, instructor assistants are composed of a mix of students including communication studies majors, business majors, communication studies minors and students majoring in the hard sciences (e.g., engineering, veterinary medicine, et al.). Although instructor assistants have many important responsibilities in the course, their main role is grading student speeches. The basic course has an enrollment of approximately 550 students per semester, divided into 12 sections directed by a graduate teaching assistant (evaluation criteria, assignments and exams.
Appropriateness of Instructor Assistants

are standardized across each section). In an average
class, instructor assistants are responsible for 15 stu-
dents and serve as graders and facilitators for these in-
dividuals based on the cooperative learning component
of this standardized course.

Procedures

For this study, instructor assistants were asked to
grade four ten-minute persuasive speeches selected
from student speakers on the university’s forensics
team. All speeches were used competitively on the AFA
(American Forensics Association) circuit during the
1999-2000 school year. These speeches were chosen for
this study in order to ensure a consistency of high qual-
ity speeches and to ensure that the quality of the speech
did not account for rater error in the event that it did
occur. Three of these speeches were considered to be
highly persuasive speeches (Persuasive Speaking Cate-
gory) and one was considered moderately persuasive (af-
ter dinner speaking) based on the use of humor to dis-
cuss the problem. Also, to ensure the elimination of
gender as a confounding variable, all speakers used in
this study were female.

Scales of Measurement

Because speeches are an integral part of the prag-
matic element of instruction in the basic course, it is
critically important that instructor assistants receive
appropriate instruction relevant to assessment. Conse-
quently, before grading any of the speeches, trainers
familiarized the instructor assistants with the criterion
referenced evaluation instrument and other grading
techniques (e.g., taking copious notes, grading speeches on the same day they are given in class, etc). Instructor assistants utilized an evaluation instrument which utilizes an analytic method by which content and delivery elements are rated and then summed to generate the final score for the presentation, rather than a holistic approach (using personal judgment when determining the importance of specific traits toward the overall product). In an attempt to determine the effectiveness of each approach, Goulden (1994) found that neither the analytic nor holistic method was more effective at producing a reliable assessment of student presentations.

In addition to testing for any differences in the overall mean scores of student speeches related to speaker order, this study also measured the quality of student comments on a seven point semantic differential scale. This scale was created to analyze the quality of student comments based on a combination of the introduction/conclusion, the body and delivery. Three student coders were selected and asked to rate IA comments for each of the speakers based on a semantic differential type scale adapted from an instrument developed by Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum (1957). Using the stimulus statement of “What is the quality of the written feedback provided by the evaluator for this presentation” and used a 7-point scale to capture coders perceptions to the degree that each section (e.g., introduction, conclusion, body, delivery) was: good-bad, valuable-worthless, qualified-unqualified and reliable-unreliable. A semantic differential type scale was used because of its ability to accurately measure the way different individuals view the same concepts (Keyton, 2001; Neuman,
2000). To examine the validity of the scale, inter-coder reliability was computed at $r = .76$.

**Experimental Design**

Speakers were selected and taped in the regular training classroom to help simulate a typical speech day in the basic course. Speeches were then re-taped in a different order with 30 seconds between speakers. This was designed to make sure that each speaker appeared in the first, second, third and fourth position. To help maximize external validity and eliminate the potential for confounding variables, the research was conducted in four classrooms used during the training session. Each of the four groups was given the same environment, visual equipment and tape quality to help ensure a similar experience across all four groups.

To increase internal validity the independent variable (speaker order) was manipulated and the IAs were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups. Three assistants were used to help administer the study. They were each provided with a detailed list of instructions in order to make sure that each group followed the same procedures and had the same experience. Participants were asked to watch all four speeches, evaluate them, make comments, assign final grades for each speech and return them to the primary investigator within 24 hours.

Three IAs not participating in the previous portion of the study were selected and trained as coders. These coders were then asked to use the presentation comment quality evaluation instrument to assess the quality of comments provided for each speaker.
Appropriateness of Instructor Assistants

Design and Analysis

Research question one used a 4 x 4 factorial design to measure the potential change in student speech grades. The order of the speech (either going 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th) was a between subjects design, while IA group assignment (group 1, 2, 3, or 4) is within subjects design. An analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze data from the four groups based on the grade that was assigned. Research question two used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyze the data among the four groups on the dependent measure and the difference on scores assigned based on the quality of comments provided by the instructor assistants.

RESULTS

The first research questions asked whether instructor assistants would be affected by primacy and recency effects when grading student speeches based on the order in which they gave their presentations. The findings indicated no significant difference on grades assigned to speakers based on their designated groups (Group & Speaker, $F = 2.775, p > .05$). There was a significant interaction between group and speaker, however an examination of mean scores reveals that the speaker position had no effect on the persuasive level of the other speeches. This suggests that the speech identified as moderately persuasive did not impact the grading of other speeches ($1st, m = 89.83, SD = 4.30; 2nd, m = 92.87, SD = 3.60; 3rd, m = 89.25, SD = 4.55; 4th, m = 89.88, SD = 3.75$).
Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Speaker by Group

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The second research questions asked whether the quality of IA feedback would decrease from the first speaker to the last based on the order of student presentations (e.g. 3rd or 4th). Results indicate that no significant differences existed ($F = .492, p > .05$), suggesting...
that students were likely to receive the same quality of comments from instructor assistants regardless of their position in the speaker order: 1st (m = 26.93, SD = 8.87), 2nd (m = 28.62, SD = 9.53), 3rd (m = 29.63, SD = 9.96), 4th (m = 27.84, SD = 8.60).

Table 2
ANOVA Table

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**DISCUSSION**

This study focused on determining whether speaker order has a statistically significant effect on student speech grades and on the quality of written feedback. Two hypotheses were used to test for the presence of these relationships. Research Question one attempted to test for "speaker order effects" in the grading process. Findings show no evidence of primacy or recency effects, thus speaker order has no impact on the final grades students received during this study. These findings dispute Anderson & Barrios' (1976) conclusions that primacy effects exist, as well as Miller & Campbell's (1959) conclusions that recency effects exist to the extent that speaker order had no impact on final grade assignment.
However, this study is consistent with Benson & Maitlen's (1975) research, which found no significant relationship between rank and speaker position. Although their study is slightly dissimilar in that it looked specifically for primacy and recency effects in a competitive speech performance, the current findings show that students are equally evaluated regardless of the speaking order.

In addition, there are three other reasons that may help explain these findings. First, because these speeches were of such similar quality, perhaps they were not entirely representative of typical classroom speeches given in the basic course. Second, only four speeches were used in this study, which represents half the normal number of speeches delivered during a typical speech day at this university, which may not account for grader fatigue. Finally, there may be some support for the value of the criterion-referenced approach used during the IA training program (Behnke & Sawyer, 1998), resulting in higher levels of rater confidence in using the evaluation instrument.

The second research question focused more explicitly on the quality of evaluative feedback students received. This study found no evidence of differences between speaker position and the quality of comments students received from undergraduate instructor assistants. These findings suggest that students would receive the same type of feedback in terms of quality whether they were speaking in the first, last or intermediate position. These results are supportive of Louden & Shellen's (1976) findings in two ways. First, they found that judges assigned the same overall grade regardless of assessment experience, which is consistent to some extent
with this study because of the high degree of grader agreement. Second, and more importantly, because instructor assistants received the same type and amount of training, the idea that differences in feedback do not exist across similar groups is supported. There also appears to be some evidence to support other notable conclusions from this data.

First, inter-coder reliability was relatively low in this study (r = .76). This may have been a result of a 7-point semantic differential scale, which allowed for more variability across the raters. Because such a low correlation exists, the quality of student feedback may be less uniform than these findings suggest. Inter-coder reliability at this level would indicate that it is difficult to determine whether the quality of feedback increased or declined across each of the speakers based on their placement in the speech rotation. Additionally, it is yet unclear as to whether undergraduates, especially undergraduates from disciplines outside communication, are capable of providing students with appropriate feedback. This finding suggests a greater need for more specific coder training in order to increase the strength and reliability of the coders and coding. Based on the above limitation, further research needs to be done to determine whether ranking of rater feedback would remain the same across speaker order if stronger inter-coder reliability was obtained.

Second, because instructor assistants did not have to interact with these speakers in the classroom, there may be some logic to suggest that they felt less inhibited in providing feedback and assigning overall scores. Instructor assistants were not faced with the pressures often associated with the grading process including stu-
dent reactions to presentation scores. This is one of the aspects of the grading process that might ultimately affect undergraduate raters the most. Additionally, watching speeches on videotape is not the same as a live experience in terms of the overall critical distance the mediated version provides.

Finally, because of the concern over grade inflation, the instructor assistant training program focuses on fundamental speech issues of organization and supporting materials, with a large focus on some delivery elements (like eye contact, movement and vocal disfluencies). Because instructor assistants are trained on such a straightforward criterion based level, these particular speakers were much more polished than many speakers evaluated during training and more capable than many speakers that instructor assistants might evaluate in the classroom which may have caused them to award higher scores in the classroom. Additionally, a larger number of speakers ranging from "A" to "F" performances would change the nature of these findings and better reflect the typical speaking day. Also, having more speeches would better test for instructor fatigue that is more likely to happen when more speeches are viewed at a given time. Since the literature suggests that rater errors still occur even after training, the implication is that "halo effects" and "personal relationships" (Bock & Bock, 1977) might exist which can impact student grades both positively and negatively. A further implication from this study supports Goulden's (1990) findings that training for classroom evaluators decreases rater error, and in this case, some of the consistency can be linked to adequate instruction in light of course objectives for instructor training.
A number of interesting implication emerge from this study in regards to the appropriate use of undergraduate raters and the pedagogical and institutional implications that result. Morreale et al, (1999) state that the biggest problem or frustration basic course administrators face is “maintaining consistency“ across courses with multiple sections (p. 29). This study has demonstrated that an instructor assistant training program has the potential of reducing the variability that often occurs in grading across groups. More definitively, one potential implication for this finding is the utilization of the criterion-based rating scale for ensuring standardization across rater groups. By providing instructor assistants with a clearly established standardized set of criteria and then training them to utilize that criteria has a significant chance of reducing the variability that often occurs across multiple section courses.

While more research needs to be done, this study does show some promise in terms of increasing the reach and scope concerning the facilitation of the basic course. Additionally, Morreale et al, (1999) identified the maintenance of existing class size as an additional concern administrators of the basic course face. In this regard, these findings should be valuable for administrators or basic course directors who are considering the option of utilizing undergraduate graders in the basic course to alleviate some of the constraints associated with increased class loads and reduced budgets. However, as you examine the findings obtained from each of these research questions, it is important to discuss a number of implications that emerge on both a practical and pedagogical level. Although these findings suggest that undergraduates can be trained to consistently
grade across groups, they do not answer whether this practice is then appropriate for the college classroom or the basic course. A number of student, parent, and institutional issues begin to emerge as a result. Should undergraduates be placed in the position to evaluate their fellow students? Should parents feel their children are obtaining the best education available when undergraduates with limited knowledge of the field are involved in providing guidance for student presentations? Is the quality of the institution ultimately impacted by using undergraduates in multi-section courses? At this point, each of these broader questions is at stake and further research is needed to provide answers to these questions.

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Appropriateness of Instructor Assistants

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Author Identification

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Index

BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL
VOLUMES 1-14

Volume 1, 1989

Gray, P. L. The basic course in speech communication: An historical perspective. 1-27.

Seiler, W. J., & McGukin, D. What we know about the basic course: What has the research told us? 28-42.


Smitter, R. D. Using plays and novels as case studies in the basic course. 70-81.

Phelps, L. A A unit on relationship termination in the basic course. 82-94.

Haskins, W. A. Teaching ethics in the basic survey speech communication course. 95-105.

Greenberg, K. J. The necessity of separating idealized accountability from realized accountability: A case study. 106-133.

Wallace, S., & Morlan, D. B. Implications of student and instructor involvement in the basic course. 134-149.
Smilowitz, M., & Phelps, L. A. The interaction of teacher and student social styles and learning outcomes of the basic communication course. 150-168.

Trank, D. M. Training or teaching: A professional development program for graduate teaching assistants. 169-183.


Volume 2, 1990


Bourhis, J., & Berquist, C. Communication apprehension in the basic course: Learning styles and preferred instructional strategies of high and low apprehensive students. 27-46.

Yook, E., & Seiler, B. An investigation into the communication needs and concerns of Asian students in basic communication performance courses. 47-75.


Haynes, W. L. Beyond writing: The case for a speech-based basic course in a vid-oral world. 89-100.

Troester, R. A communication based model of friendship for the interpersonal communication course. 101-120.

Foster, T. J., Smilowitz, M., Foster, M. S., & Phelps, L. A. Some student perceptions of grades received on speeches. 121-142.

Goulden, N. R. A program of rater training for evaluating public speeches combining accuracy and error approaches. 143-165.
Index

Bendtschneider, L. B., & Trank, D. M. Evaluating the basic course: Using research to meet the communication needs of the students. 166-191.


Gibson, J. W., Hanna, M. S., & Leichty, G. The basic speech course at United States colleges and universities: V. 233-257.

Volume 3, 1991

Verderber, R. F. The introductory communication course: The public speaking approach. 3-15.

Pearson, J. C., & West, R. The introductory communication course: The hybrid approach. 16-34.

Brilhart, J. L. Small group communication as an introductory course. 35-50.

Donaghy, W. C. Introductory communication theory: Not another skills course. 51-72.

DeVito, J. A. The interpersonal communication course. 73-87.

Hugenberg, L. W., Owens, A. W., II, & Robinson, D. J. The business and professional speaking course. 88-105.

Trank, D. M., & Lewis, P. The introductory communication course: Results of a national survey. 106-122.

Sandmann, W. Logic and emotion, persuasion and argumentation: “Good reasons” as an educational synthesis. 123-144.

Braithwaite, C. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. Instructional communication strategies for adapting to a multicultural introductory course. 145-160.

Sprague, J. Reading our own speech critiques as texts that reveal educational goals, instructional roles and communication functions. 179-201.

Neer, M. R., & Kirchner, W. F. Classroom interventions for reducing public speaking anxiety. 202-223.


Hugenberg, L. W., & Yoder, D. D. Summary of the issues discussed during the seminar on the introductory course in speech communication. 269-280.

**Volume 4, 1992**


Ford, W. S. Z., & Wolvin, A. D. Evaluation of a basic communication course. 35-47.

Sandmann, W. Critical thinking is/as communication 48-71.


Weaver, R. L., II, & Cotrell, H. W. Directing the basic communication course: Eighteen years later. 80-93.
Index

Gill, M. M., & Wardrope, W. J. To say or not; to do or not -- those are the questions: Sexual harassment and the basic course instructor. 94-114.

Leff, M. Teaching public speaking as composition. 115-122.

Isserlis, J. A. Be relevant, careful, and appropriate: Scary advice on the use of humor to the novice public speaker. 123-140.

Whitecap, V. A. The introduction of a speech: Do good introductions predict a good speech? 141-153.

Vicker, L. A. The use of role models in teaching public speaking. 154-161.

Volume 5, 1993


Gray, P. L., Murray, M. G., & Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L. The impact of perceived research and teaching competence on the credibility of a basic course director: A case study. 27-42.

Willer, L. R. Are you a REAL teacher? Student perceptions of the graduate student as instructor of the basic communication course. 43-70.

Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L., & Fink, D. S. Student perceptions of teaching assistants (TAs). 71-100.


Beall, M. L. Teaching thinking in the basic course. 127-156.

Murphy, J. M. The ESL oral communication lesson: One teacher’s techniques and principles. 157-181.

Volume 15, 2003

http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcaa/vol15/iss1/11
Rolls, J. A. Experiential learning as an adjunct to the basic course: Student responses to a pedagogical model. 182-199.

Troester, R., & McGukin, D. The status of the introductory and advanced interpersonal communication courses at U.S. colleges and universities: A national survey. 200-220.

Weber, D. R., Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L., & Gray, P. L. Adopting a transformational approach to basic course leadership. 221-246.


**Volume 6, 1994**

Cronin, M. W., & Kennan, W. R. Using interactive video instruction to enhance public speaking instruction. 1-18.

Cronin, M. W. Interactive video instruction for teaching organizational techniques in public speaking. 19-35.

Jensen, K. K., & McQueeney, P. Writing as a tool for teaching public speaking: A campus application. 36-61.


McKinney, B. C., & Pullum, S. J. Obstacles to overcome in the implementation of a program to reduce communication apprehension in the basic public speaking course. 70-86.

Williams, D. E., & Stewart, R. A. An assessment of panel vs. individual instructor ratings of student speeches. 87-104.

Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L., Fink, D. S., & Amaro, C. A. The incorporation of mentors and assistant basic course directors (ABCDs) into the basic course program: Creating a safety net for new teaching assistants. 105-128.

Willmington, S. C., Neal, K. E., & Steinbrecher, M. M. Meeting certification requirements for teacher certification through the basic course. 160-182.

Sandmann, W. The basic course in communication theory: A shift in emphasis. 183-206.

Cooper, P. Stories as instructional strategy: Teaching in another culture. 207-216.


Newburger, C., Brannon, L., & Daniels, A. Self-confrontation and public speaking apprehension: To videotape or not to videotape student speakers? 228-236.


**Volume 7, 1995**

Wood, J. T. Gerald M. Phillips’ devotion to basic communication skills. 1-14.

Treadwell, D., & Applbaum, R. L. The basic course in organizational communication: A national survey. 15-35.

Mino, M., & Butler, M. N. Improving oral communication competency: An interactive approach to basic public speaking instruction. 36-58.

Williams, G. TA training beyond the first week: A leadership perspective. 59-82.

Dwyer, K. K. Creating and teaching special sections of a public speaking course for apprehensive students: A multi-case study. 100-124.


Volume 8, 1996

Kramer, M. W., & Hinton, J. S. The differential impact of a basic public speaking course on perceived communication competencies in class, work, and social contexts. 1-25.

Williams, G. [En]visioning success: The anatomy and functions of vision in the basic course. 26-57.

Whaley, B. B., & Langlois, A. Students who stutter and the basic course: Attitudes and communication strategies for the college classroom. 58-73.

Spano, S. Rethinking the role of theory in the basic course: Taking a “practical” approach to communication education. 74-96.

Hickson, M., III. Rethinking our rethinking retrospectively: A rejoinder to Spano. 97-107.

Wood, J. Should class participation be required in the basic communication course? 108-124.

Handford, C. J. The basic course: A means of protecting the speech communication discipline. 125-135.

Hugenberg, L. W. Introduction to cultural diversity in the basic course: Differing points of view. 136-144.

Goulden, N. R. Teaching communication behaviors/skills related to cultural diversity in the basic course classroom. 145-161.
Oludaja, B., & Honken, C. Cultural pluralism: Language proficiency in the basic course. 162-174.

Kelly, C. Diversity in the public speaking course: Beyond audience analysis. 175-184.

Sellnow, D. D., & Littlefield, R. S. The speech on diversity: A tool to integrate cultural diversity into the basic course. 185-196.

Powell, K. A. Meeting the challenges of cultural diversity: Ideas and issues for the public speaking course. 197-201.

Volume 9, 1997

Osborn, M. Three metaphors for the competencies acquired in the public speaking class. 1-11.


Jensen, K. K., & Lamoureux, E. R. Written feedback in the basic course: What instructors provide and what students deem helpful. 37-58.

Yook, E. L. Culture shock in the basic communication course: A cast study of Malaysian students. 59-78.

Heaton, D. W. The em-powter-ing of America: Using info-mercials to teach persuasion and popular discourse in the basic communication course. 79-93.

Miller, J. J. The use of simulation in the beginning public speaking classroom: Let’s make it realistic, relevant and motivating. 94-104.


Williams, G. Two heads are better than one? Setting realizable goals in the basic course. 130-159.
Hugenberg, L. W., & Moyer, B. S. A commentary: the basic communication course, general education and assessment. 160-179.

**Volume 10, 1998**

Wolvin, A. D. The basic course and the future of the workplace. 1-6.


Lubbers, C. A., & Seiler, W. J. Learning style preferences and academic achievement within the basic communication course. 27-57.

Quigley, B. L., Hendrix, K. G., & Freisem, K. Graduate teaching assistant training: Preparing instructors to assist ESL students in the introductory public speaking course. 58-89.

Schaller, K. A., & Callison, M. G. Applying multiple intelligence theory to the basic public speaking course. 90-104.

Spano, S. Delineating the uses of practical theory: A reply to Hickson. 105-124.

Hickson, M., III. Theory and pedagogy in the basic course: A summary from Spano and Hickson. 125-132.

Jensen, K. K., & Williams, D. E. Teaching the honors public speaking course. 133-156.

Hugenberg, L. W., & Moyer, B. S. Commentary: The research foundation for instruction in the beginning public speaking class. 157-170.
**Volume 11, 1999**


Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L. How basic course directors evaluate teaching assistants: Social constructionism in basic course land. 37-54.

Williams, G., & Johnson-Jones, J. M. Get your modem runnin'. Get out on the I-way: Encouraging Internet investigations in the basic course. 55-78.

Mino, M. Will the dazzling promise blind us?: Using technology in the beginning public speaking course. 79-107.

Dwyer, K. K., & Fus, D. A. Communication apprehension, self-efficacy and grades in the basic course: Correlations and implications. 108-132.

Cutspec, P. A., McPherson, K., & Spiro, J. H. Branching out to meet the needs of our students: A model for oral communication assessment and curriculum programs. 133-163.

Schnell, J. Analyzing C-SPAN in the basic communication course. 164-174.

Yoder, D. D. An idea for restructuring the basic communication course: A “time when needed” modular approach. 175-184.

**Volume 12, 2000**

Titsworth, B. Scott. The effects of praise on student motivation in the basic communication course.

Sellnow, Deanna D. & Golish, Tamara. The relationship between a required self-disclosure speech and public speaking anxiety: Considering gender equity.
Huffman, Karla J., Carson, Christy L. & Simonds, Cheri J. Critical thinking assessment: The link between critical thinking and student application in the basic course.


Heisler, Jennifer M., Bissett, Susan M. & Buerkel-Rothfuss, Nancy L. An examination of male and female students’ perceptions of relational closeness: Does the basic course have an influence?

Hendrix, Katherine G. Peer mentoring for graduate teaching assistants: Training and utilizing a valuable resource.

Worley, David W. An acrostic approach to teaching public speaking in the hybrid communication course.

Volume 18, 2001

Hunt, Stephen K., Daradirek Ekachai, Darin L. Garaard, & Joseph H. Rust. Students’ perceived usefulness and relevance of communication skills in the basic course: Comparing university and community college students.

Cox, Stephen A. & Timothy S. Todd. Contrasting the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation in self-contained and mass lecture classes.

Treinen, Kristen & John T. Warren. Antiracist pedagogy in the basic course; teaching cultural communication as if whiteness matters.

Hess, Jon A. Rethinking our approach to the basic course: Making ethics the foundation of introduction to public speaking.

Schwartzman, Roy. What’s basic about the basic course? Enriching the ethosystem as a corrective for consumerism.
Index

Dixson, Marcia D. Teaching social construction of reality in the basic course: Opening minds and integrating contexts.

Arnett, Ronald C., & Janie M. Harden Fritz. Communication and professional civility as a basic service course: dialogic Praxis between department and situated in an academic home.

Volume 14, 2002


Troup, Calvin L. Common sense in the basic public speaking course.

Hunt, Stephen K. and Cheri J. Simonds. Extending learning opportunities in the basic communication course: Exploring the pedagogical benefits of speech laboratories.

Dwyer, Karen Kangas, Robert E. Carlson and Sally A. Kahre. Communication apprehension and basic course success: The lab-supported public speaking course intervention.

Anderson, Karen and Karla Kay Jensen. An examination of the speech evaluation process: Does the evaluation instrument and/or evaluator's experience matter?

Janusik, Laura A. and Andrew D. Wolvin. Listening treatment in the basic communication course text.

Johnson, Julia R., Susan M. Pliner and Tom Burkhart. d/Deafness and the basic course: A case study of universal instructional design and students who are d/Deaf in the (aural) communication classroom.

Volume 15, 2003

http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcca/vol15/iss1/11
AUTHOR INDEX

BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL
VOLUMES 1-14

Amaro, Charlotte A. 1994
Anderson, Karen, 2002
Appelbaum, Ronald L. 1995
Arnett, Ronald C., 2001
Ayres, Debbie M. 1994
Ayres, Joe. 1994
Beall, Melissa L. 1993
Bendtschneider, Lyn B. 1990
Berko, Roy M. 1998
Berquist, Charlene. 1990
Bissett, Susan 2000
Bourhis, John. 1990
Braithwaite, Charles A. 1991
Braithwaite, Dawn O. 1991
Brannon, Linda. 1994
Brilhart, John L. 1991
Burkhart, Tom, 2002
Butler, Marilynn N. 1995
Callison, Marybeth G. 1998
Carson, Christy L. 2000
Carlson, Robert E., 2002
Cooper, Pamela. 1994
Cotrell, Howard W. 1989, 1992
Cox, Tephen A., 2001
Cronin, Michael W. 1994, 1994
Cutspec, Patricia A. 1999
Daniel, Arlie. 1994
Davilla, Roberta A. 1997
Dawson, Edwin J. 1991
DeVito, Joseph A. 1991
Dixson, Marcia D., 2001

Donaghy, William C. 1991
Ekachai, Daradirek, 2001
Fink, Donn S. 1993, 1994
Ford, Wendy S. Zabava. 1992
Foster, Marilyn S. 1990
Foster, Ted J. 1990
Freisem, Karen. 1998
Fritz, Janie M. Harden, 2001
Fus, Dennis A. 1999
Garrard, Darin L., 2001
Gibson, James W. 1990, 1997
Gill, Mary M. 1992
Golish, Tamara 2000
Gorcyca, Diane Atkinson. 1992
Goulden, Nancy Rost. 1990, 1995, 2002
Greenberg, Karen J. 1989
Gring, Mark A. 2000
Hackman, Michael Z. 1995, 1997
Haleta, Laurie B. 1990
Handford, Charlene J. 1996
Hanna, Michael S. 1990, 1999
Haskins, William A. 1989
Haynes, W. Lance. 1990
Heaton, Daniel W. 1997
Heisler, Jennifer M. 2000
Hemphill, Michael. 1992
Hendrix, Katherine G. 1998, 2000
Index

Hickson, III, Mark. 1996, 1997
Hill, L. Brooks. 1994
Hinton, J. S. 1996
Honken, Connie. 1996
Huffman, Karla J. 2000
Hunt, Stephen K., 200, 2002
Isserlis, Judythe A. 1992
Janusik, Laura A., 2002
Johnson, Julia R., 2002
Johnson-Jones, Joni M. 1999
Kahre, Sally A., 2002
Kasch, Chris R. 1997
Kennan, William R. 1994
Kelly, Christine. 1996
Kirchner, W. Faye. 1991
Kosloski, David L. 1990
Kramer, Michael W. 1995
Lamoureux, Elizabeth R. 1997
Langlois, Aimee. 1996
Leff, Michael. 1992
Leichty, Greg. 1990
Lewis, Pat. 1991
Littlefield, Robert S. 1996
Littlejohn, Jera W. 2000
McGukin, Drew. 1989, 1993
McKinney, Bruce C. 1994
McPherson, Kevin. 1999
McQueeney, Pat. 1994
Miller, John J. 1997
Mino, Mary. 1995, 1999
Morlan, Don B. 1989
Murphy, John M. 1993
Murray, Martin G. 1993, 1994
Neal, Kay E. 1994
Nelson, Paul. 1990
Newburger, Craig. 1992, 1994
Oladaja, Bayo. 1996
Osborn, Michael. 1997
Owens, Alfred W., II. 1991
Phelps, Lynn A. 1989, 1990
Phillips, Gerald M. 1994
Pliner, Susan M., 2002
Powell, Kimberly A. 1996
Pullum, Stephen J. 1994
Quigley, Brooke L. 1998
Ragan, Sandra L. 1994
Robinson, David J. 1991
Rolls, Judith A. 1993
Russell, Bruce W. 1993
Rust, Joseph H., 2001
Santoro, Gerald M. 1994
Schaller, Kristi A. 1998
Schliessmann, Michael R. 1990
Schnell, Jim. 1999
Schwartzman, Roy, 2001
Sellnow, Deanna D. 1996, 2000
Simonds, Cheri, 2000, 2002
Smilowitz, Michael. 1989, 1990
Smitter, Roger, D. 1989

Volume 15, 2003
Index

Spiro, Julie H. 1999
Sprague, Jo. 1991
Steinbrecher, Milda M. 1994
Stewart, Robert A. 1994
Thomas, Richard W. 1989
Titsworth, B. Scott, 2000
Timothy s. Todd, 2001
Treadwell, D. 1995
Treinen, Kristen P., 2001
Troup, Calvin L., 2002
Troester, Rod. 1990, 1993
Verderber, Rudolph, F. 1991
Vicker, Lauren A. 1992
Wallace, Sam. 1989, 1995
Wardrope, William J. 1992
Warren, John T., 2001
Weaver, Richard. L., II. 1989, 1992

Weber, Dawn R. 1993
West, Richard. 1991
Whaley, Bryan B. 1996
Whitecap, Valerie A. 1992
Willer, Lynda R. 1993
Williams, David E. 1994, 1998
Willmington, S. Clay. 1994
Wood, Jennifer. 1996
Wood, Julia T. 1995
Worley, David W. 2000

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