Basic Communication Course Annual
2004
16
Volume 16
Basic Communication Course Annual
2004
16
Volume 16
Scott Titsworth Editor
Published by eCommons, 2004
ISSN 1546-2331
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Now 16 years old, the Basic Communication Course Annual continues to hold a unique and instrumental status among peer communication journals. Notably, the Annual is the only national communication journal devoted to research and scholarship pertaining to the basic communication course. What started as an infant in 1988 has grown into a bright young-adult with an admirable sense of self.

The success of the Annual is entirely attributable to the community of scholars who have supported the journal over the years. All of us should be thankful for the leadership provided by the previous editors: Deanna Sellnow, Craig Newburger, and especially Larry Hugenberg. One hallmark of the Annual has always been the professionalism and generosity of the editorial board, and that tradition certainly continues with the most recent iteration. Most importantly, the continued vitality of this journal is indebted to the long list of scholars who have used the Annual as the outlet for their scholarly efforts.

Articles in this volume of the Annual illustrate the interplay between stories describing the day-to-day routines of our lives and the larger, grander stories of our discipline and profession. For instance, each author has a small, yet captivating story to share with the readership. Two articles, one by Turman and Barton and the other by Reynolds, Hunt, Simonds and Cutbirth, de-
scribe the speech evaluation process in epic, even perhaps tragic terms. As they explain through crisp statistical analyses, the monotonous nature of performance evaluation and feedback in the basic course can result in less than desirable feedback for students. Brann-Barrett and Rolls, as well as Jones, Hunt, Simonds, Comadena and Baldwin take an optimistic view in their articles describing the use of speech laboratories. As they explain, both students and peer mentors derive important benefits from participation in such labs. A narrative of optimism is also provided in Trinen’s article on Whiteness studies as well as Harter, Kirby, Hatfield, and Kuhlman’s article on service learning and Prividera’s article on gender sensitivity. Specifically, both Trinen and Prividera advocate ways that the basic course can bring voice to marginalized groups whereas Harter and colleagues discuss how service learning empowers both students and teachers. Finally, as noted in Dr. Sprague’s thoughtful analysis, each of the four essays in the special forum on philosophies of teaching celebrates the unique nexus of personal and public created in the basic communication course classroom.

Though each article in this volume of the Annual shares a smaller, yet important story, a larger narrative concerning the basic communication course is also embraced. Each essay, sometimes explicitly and sometimes not, presents an idealistic vision of what our basic course does. Based on my reading, the scholars contributing to this volume seek classrooms where students are empowered and encouraged, where important societal issues are openly discussed, where relationships flourish, and where the primacy of learning is not forgotten. Though many essays in this volume point to areas of
practical concern in the basic communication course, each essay also holds romantic optimism for what our basic course can accomplish.

I share in this optimism and encourage the reader to blend these authors’ stories with their own narratives of the basic course. The essays are thought provoking, informative, and engaging. After reading each essay, you may embrace some of the smaller stories while rejecting others; yet, I believe that each of us can find common ground in the larger narrative that permeates these pages.

Scott Titsworth,
Editor
Bias in the Evaluation Process: Influences of Speaker Order, Speaker Quality, and Gender on Rater Error in the Performance Based Course

Paul D. Turman and Matthew H. Barton

This study examines how variations in speaker order increases the potential for rater error in the performance based course. Seventy-six undergraduate raters were randomly assigned to one of eight treatment groups and asked to grade eight 10-minute persuasive speeches following an eight-week training course. Speaker order and presentation quality varied across groups and an ANOVA was used to examine significant differences across rater assessments, feedback quality and rater gender. Significant main effects were identified in each of the eight treatment groups suggesting that speaker order influenced rater scoring.

Written Speech Feedback in the Basic Communication Course:
Are Instructors too Polite?

Dana L. Reynolds, Stephen K. Hunt, Cheri J. Simonds, and Craig W. Cutbirth

The present study investigates written performance feedback through the lens of politeness theory. Study 1 examined the types of comments instructors offer to students when they provide written feedback on speeches as well as the relationship between these comments and students’ grades. Results demonstrate
that instructors used an overabundance of positive politeness messages and virtually no negative politeness messages. Students who received a higher grade were more likely to receive fewer face threats and more positive politeness messages than those students’ who received a lower grade. The results also suggest that instructors are more willing to threaten a students’ negative face than their positive face. Study 2 extended the research project by examining students' perceptions of instructor feedback in order to determine the types of feedback students deem the most helpful. Results indicate that students desire a balance between their grade and the number of positive politeness comments they receive as well as more comments that threaten their face. Students in this study also found specific written feedback as the most helpful type of feedback they received.

Communication Lab Peer Facilitators:
What's in it For Them? ................................................ 72
M. Tanya Brann-Barrett and Judith A Rolls

Peer tutors have been used extensively within the communication discipline to enhance students’ learning experiences (Hill, 1981; Webb & Lane, 1986). Research suggests that peer tutoring can have positive rewards for tutors and tutees (Goodland & Hurst, 1989; Topping, 1996). However, there is little to no research that explores the benefits received by peer tutors who run small group communication lab sessions for basic communication course students. The qualitative data from focus group indicate that peer facilitators experienced: 1) self-development in terms of their self-esteem, confidence, and respect from themselves and others; 2) improved public speaking skills and better interpersonal relationships with family and friends,
other peer facilitators, and individuals in positions of authority; and 3) external rewards in that they felt better prepared for post baccalaureate programs and to compete in the workplace. The results of this study may be used as a basis for more in-depth research on the benefits derived from the peer facilitation experience in the basic communication course.

Speech Laboratories: An Exploratory Examination of Potential Pedagogical Effects on Studies

Adam C. Jones, Stephen K. Hunt, Cheri J. Simonds, Mark E. Comadena, John R. Baldwin

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects speech laboratories have on students enrolled in basic public speaking courses. Specifically, the researchers attempted to gain a student perspective about visiting a speech laboratory through qualitative methods. Ten semi-structured student interviews were conducted and the collected data were transcribed verbatim before being analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results of the analysis provide initial support that speech laboratories do, to some degree, assist students with their public speaking skills and help them manage their public speaking anxiety.

Creating a Dialogue for Change: Educating Graduate Teaching Assistants in Whiteness Studies

Kristen P. Treinen

Research indicates that minority students are underrepresented in our classroom curriculum (Churchill, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Our
schools are often entrenched in the Eurocentric model of education from content to methodology. In this paper, I discuss antiracist pedagogy and whiteness studies, offer a justification for utilizing antiracist pedagogy with work in whiteness studies in the communication classroom, and provide one model for incorporating antiracist pedagogical practice with graduate teaching assistants. This essay is intended to help create a dialogue with GTAs, basic course directors, and communication faculty about antiracist practices in the communication classroom.

From Spectators of Public Affairs to Agents of Social Change: Engaging Students in the Basic Course through Service-Learning ........ 165
Lynn M. Harter, Erika L. Kirby, Katherine L. Hatfield, Karla N. Kuhlman

Much literature bemoans the attitudes of Generation X (and their successors) toward civic participation (e.g., Putnam, 2000) and indeed education itself (e.g., Sacks, 1996). However, we have found students to be highly engaged when they have opportunities for active learning, such as those found in well designed service learning projects. We see this pedagogy as a small antidote to the sense of powerlessness that often pervades our culture. Drawing on diverse literatures, we explore theoretical reasons for using service-learning and illustrate its usefulness in speech communication basic courses. Our discussion is organized around two key themes: (a) the connection of self to subject matter, and (b) the connection of self to community. After discussing service learning exemplars in the basic course, we close with cautions about the use of service-learning.
Assessing Sensitivity: A Critical Analysis of Gender in Teaching Basic Communication Courses ........................................... 195
Laura C. Prividera

This critical study utilized a liberal feminist perspective to examine how communication teachers talked about gender issues in their basic communication classes and displayed gender sensitivity in their pedagogical practices. In-depth interviews and observations were conducted with fifteen teachers from seven midwestern academic institutions. The data revealed six themes, which describe how gender issues were marginalized and minimized in the talk and teaching practices of many of my research participants. Such marginalization may perpetuate disparities in the academic experiences of male and female students taking the basic communication course.

Special Forum on the Philosophy of Teaching Education as Communication: The Pragmatist Tradition ......................................... 230
Chad Edwards and Gregory J. Shepherd

We take the basic course in communication to be a site where associated living is experienced, and where individuals practice the democratic art of referencing and articulating their own behaviors and beliefs to those of others. This democratic practice of associated living is, as American pragmatist and educational philosopher John Dewey insisted, communication itself — “conjoint communicated experience.” In this essay, we provide an overview of this pragmatist educational metaphysic and discuss a few consequences of metaphysical beliefs about education.
Teaching and Learning in the Spirit of Friendship ............................................... 247
William K. Rawlins

This article discusses how the ideals and practices of friendship can provide an edifying ethic for the interactions and relationships of educators and students in the basic communication course. It examines three facets of friendship in the Western tradition, four dialectical tensions of the educational friendship, a collection of six virtues associated with teaching as friendship, and some limitations of the educational friendship.

Native Virtues: Traditional Sioux Philosophy and the Contemporary Basic Communication Course .................................................................
Daniel P. Modaff

Teaching and learning in the basic communication course can be informed by the traditional Sioux virtues of bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom. The virtues are forwarded as a set of ideas that may equip the reader with an alternative way to think about course material, pedagogical practices, and classroom interrelationships. The essay concludes with the limitations of and concerns with the virtues in the contemporary basic course.

The Public Speaking Classroom as Public Space: Taking Risks and Embracing Difference ....................... 279
Margaret R. LaWare

Thinking about the public speaking classroom as public space provides a generative metaphor as long as critiques of public space, particularly feminist cri-
tiques, and critical pedagogy theory are considered. These critiques recognize the importance of encouraging students to engage with the public world in such a way that they see their own power to effect change. Risk-taking and confronting issues of racism and sexism are integral to this process.

Special Forum on the Philosophy of Teaching:
A Synthesis and Response ........................................ 292
Jo Sprague

Author Identifications ............................................... 207

Index of Titles Volumes 1-15 ................................. 314

Index of Authors Volumes 1-15 ............................ 327

Submission Guidelines for Volume 17 ...................... 331
Demand for increased proficiency in communication skills has increased dramatically in recent years (Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). Consequently, the basic course has taken the brunt of this demand. Current trends in higher education demonstrate that the basic course at most universities will find itself servicing even more students in the near future. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the number of high school students continuing on with their education after graduation increased by 12% between 1995 and 2002, and as a result college enrollment has increased by 17% in this same time period (public and private not-for-profit institutions). If higher education continues to see a persistent influx of students in the wake of current economic conditions, the increasing student population will begin to place a significant burden on current basic course structures.

Increasing the number of sections offered in the basic course has been the traditional solution to the problem of increased demand (Gibson, Hann, Smythe, & Hayes, 1980; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1985; Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). However, this strategy comes with
a number of pitfalls. First, the buildup of additional sections requires an increase in the size of the instructional staff. This move is difficult to justify with so many demands on already strained departmental and institutional budgets (Fedler & Smith, 1992). Second, when the addition of staff is warranted, administrators often provide increases in personnel in the form of adjunct or part-time faculty, which provide only temporary solutions for most basic course directors (Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). On the other hand, some departments, particularly those at larger institutions, have increased the utilization of graduate teaching assistants (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Roach, 1991; Williams & Roach, 1993; Williams & Schaller, 1994). While this action has reduced some of the pressure, it seems that administrators are “upping the ante” by adding more and more students to these courses. Thus, instead of solving the problems associated with increased class size, they are perpetuated. Moreover, in their assessment of the basic course, Gibson, Hanna & Huddleston (1985) found that a majority of colleges and universities utilized either a public speaking (54%) or a hybrid (34%) course structure suggesting that the basic course continues to place an emphasis on student performance.

Research has identified three primary problems that need to be addressed. First, although increasing the number of sections available for the basic course is one available option, increasing class size places significant restrictions and limitations on the function of a performance based course and ultimately limits students’ ability to obtain communication competence (O’Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, & Wiemann, 1995). Second, larger class sizes pose a number of pragmatic problems that
need to be addressed (Cheatham & Jordan, 1972). For instance, in order to provide larger classes of students with the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on speeches, instructors are forced to either add more speech days or add more speakers on a given day. In some cases they must do both. Instructors who have taught performance-based courses have likely had groups of three or four speech days throughout the semester where they have heard as many as eight or more speakers on each of those days, which can contribute to the potential for rater fatigue. This predicament is compounded by the fact that many instructors teach more than one section of the basic course, meaning that they may encounter 16 to 24 speakers on each of those days. Considering the other responsibilities of faculty life, instructors want and need to be more efficient. Rater error can happen not because instructors are unconcerned about improving student speaking skills, rather because they have limited time to grade presentations in detail with so many speakers to evaluate. Thus, cutting corners in the evaluation process becomes a greater temptation. Finally, hearing so many speeches over a consistent time decreases the odds that meaningful distinctions between speakers can be consistently accomplished (Miller, 1964). Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine if a potential evaluation threshold exists in the basic communication course (e.g., those with a strong public speaking or performance-based component). Logic and experience suggest that there may be a limited number of student speeches that can be effectively evaluated in a given class period without compromising the quality and quantity of instructor feedback. Specifically, this study attempts to examine
situational qualities (e.g., presentation quality and speaker order), which may further contribute to grading inconsistencies.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

To be successful in higher education, communication faculty must learn to provide effective feedback that is detailed, individualized, consistent and objective (Bock & Bock, 1981). Reaching this level of success is obviously a difficult undertaking because of a number of factors. For an instructor to arrive at a score or final grade for a presentation, he/she is required to assess the quality of that performance. The expectation is that the best presenter will receive the highest score regardless of the individual rating of the presentation (Lunz, Wright, & Linacre, 1990). Saal, Downey and Lahey (1980) indicated that although the expectation for unbiased scoring is connected with the performance appraisal process, research examining the subjectivity associated with rater error has identified significant variations regardless of the type of appraisal (e.g. job performance, leadership evaluation, personnel selection, etc.). Engelhard (1994) argued that one of the major problems with appraisal processes is that they depend primarily on the quality of experts who make the final judgment. In one of the first examinations of rater error, Guilford (1936) stated that “Raters are human and they are therefore subject to all the errors to which humankind must plead guilty” (p. 272). When rater error does occur it has the potential of weakening the reliability and validity of the system employing the assessment.
Bias in the Evaluation Process

and information provided by the assessment (Bannister, et al., 1987). Evaluations of rater validity and reliability have reported coefficient levels ranging from .33 to .91 (Dunbar, Kortez, and Hoover, 1991) and .50 to .93 (Vand Der Vleuten & Swanson, 1990) which suggests that as the range of error increases the potential for accurate assessment will decline significantly.

As the preceding studies have indicated, the existence of rater error is a legitimate problem when subjective assessment is involved. Also, depending on the situation facing the rater, error can be a result of a number of factors including: the assessment tool used, the scoring procedures, and individual rater bias (Popham, 2002). First, the flaws in assessment tools can be caused by a deficiency in the evaluation criteria being used. As a result inappropriate ratings are made because of the ambiguity associated with the methods used to score certain behaviors described in the evaluation criteria (e.g., one instructor may view eye contact while another may look for gestures as the most important part of the delivery). Second, ambiguity or flaws in the scoring procedures occur when raters are asked to assess too many qualities about a particular ratee (Popham, 2002).

The third and perhaps most significant type of assessment error is a result of bias within the individual rater. Individual rater error has seen significant research in the past century and this body of literature has identified three primary types of errors that occur at the individual level. The most prominent is the halo effect first identified by Thorndike (1920) during the examination of consistency across evaluations for officer candidates in the military. When applied to an educa-
tional context, Engelhard (1994) suggested that the halo effect would occur when a teacher’s impression or previous experience with a particular student affected the score obtained on the assessment. As a result, the halo effect can occur in one of two ways; if the impression is favorable the rating will be higher, and if it is unfavorable the rating will be lower. The halo effect has also been attributed to a rater’s unwillingness to make distinctions across various dimensions on a rating scale and as a result they place ratees at the same level across all criteria dimensions. Although research applying the halo effect to student presentations has been limited, Harper and Hughey (1986) identified literature demonstrating that instructors “receive more favorably the communication performances of students who possess similar communication attributes” to their own (p. 147).

Another individual rater error that has been identified is called positive leniency/rater severity (Engelhard, 1994), where the rater has a tendency to consistently provide ratings on either the high or low end of the scale, making their assessment practices unfair. Positive and negative leniency can also be a function of attribution error on the part of the rater. These types of errors occur more at the holistic level, when instructors are more likely to grade all students higher than they should, or the converse happens when they choose to be more critical of all student behaviors than is logically warranted.

Finally, central tendency or restriction of range occurs when ratings are “clustered around the midpoint of the rating scale, reflecting rater reluctance to use either of the extreme ends of the continuum” (Saal, Downey, &
Lahey, 1980, p. 418). This type of individual rater error reflects how the rater utilizes the categories on the rating scale itself. Engelhard (1994) suggested this type of error is most likely to occur when raters use the evaluation criteria differently by which some overuse extreme categories and others overuse those categories in the middle of the scale.

Research specific to rater error in the context of speech assessment is relatively limited to date, however previous communication research has suggested a need to be concerned with primacy and recency effects during the assessment process. 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; Bishop, 1987; Ehrenberger, 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.

To test the effectiveness of the Instructor Assistant training process and grading procedures Turman and Barton (2003) explored primacy and recency effects as a result of speaker order. Four groups of undergraduate raters were asked to grade four ten-minute persuasive
speeches after participating in an extensive training program. Presentations were placed in varying orders for each group and no evidence of primacy or recency influence or rater error emerged across groups, indicating speaker order had no impact on the final grades students received. Aside from this particular study, literature on primacy and recency effects and rater error does not deal directly with speaking situations and it appears to be badly dated (Ehrensberger, 1945; Lund, 1925 in Mason). Ironically enough however, there are findings favoring both types of effects (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987; Miller & Campbell, 1959).

**Research Questions**

Research on general rater error (halo effect, severity and leniency, and central tendency) has suggested that the subjectivity associated with evaluation of human performance guarantees the potential for error in performance appraisal. However, research on rater error in the context of communication and speech performance has presented inconclusive results when examining the influence of rater error on speaker order. Additionally, these findings do not indicate whether rater error is unlikely to exist in situations where more than four speakers are evaluated in a given class period (Turman & Barton, 2003). Also, research has yet to represent a design which is reflective of a typical speech day (e.g. grading student speeches of varying quality) which might increase the potential for rater error. In other words, when examining what occurs in a traditional classroom structure one would expect to find seven or eight students speaking on a given day coupled with variations in the speaking order and in the quality of
Bias in the Evaluation Process

student speeches, resulting in a likely variability in student scores related to these factors. Thus, to isolate and clarify the potential influence of speaker order and quality when the number of speakers is increased, the following research question was set forth.

RQ1: Does speaker order and presentation quality influence the subsequent grade that students receive?

An additional challenge raters face is providing effective feedback to students, while ensuring that their grading practices are both valid and reliable. One of the primary objectives of a course with a presentation focus is to provide students with effective feedback to enhance their speaking ability over the course of a semester (O’Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, and Wiemann, 1995; Sawyer & Behnke, 1997). Because of the ego involvement associated with public speaking situations, feedback providing more than a simple numerical justification for student grades is necessary. Raters are expected to provide students with high quality feedback by which students engage in skill building as a way to become stronger public speakers. One could argue that in addition to increased potential for rater error based on speaker order, raters may also experience rater fatigue, and consequently be less likely to provide high quality feedback as they progress through the speaker order. While proving fatigue is difficult, the present study is concerned with finding any hint of fatigue that may influence the evaluation process and provide an additional avenue of research in the context of rater error. Overall, the assumption of the following research question implies that students presenting presentations at the
beginning of the speaker order would receive higher quality comments than those at the end, suggesting that fatigue is present and may account for this discrepancy. To analyze the potential for this assumption, the following research question was set forth:

RQ2: Does the order in which a speaker presents influence the quality of comments and feedback provided by the rater?

In addition to the preceding problems, limited research has attempted to determine the influence of other mediating variables on rater error. For example, some studies have explored the problems associated with the way that international students (Young, 1998) and students with different dialects (Agee & Smith, 1974) are evaluated. However, a more obvious influence on rater error comes from an examination of gender. Exploration into gender as a significant problem related to speech evaluation has found that women tend to be more lenient graders than men when using rating scales (Bock, 1970), drawing attention to the need for adequate assessment tools. In addition, Bock and Bock (1977) found that instructors demonstrated a tendency to rate students of the same sex more highly, commonly known as a trait error, which occurs when instructors place an over-emphasis on a specific trait or skill (Ford, Puckett & Tucker, 1987; King, 1998). Thus, there appears to be a precedent set for a negative evaluation bias based on gender that needs to be addressed more completely. In an attempt to determine whether the gender of the rater influenced student grades based on the speaker’s gender, the following research question was set forth:
RQ3: Does rater gender influence the quality of comments students receive for classroom presentations?

**Method**

**Participants & Procedures**

*Raters.* The raters in this study consisted of 76 (males, n = 30; females, n = 46) undergraduate students currently working with the basic course at a large Midwestern university. Raters were competitively selected from a pool of students who had successfully completed the basic course by utilizing grade point average and reported performance in the classroom. Raters were given course credit for their participation and included a mixture of students from a variety of majors (e.g., communication studies, business, etc.).

*Training Procedures.* To prepare for the assessment process raters were required to complete an eight-week training program which focused on evaluation of recorded presentations and speaker outlines. Before grading any of the presentations, the primary researchers familiarized the raters with a criterion referenced evaluation instrument which was divided into three major sections (i.e., introduction and conclusion, body, and delivery). Over the course of the eight week training period, the raters were trained to utilize the evaluation form which assigned specific point values to respective elements for each of the three major criteria sections. Twenty points were assigned to the introduction and conclusion (e.g., assessment of things such as the
attention getter, preview and summary statements, and closing remarks), 40 points reflecting content (e.g., main point development, organizational structure, documentation and use of evidence), and 40 points for delivery (e.g., including eye contact, extemporaneous delivery style, gestures, posture, and movement). Additionally, grading techniques such as taking copious notes, utilizing positive and negative comments, and the need for providing appropriate feedback were addressed to further ensure consistency across rater use of the evaluation form. Each reviewer viewed and assessed ten presentations, entered into discussion with fellow reviewers concerning the comments and grades assigned, and then submitted their evaluation forms for assessment by the primary researchers.

**Experimental Design**

To obtain a pool of student presentations, 25 speeches were taped from one section of the basic course for a persuasive speech assignment. The primary researchers each evaluated the presentations and assigned grades based on the same criterion referenced evaluation instrument (intercoder reliability was calculated at .89). From these presentations, the primary researchers utilized a cluster sampling technique to select two speeches from each of the A, B, C, and D grade categories (n = 8). Also, to incorporate gender as an independent variable, male (n = 4) and female (n = 4) students were selected at each grade category as well. Those speeches selected for utilization in this study ranged in length from 7 to 9 minutes, and after the selection process, presentations were re-taped in varying order utilizing an incomplete factorial design (see...
Table 1 for representation of the distribution of multiple A through D presentations across the treatment groups\(^1\). Additionally, thirty-second delays were incorporated into each tape between each speaker to simulate the amount of time graders often utilize between speakers on a typical presentation day in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker Position</th>
<th>Rater Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>A-1 D-2 D-1 C-1 A-2 D-2 B-1 C-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>A-2 D-1 C-1 C-2 B-2 C-2 B-2 C-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>B-1 B-2 C-2 D-1 C-1 B-2 D-1 A-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>B-2 B-1 A-1 D-2 D-1 A-1 D-2 A-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>C-1 A-1 A-2 A-1 A-1 A-2 C-1 D-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>C-2 A-2 B-1 A-2 B-1 B-1 C-2 B-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>D-1 C-1 D-2 B-2 C-2 C-1 A-1 D-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>D-2 C-2 B-2 B-1 D-2 D-1 A-2 B-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess the presentations the raters were randomly assigned to one of eight treatment groups. Assistants were used to help administer the study, and each was provided with a detailed list of instructions in

\(^1\) A complete experimental design would have required an additional 56 groups to achieve the total number of possible speaker combinations; and would have required approximately 500 additional raters. Additionally, access to student raters and consistent training personnel was limited to a one-year period based on the existing structure of the basic course at this institution.
order to make sure each group followed the same procedures and had the same experience. Participants were asked to watch all eight speeches, evaluate them, and make the necessary comments. To further represent a typical speech day, the raters were given a 24 hour period to make needed comments and were then instructed to return the evaluation forms to the primary researchers to simulate the actual experience of returning scores to the students. To help maximize external validity and eliminate the potential for confounding variables, the research was conducted in classrooms used during the training session. Also, raters were provided with the same environment, visual equipment and tape quality to help ensure a similar experience across each group. Furthermore, raters were not provided with information concerning the nature and purpose of the study to eliminate the increased potential for a halo effect to emerge.

**Scales of Measurement**

*Analytic Grading Form.* Raters used an evaluation instrument that utilizes an analytic method by which content and delivery elements were 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. To test the effectiveness of the rater training and evaluation procedures, an initial pilot test was conducted using four persuasive presentations
Bias in the Evaluation Process

of similar quality. The speaker order was manipulated and 38 undergraduate raters were assigned to one of four treatment groups. An analysis of variance indicated no significant differences across groups (F (3, 124) = .492, p > .05) based on rater evaluations when only four presentations were utilized.

**Evaluation Quality.** Two student coders were selected and asked to evaluate rater comments for each of the presentations based on a semantic differential type scale adapted from an instrument developed by Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum (1957). This 12-item scale was created to analyze the quality of student comments based on a combination of the introduction/conclusion, body and delivery. Coders were given the stimulus statement, “What is the quality of the written feedback provided by the evaluator for this presentation” and used a 5-point scale to capture perceptions to the degree that each section (e.g., introduction, conclusion, body, delivery) was: good-bad, valuable-worthless, qualified-unqualified and reliable-unreliable. Inter-coder reliability was calculated at .88 for the two coders.

**Data Analysis**

Research question one used an 8 \times 8 factorial design to measure the potential change in student presentation grades. The order of the presentations (either going 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th) and rater group assignments (group 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8) both served as ran-
dom factors\(^2\). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with follow-up analyses using the LSD procedure (p = .05) was performed to examine the effects of speaker order and presentation quality on students’ grades. An ANOVA was also utilized to analyze data for research question two to determine the influence of speaker order on the quality of comments provided for students. Furthermore, data for research question three was assessed using an independent sample t-test to determine significant differences based on rater gender.

**RESULTS**

The first research question inquired whether student ratings would be influenced by speaker placement. ANOVA analysis indicated a significant interaction effect based on rater grouping and presentation score \((F(7, 49) = 8.88, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .35)\) and post hoc analysis indicated significant differences across groups for each of the eight presentations. Two particular patterns emerged when examining the differences across groups.

First, a number of speaker positions caused a significant decrease in presentation ratings (See table 2). Specifically, scores on presentation A-1 and A-2 declined when preceded by lower quality presentations (see group 5, 6, 7, and 8 in Table 1). The grades assigned to

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\(^2\) Speaker order and grade quality both served as random factors as a function of the incomplete experimental design utilized for data analysis. Because it was not possible to design a complete experiment incorporating the 64 treatment groups necessary, the primary researchers were forced to randomly assign speaker order and grade quality across the eight groups in an attempt to make inferences across the 64 groups required in a complete design.
Bias in the Evaluation Process

each of these speakers appeared to be most affected by speaker order wherein presentation _A-1_ ranged in scoring from a high of 84.70(_SD_ = 5.69) to a low of 55.55(_SD_ = 10.82). A clear interaction effect emerged when examining the profile plots for the _A-1_ presentation when compared with _D-2_ (see Figure 1). In this instance the placement of presentation _A-1_ in groups 6, 7, and 8 produced a steady decrease in rater scoring, while presentation _D-2_ experienced a significant increase in rater scoring for group 5, 6, and 8. Presentation _A-2_ experienced similar variability with raters scoring this presentation high (_M_ = 85.44, _SD_ = 5.70) while other raters influenced by speaker position and preceding speaker quality rated the presentation significantly lower (_M_ = 50.90, _SD_ = 14.39). Similar declines in scoring were recorded for presentation _C-1_ and _C-2_, whereas scores tended to be affected by placement in close proximity to lower quality presentations (see group 6, 7 and 8 in Table 1).

Second, a number of speaker positions resulted in significant increases in presentation ratings (see Table 2). Scores on presentation _C-1_ increased significantly when placed in the beginning or end of the presentation rotation (See group 7 on Table 1). _C-1_ experienced a significant decline when placed at the front of the order and followed by lower quality presentations (see Figure 2). Finally, _D_ presentations tended to increase significantly when there was significant variability in the speaker order (see groups 5, 6, and 8 on Table 1).

No significant differences, however, were found for research question two which asked whether speaker order would impact the quality of written comments. The ANOVA analysis indicated no significant differences (_F_
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Bias in the Evaluation Process

(7,600) = .086, \( p > .05 \) indicating that those students who present in the last speaking position received the same quality comments as those who present in the first. Research question three assessed whether rater gender would affect the quality of written comments provided to students on the analytic evaluation form. Findings from the T-test indicated significant differences did exist (\( t = (606) = 7.06, p = .008 \)), suggesting that female raters provided higher quality written comments (\( M = 14.60; SD = 4.43 \)) when compared to male raters (\( M = 15.20; SD = 3.79 \)).

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether student presentation grades and feedback quality were affected by speaker placement and rater gender. Three research questions were used to test the presence of these relationships. Specifically, research question one asked whether student ratings were affected by speaker placement and proximity to presentations of various levels of quality. Findings from this study demonstrated significant differences across each of the presentations used in this analysis and the emergence of two patterns of rater error. First, ratings for A presentations significantly declined when preceded by lower quality presentations. Similar findings were obtained when examining the decline in ratings for C presentations. Second, a number of ratings for B and D presentations experienced significant increases when initiating the speaking order and when variability across presentation quality existed (e.g. A, B, C, D, A, B, C, D).
A variety of parallels to existing research on rater error emerge from this analysis. First, these findings support the assumption that student presentation grades are not only influenced by the quality of the presentation given by the student, but they are also influenced by the speakers’ placement in a particular speaker order. Further, the quality of the presentations surrounding a particular speech significantly influenced ratings provided by undergraduate raters. This conclusion was true for both A and D presentations which experienced a significant decrease and increase respectively by raters. Results partially support the existence of both positive leniency and negative severity when variability across speakers occurred (Bock & Bock, 1981; Engelhard, 1994). In these instances the evaluators were more likely to grade high quality speeches more severely and lower quality speeches more leniently. Both sets of A and C presentations experienced significant declines in ratings when preceded by lower quality presentations. This finding suggests that raters had a difficult time making distinctions across presentations of different quality, and as a result, their final evaluations were skewed both positively and negatively. These findings also support the existence of primacy and recency effects. Raters appeared to be influenced by those presentations that appeared earlier in the speaker order. These findings have a number of parallels with previous research including Anderson and Barrios (1976) and Miller and Campbell (1959) who concluded that primacy and recency effects exist to the extent that speaker order had an impact on final grade assignment. However, this study is inconsistent with Benson and Maitlen (1975) and Turman & Barton (2003) who found
no significant relationship between rank and speaker position. When examining the mean scores for all speakers as a whole, central tendency appeared to occur across raters for each group (Saal, Downey, & Lahey, 1980). Presentation scores across the eight speakers were relatively low ranging from 78.67 (11.40) to 64.36 (12.63).

There are a number of implications for the above findings concerning rater error and speaker order. First, these findings demonstrate that evaluating eight speeches of varying quality at one time could increase the likelihood of rater error happening if a particular combination of speaker placement occurred. As a result, it seems evident that the circumstances of these various speaking situations limit the rater from making an accurate assessment of the speaker’s performance. Second, these findings might suggest the need for additional assessment to take place in those performance-based classrooms where class size remains high. Peer assessment is one particular method that raters could use to assist in determining accuracy of performance assessment. Research examining the use of peer assessment as a function for analyzing student presentations has been addressed by a number of researchers with mixed results. MacAlpine (1999) and Orsmond, Merry, and Reiling (1996) obtained correlation coefficients in the ranges of .80 and .74 respectively when utilizing a likert scale assessment tool for students to complete. Kwan and Leung (1996) however found unacceptable correlation coefficients (r = .20) when having students provide raw scores, and Freeman (1995) obtained limited success with the use of peer team/groups (r = .26). However if appropriate training and assessment tools are util-

Volume 16, 2004
ized, peer assessment could assist in checking the accuracy of scores provided by raters (Bock & Bock, 1981). One avenue for future research could be the examination of similarities across peer and instructor assessments and the impact similarities/dissimilarities would have on perceived instructor credibility. Third, these findings could provide justification for a type of error referred to as “systematic distortion” (Carlson & Mulaik, 1993, p. 111). Carlson & Mulaik (1993) argue that when individuals make assessments of others they:

. . . develop common, implicit notions about “what goes with what” based on the conceptual or semantic similarities among attributes. When people are asked to make memory-based judgments of previously observed trait or behavior attributes, the ratings are systematically biased in the direction of the conceptual similarity schema....ratings of human attributes are merely linguistic artifacts that have little, if any, relation to true behavioral covariance. (p. 88)

In the context of making speech evaluations across a number of speakers the order and quality of the presentations ultimately impacts a rater’s ability to make distinctions across presentations (e.g., the first and second presentations both had good introductions and as a result they are scored alike). Thus the idea that similarities in the presentation directly preceding and following a speaker could impact the rater’s assessment is of significant importance and requires additional analysis.

No significant differences were found when examining the impact of speaker order on the quality of written feedback to students in research question two. However, one should note that the potential fatigue associ-
ated with written feedback may not be as evident after only eight presentations. Proving that fatigue is a cause of poor feedback would require a much larger and more inclusive research design than the current study could accommodate. Although this study used well-trained raters, they are still largely novice. Even with the novice label, it is unlikely that fatigue would be evident with eight speakers in one isolated speech day. Placing these same raters in the context of a typical faculty experience where two or three sections of the course are taught by the same instructor and speakers from all sections speak on the same day is much more likely to reveal evidence of fatigue. This means that a more longitudinally focused study needs to be done that tracks this issue over the course of a semester.

The third research question focused on determining whether rater gender would influence the quality of comments students received for their respective presentations. Findings indicated that females provided written comments of higher quality than male raters; however, only slight differences emerged across these two groups. The minor differences in feedback quality may have been a result of selection procedures when choosing both male and female speakers of similar quality for raters to grade. Research has suggested that raters are more likely to rate students of the same sex more highly, and by averaging the scores across the four male and female speakers may have hindered our ability to obtain large differences in feedback quality. Moreover, power was significantly reduced when including speaker sex into the analysis of rater sex differences.

Findings from these research questions do answer a number of concerns in regards to the quality of rater
feedback in the performance-based course. The assumption that rater feedback would decline as speaker order increased was disproven, indicating that quality feedback was provided across all speakers. A significant issue emerges from this and previous findings. Quigley (1998) pointed out that feedback on oral assignments benefits students most through “clear grading criteria, structured practice and specific feedback” (p. 48). However, these analyses suggest that not only were raters influenced by speaker order and quality when assigning scores, but they also appeared to be able to provide written justification for those scores. One must consider how raters justify the grades they assigned in those instances where significant increases or decreases in ratings occurred. Book (1985) found that an improvement in speaking skills is directly related to effective feedback “in accordance with the assignment” (p. 22). Future research examining the implication of speaker order and evaluation quality could attempt to determine how lower scores are justified to speakers. In situations where scores were reduced, feedback could ultimately cause a decline in presentation quality in the future.

Despite the findings obtained in this analysis, there are a number of limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results from this study. First, even though extensive training occurred to familiarize raters with appropriate assessment methods, undergraduate students were used in this analysis. There is some evidence to support the idea that less experienced evaluators may be more prone to experience rater error (Young, 1974). Second, because an incomplete experimental design was utilized for this analysis, the selection of the speaker placement for each group may cause
the findings to over represent the potential of this phenomenon. A complete experimental design would have required an additional 56 groups to achieve that total number of possible speaker combinations. From this analysis each of the groups demonstrated significant differences for at least one of the eight speeches and the percentage could drop significantly if a complete experimental design was performed. Third, the fact that raters had a difficult time making distinctions across presentations of varying quality may have been a result of the training procedures. Because raters were trained by evaluating individual presentations during each training session, rather than multiple presentations, may have had an impact on their ability to make clear distinctions across speakers. Finally, because raters were not required 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. Watching speeches on videotape is not the same as a live experience in terms of the overall critical distance the mediated version provides. However, because raters had no previous contact with the presenters prior to assessment, the potential impact of the halo effect was eliminated as a type of rater error that may have emerged.

Despite the above limitations, this study does have a number of practical implications for the basic course director. Although undergraduate raters were utilized, the training sessions made use of many of the same training procedures employed by basic course directors when training graduate teaching assistants. The findings suggest that GTA’s should be trained to understand the increased potential for rater error once fluctuations in
speaker quality exist. Furthermore, using training methods which focus on evaluations of single presentations followed by discussion may serve to increase the potential for rater error because this procedure does not accurately reflect what new GTA’s will face during a typical presentation day. Finally, directors who are faced with the decision to increase the number of speeches given by students in a given class period, must consider not only the pedagogical implications, but also the potential unfair advantage it places on the effective evaluation of student presentations. This study could potentially serve as a rationale for maintaining current course structures when administrative pressure begins to emerge.

This study has demonstrated that when grade variability exists for a group of speakers, the placement of those speakers can significantly affect the final grade students are assigned. When examining previous research utilizing a similar experimental design (Turman & Barton, 2003) with only four speakers and presentations of similar quality, no significant differences were obtained. Including four additional speakers, and better reflecting a typical speech day with inconsistent presentation quality caused grade assignment across groups to change based on speaker order. Although future research needs to be done, this study does show some promise in terms of the impact increased class size could have on student learning and their right to receive fair and accurate assessment. In addition, these findings should be valuable for administrators who insist that increasing class size is the first option for reducing costs in the basic course. In the face of increasing demands for accountability, the more that educated planning de-
Decisions can be made the more likely students are to obtain a better, more equitable education.

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Bias in the Evaluation Process


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Note: Means displaying different subscripts in the same column differ at p < .05.
Figure 1. Interaction Effect for presentation A-1 and D-2
Figure 2. Interaction Effect for Presentation B-2 and C-1
Written Speech Feedback in the Basic Communication Course: Are Instructors Too Polite to Students?

Dana Reynolds  
Stephen K. Hunt  
Cheri J. Simonds  
Craig W. Cutbirth

Written feedback is one way in which instructors inform students on how to maintain, alter, or improve performance (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980). One of the goals of feedback is to facilitate learning by instructing students on where, why, and how to make improvements (Whitman, 1987). However, potential problems arise in the classroom when students view the instructor’s feedback (either verbal or written) as face threatening. This is a particularly salient concern in the public speaking classroom where students find themselves the focus of everyone in the classroom.

According to Goffman (1967), the term “face” refers to the public self-identity that each person claims during a specific interaction and is comprised of two specific types of face wants: positive face and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Positive face involves one’s need to be liked, approved of, and appreciated. Negative face involves one’s need for autonomy or claim to territory and possessions.

The college classroom contains several inherent threats to students’ face. Instructors can help to mitigate these threats when commenting on a student’s
work by balancing course content (informational expertise) and relational content (including use of facework strategies) (Frymier & Houser, 2000). In this study, we apply politeness theory to instructor written feedback in order to develop a more concrete understanding of the pedagogical utility of feedback practices in the basic public speaking course. Specifically, we explore the types of feedback that instructors use in the classroom as well as students’ perceptions of the usefulness of such feedback. It is our contention that a better understanding of this pedagogical practice can assist instructors in their efforts to refine their feedback strategies and thus contribute to improved student learning and satisfaction. In order to understand the implications of politeness theory in terms of instructor feedback, it is first necessary to explore notions of face.

**FACE AND FACEWORK**

Face is comprised of two specific kinds of desires or face wants: positive and negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that all rational, willful, fluent speakers of a natural language have positive and negative face. Positive face is “the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants” (p. 61). To have concern for a person’s positive face is to show approval of their accomplishments or character, or to demonstrate that they are considered likable and a worthy companion (Metts, 1997).

Brown and Levinson (1987) define negative face as “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights...
to non-distraction — i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (p. 61). To have concern for a person’s negative face is to avoid imposing on their time or belongings, to show respect for their privacy, to avoid intrusive behaviors, and to advocate their autonomy and independence (Metts, 1997). Brown and Levinson (1987) state that, in general, it is in everyone’s mutual interest to maintain each other’s face. However, some acts will intrinsically threaten face. Communicative acts that threaten face are known as face threatening acts (FTAs). Some of these inherent FTAs include requests, criticism, and advice (Metts, 1997).

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that when there is a threat to the addressee’s face, the speaker should seek to minimize the face threat of the FTA. Hodgins, Liebeskind and Schwartz (1996) argue that the one who initiates the FTA plays an important role in trying to restore and repair the damage done to the addressee’s face. There are a variety of ways in which interactants can help to prevent the loss of face or help to restore face once lost (Metts, 1997). These communicative devices are known as facework. One way to try to minimize the loss of face when doing a FTA is by using positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness is oriented towards the addressee’s positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As Metts (1997) notes, positive politeness in manifested is such communicative acts as claiming common ground, indicating that the listener is admirable, being responsive to the listener’s needs, exaggerating approval, including listener in activities, seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement, joking and giving gifts. Although each supportive message can
lessen the loss of face, too much support can do more harm than good (LaGaipa, 1990).

Negative politeness is oriented towards the addressee’s negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Again, Metts (1997) describes negative politeness as being manifested in such communicative acts as providing a listener with several options, hedging while making a request, avoiding the use of coercion, showing deference, apologizing, and being vague or ambiguous. The notion of face has a direct application to the classroom given that feedback is potentially an FTA.

**Feedback in the College Classroom**

An instructor’s written comments not only evaluate (or criticize) the student’s work, but the instructor will also offer advice or make requests on how to improve. It seems as if a student’s face is especially vulnerable or “exposed” in a speech communication classroom. Suddenly a student finds him or herself the focus of attention of not just the teacher, but twenty or so other students. In no other class should face concerns be more apparent than in a public speaking class. Those who have taught the basic course recognize that the fear of speaking in public is a common fear among students (Ellis, 1995). These anxieties or fears may stem from the fact that when a person is speaking in front of a group, their face becomes quite vulnerable in a very public setting. In the classroom, a student’s face is left unguarded during the actual performance. In addition, the instructor threatens the student’s face by writing comments about how the speech flowed, how well it was delivered,
how the speech was introduced, how interesting the topic was, and so on. Robinson (1997) states that it is crucial for instructors to find ways to help students manage their speech anxieties in a supportive atmosphere.

College instructors can create a climate ripe for learning by using feedback effectively (Whitman, 1987). Robinson (1997) suggests that providing feedback on students' work is one of the key elements to creating a positive, supportive classroom environment. Because feedback is such an intrinsic FTA, an instructor needs to write comments in a way that helps to mitigate the threat to face. Kerssen-Griep (2001) encourages teachers to be vigilant about face-support during all instructional interactions. Similarly, Frymier and Houser (2000) argue that ego support serves as a significant predictor of learning and motivation. Ego support involves encouragement and confirmation. Students look to their instructors for more than basic knowledge. They want their instructors to help them feel good about themselves and feel in control of their environment. In other words, students want teachers to support their positive face needs.

Whether an instructor uses feedback to facilitate learning, improve speech performance, reduce stress, or as a motivational tool, feedback is an essential part of the basic public speaking course. Rubin, Welch and Buerkel (1995) argue that learning has taken place in a speech communication classroom if students show improvement in speaking skills or knowledge. Feedback is one common method used by instructors to inform students what aspects of their performance were sufficient and what needs to be improved. Book and Wynkoop-
Simmons (1980) argue that feedback plays an important role when attempting to improve or modify a student’s behavior.

Instructors commonly use some form of written feedback to improve performances in the basic public speaking course. This may best be accomplished by utilizing comments that would inherently threaten a student’s face. An instructor could tell a student where their performance was lacking (e.g., you did not have enough eye contact, a positive face threat), and expect the student to know how to go about making improvements. Better yet, an instructor could specifically instruct the student on how to improve (e.g., try to practice looking at the entire audience, not just the right side of the room, a negative face threat).

McKeachie (1999) notes that, up to a point, the more specific feedback an instructor can give the student, the greater the learning that takes place. He goes on to qualify that statement by suggesting that a student can become overloaded if an overabundance of feedback is given. Book and Wynkoop-Simmons (1980) state that when compared to students who received no written teacher feedback, students who were given specific feedback showed significant improvement on pre- and post classroom tests. Their research demonstrates that automistic, impersonal, negative criticism is rated by students as being the most helpful type of feedback. Automistic feedback is given on specific elements of the speech, impersonal feedback deals with the principles of good speaking, and negative criticism points out weaknesses and suggests improvement (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980). In terms of face, automistic, impersonal, negative criticism would be classified as specific
comments that threaten the student’s negative face. Holistic, personal, positive comments were rated by students as the least helpful type of feedback. Holistic feedback comments on the overall performance, personal feedback deals with that student’s (or the instructor’s) personal life or attitude, and positive comments tell the student what they did correctly (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980). Similarly, holistic, personal, positive feedback would be classified as general comments that either threaten the student’s positive face or comments that would be classified as positive politeness. McKeachie (1999) suggests that helpful comments are an appropriate type of feedback when pointing out the errors in a student’s speech. Helpful comments do not simply note that the error occurred, but also provide insight on how to improve. Importantly, positive and negative comments need to be balanced to motivate a student to improve (McKeachie, 1999).

Surprisingly, neither Goffman’s (1967) notion of face nor Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory is utilized in the current research regarding teacher feedback. One of the goals of feedback is to help the student make improvements and facilitate learning. For a student to improve she/he has to make some changes before completing the next assignment. According to Wilson and Kunkel (2000), trying to alter another person’s behavior is an intrinsic FTA.

**STUDY ONE**

It has been established that teacher feedback is potentially an FTA. However, it is not clear if instructors
find it necessary to use politeness to mitigate the FTA, since feedback is an expected occurrence in the classroom setting. Therefore, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: How, if at all, will an instructor use positive or negative politeness when providing feedback on students’ speeches?

Although both positive and negative feedback is to be expected in a classroom setting, instructors must be able to balance the types of comments. Too much criticism or negative feedback (threats to positive and negative face) might crush a student’s motivation for trying to improve. On the other hand, too much social support or positive feedback (positive and negative politeness) may make a student with a less than perfect grade feel that the grade was unjustified. Thus, to determine the relationship that exists between these variables the following research question was posited:

RQ2: What is the relationship between the nature of the instructor’s comments and the grades received on students’ speeches?

When giving feedback, an instructor can write comments that threaten the student’s positive or negative face. The instructor can also use positive and negative politeness to help mitigate the FTA. Regardless of the specific type of comment an instructor writes, it seems obvious that to help the student make improvements, the instructor would be more willing to threaten a student’s negative face, rather than a student’s positive face. It is unlikely that threatening a student’s self-image would motivate them to improve, reduce their
stress, or facilitate learning. However, students may give up some of their autonomy to make improvements for their next performance. In fact, many researchers suggest that negative face threats are the most helpful type of feedback, and this type of comment is the feedback that the student most desires (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980; McKeachie, 1999; Whitman, 1987). Importantly, research indicates that instructors should not overwhelm students with so many negative face threats that they become discouraged (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₁: When giving written feedback on a speech performance, an instructor will write more comments that threaten the student’s negative face than comments that threaten the student’s positive face.

**Method**

Instructor evaluations for informative speeches (n=107) were extracted from a previously collected data set of 115 portfolios.¹ Seven of the instructor evaluations were excluded from this study due to illegible writing and poor copy quality. The original portfolios were collected at the end of the first full year of the General Education program at a large Midwestern university.

¹ These assessment portfolios include all of the students’ written work and speech materials (instructor, peer, and self evaluation forms, speech lab documentation, speech outlines) for the three major speeches (informative, group, and persuasive) in the basic course.
during the spring of 1999. The portfolios represented a random sample of 10% of the population of students enrolled in the course during that semester. An additional fifty interviews with students who were enrolled in a basic public speaking course at the same university were conducted and their evaluation forms for the informative speech collected in the fall of 2000 were included.

**Category Definitions**

To answer the hypothesis and research questions, feedback on the instructor evaluation forms were coded into four feedback categories based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory: positive face threats, negative face threats, positive politeness, and negative politeness. Positive face threats included both negative personal comments about the student as a speaker as well as negative speech comments. Negative face threats are those comments which instruct the student what they need to do for next time and suggests areas of improvement.

Politeness messages include those comments in which instructors use feedback to meet student’s face needs, as well as prevent some inherent damage in light of the criticisms and violations to face. Positive politeness includes those comments that mitigate positive face threats about the speech itself and the student’s presentation of the speech. Negative politeness includes messages that acknowledge the students’ negative face needs are being violated. These messages are a type of disclaimer.
Procedure

The researchers trained two coders (both male). Both of the coders were ‘layperson’ coders, meaning that neither of them are members of the communication or education disciplines. The coders independently analyzed 10% of the sample. Using Holsti’s (1968) formula, the inter-coder reliability was .80. After establishing inter-coder reliability the data set was divided evenly between the coders.

To code the instructor evaluation forms, tally marks were used to represent each feedback message written in one of several speech sections (outline and references, introduction, body, conclusion, delivery, and overall impression). A coding form outlining each speech section was used to record the tally marks. Each tally mark represents the number of positive face threats, negative face threats, positive politeness comments and negative politeness comments in each speech section. These tally marks were counted to give total scores for each category on every section of the speech as well as an overall total for the speech. Mixed messages (i.e., a message that included both negative politeness, as well as a negative face threat) were broken up into their smallest possible units to prevent frequency counts for complicated combinations of messages. There was also a section for noting points received in each individual section of the speech as well as the overall grade. Any comments not addressing face were excluded from this study. For example, an instructor may jot down the outline of the speech as the student is speaking. This type of comment is more a note to one’s self (the evaluator) than a comment to the student. However, if when jotting down the outline, the instructor would make a
comment to the student (e.g., “oops, you forgot to justify your point”), the comment would be included in the body section of the speech as a threat to the student’s positive face.

**RESULTS**

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the students’ grades on the informative speech ($M = 80.63$, $SD = 6.83$, $n = 103$). A frequency distribution was run to answer research question one (do instructors use positive politeness and negative politeness) and to provide an overview of the types of comments’ instructors wrote on informative speech evaluations. The results are shown in Table 1.

Research question two examined the relationship between the nature of the comments and the grade the student received. A Pearson product-moment correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Frequency of Instructor Comments By Type of Message</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Face Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcca/vol16/iss1/18
was run pairing the grades the student’s received with each of the four types of instructor comments (i.e., raw speech grades were correlated with the number of comments provided in each category by the instructor). These results yielded three significant correlations. The student’s grade held a negative relationship in regard to positive face threats \( (r = -0.51, p < .01) \). As the student’s grade increased, the instructor wrote fewer comments that threatened their positive face. The student’s grade and negative face threats also shared an inverse relationship \( (r = -0.37, p < .01) \). As the student’s grade increased, the number of comments that threaten their negative face decreased. However, the results yielded a positive relationship between the student’s grade and positive politeness \( (r = 0.37, p < .01) \). As the student’s grade increased, so did the number of positive politeness comments. Given a lack of comments that utilized negative politeness, correlations could not be reported.

Hypothesis one suggested that an instructor would write more comments that threaten the student’s negative face than comments that threaten the student’s positive face. Results demonstrate that there was a difference between the number of comments that instructors wrote threatening students’ negative face \( (n = 586) \) versus those threatening students’ positive face \( (n = 486) \).

**DISCUSSION**

The goal of Study 1 was to examine the types of comments instructors offer to students when they provide written feedback and to explore the relationship
between these comments and students’ grades. In terms of the first research question, the results indicate that positive politeness is the most common type of message the student receives. The results yielded more positive politeness messages than all other types of feedback combined. One possible reason for instructors choosing to use positive politeness messages is that instructors are trying to encourage their students by using ego (social) support. Frymier and Houser (2000) suggest that ego support serves as one communication skill that predicts learning and motivation, and that students look to their instructors for praise and encouragement. The instructors in this study may be trying to fulfill the student’s positive face needs. Moreover, the instructors may have felt the need to exaggerate approval in some areas of the speech to mitigate other FTAs in the evaluation process. In addition, given that the informative speech was the first major graded speech completed by students, the instructors may have been more likely to provide students with more positive comments that encouraged them for continuation in the course.

Another potential explanation for the sheer volume of positive politeness messages would be that those were the comments the students deserved. However, upon further review of the results it is suggested that this former explanation is not the case considering the average grade in this study was a low B. With the overwhelming use of positive politeness messages, it is no wonder that the students’ grades were so high. In fact, this may be a significant contributor to course grade inflation. Perhaps the instructors, unable or unwilling to give constructive feedback, were forced to assign high
grades to speeches because they lacked the ability to justify negative criticism to their students.

Another interesting finding related to the delivery section of the speech. This is the only section of the speech where instructors felt it necessary to threaten the students’ negative face. There were nearly twice as many negative face threats coded in the delivery section as positive face threats. One possible explanation for this finding is that instructors may have felt more comfortable making suggestions for improvement when they focused on delivery skills. Importantly, this finding may reflect the fact that much of current training for the basic course focuses on assessing student delivery. This implies that basic course directors should be careful to design training programs that prepare all who teach the course to assess all aspects of speech preparation and delivery.

Only three negative politeness comments were given as written feedback in this study. The most obvious explanation for this is the setting in which this study took place. Negative politeness is utilized when the act threatens the subject’s negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In a classroom setting, it is unlikely that an instructor will feel the need to use communicative acts to restore a student’s negative face. Students accept and encourage comments that threaten their negative face. Goldsmith (2000) suggests that when the recipient invites feedback (as is the case in a classroom setting), the feedback is likely to be viewed as constructive. She goes on to suggest that failing to give feedback when expected can be viewed as a lack of caring or concern (a threat to positive face). Because negative face threats are warranted in a classroom setting, it is not surprising
that instructors did not feel the need to "soften the blow" by using negative politeness.

The second research question examined the relationship between the nature of the comments and the grade the student received. The results yielded significant correlations for positive face, negative face, and positive politeness and the student's grade. The results suggest an inverse relationship between the students' grade and the number of comments that threaten the students' face. For example, the higher the grade the student received, the less likely it was for the instructor to point out what they did wrong. For students who received lower grades, there were more comments that threatened their positive face. The number of negative face threats was also inversely related to students' grades. Again, the higher the student's grade, the fewer comments that threaten the student's negative face (comments that instructed the student on how to improve). The result for the number of positive politeness messages and the students' grade yielded a positive relationship. The more positive politeness messages an instructor wrote on an evaluation, the higher the students' grade. The explanation for these results is really quite simple. The higher the grade the more praise the student received. As grades begin to fall, the instructor gives an increasing amount of feedback telling the student what they did wrong and suggesting ways to improve their speech.

The hypothesis posed in this study suggested that an instructor would write more comments that threaten the student's negative face than comments that threaten the student's positive face. There was support for this hypothesis. This is a refreshing discovery.
study, instructors were more willing to threaten the student’s face by suggesting how they should improve their speech versus just pointing out what they did wrong. The instructors in this study were willing to take the time to threaten the students’ negative face instead of just writing negative comments. For example, it takes more effort on the instructors part to threaten a student’s negative face by stating “Try looking at both sides of the room during your speech” than to threaten their positive face (e.g., “Poor eye contact”). When instructors suggest ways for the students to make improvements, they are creating positive stress. According to Book and Wynkoop-Simmons (1980), positive stress can motivate students to take action. By threatening students’ negative face, the instructor is increasing their motivation to learn.

STUDY TWO

The type of comments an instructor writes on an evaluation is one way to use the notion of face to assess teacher feedback. But this information would only paint half of the picture. The types of feedback on an evaluation have little worth until it is known what types of comments students are seeking. Book and Wynkoop-Simmons (1980) found that students perceived automistic, impersonal, negative comments as being the most helpful. McKeachie (1999) suggested that students would show the greatest motivation to improve when suggestions on how to improve are indicated. It is reasonable for an instructor to expect a student to give up some of her/his autonomy to make improvements for
their next performance. On the other hand, Frymier and Houser (2000) suggest that students want their instructors to help them feel good about themselves and in control of their environment. Because there appears to be some inconsistencies with this body of literature, there needs to be further research to explain how students perceive instructor comments. Study 2 extended the initial research project by exploring the following question:

RQ1: How do students perceive the instructor’s written speech comments?

**METHOD**

To answer this research question, interviews with students enrolled in the University’s basic public speaking class were conducted. Instructors of a basic speech course were contacted via e-mail and asked if they would be interested in allowing their students to participate. Several instructors replied, and offered extra credit for those students willing to participate.

Students were asked to bring two photocopied forms of their instructor’s feedback and their self evaluations (for the informative speech only) with their names redacted. Two different researchers conducted the interviews on alternating days. Signs were posted in two locations showing participants where to go. Upon a participants’ arrival, she/he was first instructed to read and sign an informed consent form, and given a slip of paper to keep with the researchers’ information on it. The participant was then asked for the photocopies of both the self-evaluation form as well as the instructor evaluation form.
A total of six instructors participated. All instructors offered extra credit to their students for participating. Although 93 students signed up, only 50 of these students actually participated. There were more females \( (n = 41) \) than males \( (n = 9) \) in the study and the average age was 18.14 \( (SD = .35) \). In order to distinguish between the research participants, each was given a number \( (R1 – R50) \) upon their arrival. These participant codes will be used to identify the research participants throughout the remaining sections of this manuscript.

**Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed to analyze the data and answer the research question. The instructor evaluations were coded in the same manner described earlier. The purpose of the interview was to evaluate the student’s perceptions of the amount and type of feedback they received on their evaluation form by asking several probing questions.

Along with these open-ended questions, students were asked to rank the instructors’ comments on several 5-point \( (5 = \text{high}, 1 = \text{low}) \), Likert-type scales. Four scales were used to allow the students to quantify their perception of how fair the grade was (fair/unfair), how accurate the grade was (accurate/inaccurate), how helpful the feedback was, (very helpful/not helpful), and how well the comments explained why the student received their grade (explained well/explained poorly).

The raw and reduced sets of data consisted of the instructors’ evaluation forms, transcriptions of the interviews, and the semantic differential scales. The interpretive model suggested by Lindlof (1995), was used to
analyze the data. Emerging themes were identified after carefully reading through the interview transcripts.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data

The research question probed students’ perceptions of the instructors’ feedback. The analysis began by examining the 5-point, Likert-type scales and conducting a frequency distribution among the different grade variables: fairness ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .91$, $n = 50$), accuracy ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .96$, $n = 50$), helpfulness ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.09$, $n = 50$), and explanatory power ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.11$, $n = 49$).

To further quantify the research question, Pearson product-moment correlations were run pairing the four types of instructor comments and the student’s grade on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Face Threats</th>
<th>Negative Face Threats</th>
<th>Positive Politeness</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>−.31a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>−.38b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>−.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>−.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory Power</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>−.15</td>
</tr>
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Note: *Correlation is significant at the .05 level †Correlation is significant at the .01 level
the informative speech among the perceptions of the four grade variables. Table 2 shows the results of these correlations. The only significant correlations occurred when the student’s grade was paired with either fairness or accuracy. Specifically, as the student’s grade increased, the student’s perception of how fair and accurate the grade was decreased.

**Qualitative Data**

Interviews were conducted with the students in order to gain a more complete look at the student’s perceptions of the instructor’s written comments. Three re-occurring themes were identified. They are presented in this section, and supported with the interview data.

**Students Desire More FTAs.** The first theme that emerged from the interviews was that the students desired more comments that threatened their face. Book and Wynkoop-Simmons (1980) argue that feedback plays an important role when attempting to improve or modify a student’s behavior. The students in this study agreed, asking for more comments that threaten their negative face. They wanted to know what they were missing, what could have made this speech better. For example, the following student noted that his instructor deducted points on the speech without providing a rationale or explaining what he should do differently in the future:

I’d like specifics on what [I] did wrong. I would have liked a few more negatives, stuff to work on. (R19)

Students in this study wanted to have their autonomy violated. They would have liked for their instructor to
tell them what they need to improve to do better on future speeches.

Not only did the students in this study desire more comments that threatened their negative face, but they also wanted more positive face threats. When students received a grade lower than expected, they wanted to know why. One student felt her grade was unjustified. She had expected a higher grade and wanted her instructor to write more feedback about why she received a low grade:

What I don’t understand is her grading. The only thing I did wrong according to these comments is look at my note cards too much. Why would I get an 83% for that? I wish she would write more things I need to work on to justify the grade that I got. (R47)

For learning to take place, students have to know what they did wrong and more importantly, how to correct the mistake. Instructors need to threaten the students face for the students to learn. Instructors who are using positive face threats are stating what the student did wrong, but are not necessarily motivating the student to improve. However, if an instructor chooses to use negative face threats, not only are they stating where the mistake occurred, but they are also providing suggestions for improvement.

_Students Become Frustrated with too many Positive Politeness Messages._ Frymier and Houser (2000) suggest that students look to their instructors for more than basic knowledge. They want their instructors to help them feel good about themselves (support their positive face needs). However, a theme that emerged in this study was that instructors provided too many positive polite-
ness messages as feedback. This was a particularly salient issue for students when the grade did not reflect these comments. For example, some of the students focused on why individual points were being taken off. One student became frustrated when an instructor subtracted points, but only offered positive politeness as feedback. When positive politeness is the only type of comment written in a section, this student expected to receive the full amount of points available:

I think it [the grade] is fair, but it’s frustrating because it says “good, good, good,” and I never get the full points on that. I don’t understand how you get a twenty-four out of thirty even though everything is pretty much good. (R8)

Another student felt that the excess of positive politeness feedback should have resulted in a better grade:

She said “good” on stuff, but then I got a lower grade than I expected. She put excellent here, and good here, and good here, and then took off five points and didn’t explain why. (R11)

Students in this study suggested that there were too many positive politeness messages to justify the low grade they received.

*Students Deem Specific Written Feedback as Most Helpful.* The third re-occurring theme that emerged from the interviews with the students is that specific written feedback is the most helpful. The first set of data came from students who received vague comments. The meaning of a vague instructor comment confused the first student:

I needed to know what he wanted specifically. I also needed to know what certain comments meant, like,
“make it real.” He needs to give comments that explain more, they need to be specific. (R10)

Another type of vague comment those students found as inadequate feedback were a system of pluses, minuses, and various other marks. One student wanted more concrete information from her instructor. She was unhappy with the obscure coding system the instructor used:

There were just a lot of pluses, which is good, but in my mind he didn’t give enough reinforcement. He really needs to elaborate in places. I want more than just a plus. (R26)

The meaning of the symbolic feedback also confused a second student. She desired a more specific type of feedback:

The comments were not specific enough. [They needed to be] more specific or get a chance to explain what the pluses mean. (R29)

Students seemed most appreciative of instructor feedback that was directed at specific elements of the speech. For example, one student commented on the helpfulness of the specific comments as well as the nice balance between positive politeness messages and face threats. This student noted that the comments that were the most helpful told her specifically how to improve:

My instructor’s comments were very helpful. They tell me specifically what I need to work on and what my strengths and weaknesses were. (R12)
Some students gave examples of this type of comment. A motivated student discusses why she liked the specific feedback her instructor wrote:

She pointed out specific examples, like she pointed out some of the vocal fillers that I used. [For example] there’s a visual aid I didn’t put the proper citation on. I’ll do that next time. She gave me some examples of stuff I did like “you know.” I’ll try to avoid the phrase. (R39)

Students who received specific written feedback deemed it as the most helpful type of comment. Students also found it helpful when their instructor identified what the student did wrong and noted specifically how to correct the mistake in the future. Regardless of which type of comment the instructor is trying to convey, students deem specific suggestions as the most helpful.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of Study 2 was to examine students’ perceptions of instructor feedback in order to determine the types of feedback students deem the most helpful. First, an attempt was made to determine how students perceived the grade they received on their speech. Seventy-six percent of the students felt that the grade they received on the speech was fair, and 70% perceived their grade to be accurate. The high percentages are encouraging because even though students may not have been happy with the grade they received, they, for the most part, still perceived the grade to be accurate and fair. Although the students’ perception of the helpfulness of the comments they received on their speech was a lower
percentage, the number is also promising. Sixty-eight percent of the students perceived the feedback they received on their speech to be helpful. However, only 46% of the students perceived their feedback as having explanatory power. This percentage is lower than it should be. Less than half of the students in this study felt that the feedback they received explained what they did wrong or how to improve. One of the goals of feedback is to encourage learning (McKeachie, 1999). When instructors give feedback that lacks explanatory power, they are denying the students their greatest potential to learn. This can also set up the potential for student-teacher conflict.

This study also examined the students’ perception of the grade in light of the number of FTAs and positive politeness comments. Most of the correlations yielded insignificant results. The students’ perception of the fairness, accuracy, helpfulness, and explanatory power did not change in terms of the number of positive face comments, negative face comments, or positive politeness comments. However, when correlating the students’ grade with the fairness and accuracy constructs, significant results were found. In this study, both fairness and accuracy have an inverse relationship with the students’ grade. While this finding cannot be fully understood by this research, it warrants further investigation in the future.

The interviews with the students provided further insight into the research question for Study 2. Three re-occurring themes were found: 1) students desire more FTAs, 2) students become frustrated with too much positive politeness, and 3) students deem specific written feedback as most helpful. The first of these themes
indicates that the instructors in this study needed to write more comments that threaten the students’ face. This theme is consistent with extant literature indicating that feedback should challenge students to make improvements before their next performance (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980; Whitman, 1987). Students in this study wanted to know what they did wrong (positive face threats), and more importantly, how to improve (negative face threats). These types of comments are especially important when students receive a grade lower than expected. Instructors need to justify why points are being taken off, and make suggestions for improvements.

The second theme suggested that the instructors in this study were trying too hard to protect the students’ face. Positive politeness messages should be used to note a high point in students’ performance. However, this research suggests that students perceived the feedback they received as having too many positive politeness comments in light of the grade they received. Consistent with past research on teacher feedback, this type of comment was perceived as being the least helpful (Book & Wynkoop-Simmons, 1980). Although many of the students admit that they appreciate some positive politeness, too many comments do not justify a lower than expected grade. Again, in the students’ perception, an overabundance of positive politeness comments should result in a high grade. When students receive overwhelmingly positive comments (e.g., “good,” “great,” “++,” “wow!”) they expect to receive a grade that reflects the comments. The students in this study received similar comments without a superior grade. This
Speech Feedback

led to the students feeling frustrated and may have decreased their motivation for learning.

The third theme uncovered by this study was that specific written feedback was the most helpful type of comment. This finding supports Book and Wynkoop-Simmons (1980) research that suggests students perceive automistic, impersonal, negative as being the most helpful. First, students reported that vague comments were not only confusing but also frustrating. Some of the comments that students were receiving were vague statements that lacked meaning. The most frustrating type of feedback was a system of pluses, minuses, check marks, and squiggly lines. None of the students in this study liked this type of comment, and most were discouraged that their instructor only offered this type of feedback on their speech. The most satisfied students were the ones who received specific comments, particularly those who received comments that told them how to make improvements before their next speech.

**Overall Considerations**

Taken together, the results of these two studies suggest that a student who receives a lower grade will also receive more face threats, and a student who receives a higher grade will receive more positive politeness. Students were also found to perceive their grade as fair, accurate, and the feedback as helpful. These results may lead readers to infer that instructors are doing a fine job of providing feedback to students. However, when interviews were conducted with the students, their perceptions of the feedback were less positive. Simply put, stu-
Students felt their instructors were too polite in the feedback provided. Positive politeness was the most prevalent type of feedback given by the instructor. However, students desire specific feedback that threatens their face and, more specifically, suggests ways to improve.

To motivate learning, instructors need to increase the number of specific negative face threats while decreasing the number of positive politeness comments. Instructors need to be careful about using too many generic positive politeness statements (e.g., “good,” “wow,” “great job,” and “super”). This type of feedback does not provide the student with new knowledge that they can use to improve their speech performances. For the most part, the students commented that they knew when they were doing something right. This research does not suggest that these types of comments are useless; however, they should be sincere and used in moderation. Positive politeness messages need to be given as feedback so students know when they are meeting (or exceeding) expectations. In fact, Goldsmith (2000) suggests that failing to give feedback when expected could be viewed as a lack of caring or concern (a threat to positive face). To better utilize positive politeness instructors need to answer the following question: Why was it good? The instructor needs to make specific positive politeness comments (e.g., “Your use of statistics really helped to clarify your argument,” “You chose a good concrete organizational pattern for this speech, it helped your speech to flow beautifully,” “Wow what a closing! It will really make your audience think”). By specifically addressing the student’s speech, the student knows exactly what they did right and they can continue that course of action for the next speech.
A student who improves from one speech performance to the next is a student who has engaged in learning. If an instructor wants their students to learn by giving a speech performance, she/he must provide written feedback that threatens the students’ face. A positive face threat occurs when the instructor observes an “error” in the speech or in the performance. This type of feedback should not be degrading if it is to be effective (e.g., “You needed to have a more inviting attention getter,” “Four sources are needed to meet the requirements of this speech,” “You forgot to preview your close”). An even better strategy for instructors to use is to threaten students’ negative face. This type of comment suggests specific ways for the student to improve, and thus learn (e.g., “You need try to have eye contact with your audience for longer periods of time,” “Be sure that you cite information from a source with their name and the publication date,” “Your next visual aid should be presented in at least a twenty point font so your audience can see it clearly”).

It is also important to note that many of the students who participated in the interviews seemed overly concerned with why they lost points. These students assumed that they should have been awarded full points on a section unless they failed to include a required element (e.g., attention getter in the introduction). In other words, they indicated they should have been awarded full credit if they simply made a good faith effort to include all of the required elements in the speech. Students had a difficult time understanding that there are qualitative differences between an “A” and “B” for elements such as the attention getter in the introduction. As speech teachers, we expect our students to earn
the points that are given in each section. In light of this observation, a student whose instructor wrote, “good,” “good,” “good,” in a particular section should have received a B on their speech. The student’s speech was above average, but not superior. Most of the participants in this study were first year students and may have expected grades to be given instead of earned (see Leamnson, 1999 for a detailed description of this phenomenon). One student puts it best when she says, “I guess I’m just used to high school grading” (R41). This finding highlights the need for instructors to communicate their expectations to students—to let them know what it takes to earn an “A” on the speech.

The results of these two studies have clear implications for basic course directors. Training programs should be developed to teach instructors how to provide specific positive and negative face threats for students. This training could provide information on facework theory so that instructors feel more comfortable with providing this kind of feedback to students. In addition, training could focus on the relationship between the kinds of comments provided and grades received based on published criteria. This, in turn, could affect grade inflation practices in the basic communication course as well as increase rater reliability across sections.

No study is without limitations. One limitation of this study can be identified in the nature of those who participated in the interviews. First, the sample seems overly represented by women. Although we discovered no identifiable differences based on sex (the women and men in the sample offered the same types of comments), future studies should seek a more balanced sample. Similarly, we may have had a self-selection bias with
this sample. In other words, it is possible that many of those who showed up to be interviewed were students with a complaint about their grade. Again, this limitation should be taken with a grain of salt given that the vast majority of participants reported that they felt the grade they received was fair.

Another limitation is noted when examining the measures used in Study 2. The Likert-type items could not be tested for reliability because there was only one item for each construct. To correct this, future studies will need to develop measures with multiple items for each of the constructs.

The use of face in the college classroom warrants further research. The next logical step would be to train instructors to be face sensitive when giving written feedback to determine whether or not the students’ perception of the feedback would change. This research could only take place provided that the students are aware of the instructors grading system, as discussed earlier. In future research, a group of instructors would be made aware of the conclusions drawn in this study, and trained how to give better written feedback. Instructors would be educated to give specific written feedback that violates the student’s negative face when noting an error in the student’s speech, and more complete positive politeness when complimenting the student for a job well done. The student’s perceptions of the feedback would be recorded for the “trained” group of instructors as well as for an “untrained” group (control group) of instructors. These groups could then be compared and students’ perceptions measured to test the effectiveness of the training.
Another area of future research that could extend these findings to determine how students would respond to negative politeness (that they suggest they want) would be to establish an experimental design in which instructors are asked to provide comments that represent negative politeness and then have another set of instructors provide nothing but positive politeness messages. Researchers could then look to see how students in each of the groups respond to the feedback they receive from instructors. Such a study would help scholars identify whether or not students would be truly satisfied with this level of feedback.

Beyond considering students’ face needs in regards to written feedback, scholars should explore these needs in student/teacher face-to-face interaction. These interactions could occur during an in-class discussion, during a student/teacher conflict, or during the instructors’ office hours. What face saving strategies, if any, do instructors utilize during face-to-face interaction with their students? Does the dynamic of the conversation determine what types of face management techniques are employed? Many questions remain.

This research provides a greater understanding of what types of written feedback instructors are providing their students, as well as the types of comments the students themselves would like to receive. Written feedback plays a crucial role in the learning process. Proper use of feedback can empower the student to make improvements and thus learn from the speaking experience. This research provides instructors with a good foundation to improve their ability to give students the kind of written feedback that promotes student learning.
REFERENCES


The notion of students tutoring students has had a long history within both formal and in informal learning environments. With roots dating back to before the first century, evidence suggests that even Aristotle used peer leaders to assist with his teaching (Wagner, 1982). A review of contemporary literature indicates that peer tutoring, or peer facilitation as it is sometimes referred, has been implemented, developed, and researched in K through 12 (Boland-Willms, 1991; Fischer, 1999-2000; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Karns, 2001; Gaustad, 1993; Mathes, Howard, Allen, & Fuchs, 1998; Myrick & Bowman; 1991; Olmscheid, 1999) as well as in higher education (Cafarella & Barnett, 2000; Martin & Arendale, 1992; Saunders, 1992; Smith, 2000; Sniad; 2000). The structure and goals of peer facilitation programs vary from institution to institution. Some are informal and uncomplicated, and simply link students who perform well academically with those who do not. Others require peers to provide each other with feedback on academic work. In more structured models, tutors are trained specifically for the role.

Peer tutors have also been used extensively within the communication discipline to enhance students’ learning experiences (Hill, 1981; Webb & Lane, 1986). In fact, peer facilitators have played an integral role in

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the development, execution, and growth of communication laboratories as a pedagogical learning model (Alley-Young, 2000; Brann-Barrett & Sulliman, 2002; Grice & Cronin, 1992; Hobgood, 2000; Morreale, 1994; Rolls, 1998; Sulliman & Brann-Barrett, 1999.) The overarching goal of communication labs is to provide a context where students can learn experientially. This comes in the form of one-on-one interactions, or small group sessions where the peer facilitator works with students to help them enhance their understanding of communication. Sometimes communication labs consist of large groups of students that come together specifically to engage in experiential learning exercises. Regardless of how communication labs are set up, they typically feature peer facilitators, peer assistants, or peer consultants (depending on the individual characteristics or goal of the lab) to help fellow students.

Attendance at communication labs can help students attain a variety of communication skills. Research has demonstrated that students respond well to experiential learning labs and learn to integrate concepts at the cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels (Rolls, 1993). Clements (1995) notes that students who are exposed to experiential learning rate the value of and their interest in the subject matter higher than do lecture students and, they find experiential learning instructors more courteous and considerate than traditional lecturers. Further, both females and males learn equally well in communication labs (Rolls, 1997).

Not only do students, or tutees, respond well to the experiential learning that occurs in communication labs, there is research to suggest that tutors or peer facilitators also gain from the experience (Gaustad, 1993; Gen-
Peer Facilitation Benefits

In fact, Topping (1996) notes the potential for mutual benefits to be derived for both the tutee and the tutor when he defines peer tutoring as “people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by teaching” (p. 322). However, there is little to no research that examines the benefits that peer facilitators who run small group communication labs actually receive. Given the recent proliferation of interest in (Burnette, 1998; Ellis, Shockley-Zalabak, Hackman, 2000; Morreale, 2001; Ratcliffe & Hudson, 1987) and numbers of peer facilitators who participate in such centers, a study examining the benefits of tutoring for peer facilitators would be useful and relevant for communication pedagogy. From a more practical perspective, information garnered by the study could prove valuable to communication departments wishing to develop labs. If it can be demonstrated that such models are mutually beneficial to students and facilitators, institutions may be more willing to invest finances and human resources in this endeavor. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceived benefits that peer facilitators receive as a result of facilitating communication labs that consist of small experiential learning groups. Specifically, the research question was: What benefits do peer facilitators derive from the peer facilitation process?
METHOD

This study was intended as a preliminary exploration of the benefits derived from peer facilitation. For this reason, focus groups were used to collect descriptive data. According to Lederman (1990), focus group interviews allow for the generation of rich data. She endorses focus groups as a data collection tool for assessing educational effectiveness in that if you want to know how students are doing, ask them. Further, the dynamic created among group participants is often greater than the sum of the individuals.

Participants

Participants consisted of ten former peer facilitators who had worked in an undergraduate communication lab between September, 1998 and April, 2002. Peer facilitators were male and female upper level students who maintained a 70 average (equivalent to a 3.0 grade point average). The number of semesters each participant worked in the lab varied from one to six, thus representing both repeat and one-time-only peer facilitators. At the time the focus groups were conducted, the facilitators had graduated within the past two years.

Because focus groups are not selected by random sampling (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001, p. 19), fifteen former peer facilitators were invited to participate in the study. While all were willing, five could not attend due to scheduling conflicts. The peer facilitators in this study satisfy what Krueger (1998) refers to as “purposeful” sampling, whereby the researcher selects
participants based on the purpose of the study” (p. 71). The goal of the focus groups was to learn about the benefits of peer facilitating. Clearly, only those having had the experience could engage in such a discussion. This control of the group composition is referred to as segmentation (Morgan, 1997) and is related to homogeneity. For best results, focus group samplings should be homogeneous in focus experience but not in attitudes (Morgan, 1997). As Lederman (1990) notes, “It is the “group-of-like-kind” context which creates the freedom to discuss thoughts, feelings, and behaviors candidly” (p. 118) and, it is this interaction among participants that makes the data unique (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 58).

The lab sessions conducted by peer facilitators are a mandatory component of the two basic communication courses (Introduction to Interpersonal Communication and Introduction to Public Communication) that are delivered at the university. Students meet in regularly scheduled, small groups of five to seven participants and engage in experiential learning activities, practice for upcoming graded classroom performances, and complete subjective reflective journals of their lab experiences. Along with facilitating weekly lab sessions, peer facilitators provide extensive written and verbal assessments of their students’ participation, assess their students’ subjective reflective journals, and maintain their students’ files and records (Brann-Barrett, 2001). Facilitators also maintain detailed logs of each session they facilitate and these are reviewed regularly by the lab coordinator. Peer facilitators receive on-going training through attendance at weekly meetings. Each of these components helps to maintain a well-developed, fine-tuned peer facilitation program.
Focus Group Format

Two focus groups, each consisting of five peer facilitators and lasting approximately two hours, were held in the Communication Lab. The size of the groups is in keeping with social science research where the goal is to generate depth of information. Larger groups can inhibit discussion and self-disclosure, and be difficult to moderate (Bloor et al., 2001). Participants were provided total disclosure about the purpose of the study and each read and signed a consent form prior to participation. Sessions were audio taped to ensure accuracy in recording comments. As is also recommended (Krueger, 1994, 1998; Kirby & McKenna, 1989), verbal and written field notes were made both during and after each session. These included first impressions, notes pertaining to the kinds of responses that emerged, and observation of communication climate and nonverbal cues. Krueger (1998) advises that focus groups be conducted until a level of theoretical saturation has been reached; that is, until emergent themes became redundant. Kirby and McKenna (1989) refer to this phenomenon as “saturation of information” (p. 123). The researchers were satisfied that this had occurred.

Questions. The focus groups were conducted by one of the researchers and a moderately scheduled question format served as a guide (See Appendix A). Lederman (1990) states that questions used in focus groups should enable the researcher to answer the research question. Given that this was a preliminary inquiry into perceived benefits of facilitating, questions that could provide such information were developed. Although the questions were not pilot tested per se, potential study participants
were asked to review the guide for clarity and to suggest any questions that might be useful.

Questions focused on how the peer facilitators’ experience affected participants’ role as students, understanding of communication theory, application process for further education, impact on career choice, professional life, and personal life. Facilitators were also given an opportunity to engage in informal group discussions pertinent to the subject matter.

**Analysis**

Focus group data can be analyzed in a variety of ways (Bloor et al., 2001; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Krueger, 1994, 1998b; Lederman, 1990; Morgan, 1997). The system used for this study was adapted from those described by Nelson (1989), Krueger (1994; 1998), and Bloor et al. (2001). It consisted of three phases: transcription, organization (coding), and interpretation. First, a transcription-based copy (Krueger, 1994; 1998) of the focus groups was made. The data were transcribed verbatim and nonverbal vocal cues were recorded as well. This script served as the basis for the organization and interpretation stages of analysis.

In the organization phase, the data are coded (Morgan, 1997) or indexed (Bloor et al, 2001). Aubel (1994) writes that: “Qualitative data are not neatly compartmentalized as are quantitative data. Data collectors are sometimes overwhelmed with the absence of order in the mass of data which they have collected. The coding process aims to organize the data in relation to the specific objectives of the study” (p.46). Bloor et al. (2001) note that index codes are broad at the onset and
become more focused as the analysis continues. In this study, responses were first computer color-coded according to the three overarching and interwoven benefits that were probed during the focus group discussions: academic, professional, and personal benefits. These topics were emphasized by participants in both groups and suggest what Morgan (1997) refers to as ‘group-to-group validation’ (p. 63). He writes that, “...whenever a topic comes up, it generates a consistent level of energy among a consistent proportion of the participants across nearly all the groups” (p.63).

After the initial color-coding into these broad topics, the data were copied and pasted into corresponding organized response files. Each file was then re-organized and further refined into emergent sub-categories of the perceived benefits, which were also color-coded and number labeled. Once these steps were completed, the original transcript was reviewed to ensure that descriptors and comments were considered within the context they were delivered. Further, fieldnotes were also reviewed as they contained nonverbal observations and comments regarding the communication climate among the participants. When the emergent sub-categories were examined, it became evident that the benefits of engaging in the peer facilitator process might be grouped in terms of self-development, skill acquisition, and external rewards. These are further explained in the results section.

**Validity**

Steps were taken at each phase of the research process to ensure that the results would be a valid reflection
of participants’ responses (Krueger, 1998). For instance, before the focus groups were conducted, potential participants reviewed the questions. During the actual group discussions, the moderator summarized participants’ responses, provided “internal summaries,” (Lederman, 1990), sought clarification when necessary, and provided ample opportunity for addition comments, particularly at the end of the sessions. During the analysis, attention was also given to the context of the content and the accompanying nonverbal cues. These steps were deemed important in the analysis because they helped to create an accurate summary of the focus group conversations.

**RESULTS**

In the final analysis of the data where themes are reduced and combined to further understand and interpret student comments, it became evident that engaging in the peer facilitation process resulted in three major outcomes: self-development, skill acquisition, and external rewards. These results are explained and illustrated in this section.

**Self-Development**

The emergence of the sub-themes suggests that peer facilitators developed and matured as a result of the experience. For instance, they reported feeling a new sense of belonging, an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence, more respect for themselves and others, and an increased desire to succeed.
Peer Facilitation Benefits

**Sense of belonging.** Prior to becoming lab facilitators, many felt a sense of detachment. However, as a result of the experience, they stated that they felt a stronger connection with the university, as is demonstrated in the following comment.

Being a facilitator has allowed me to have that sense of community and to feel like I was part of the university. I was a student 3 years before I became a facilitator. I was always a good student but I felt a kind of distance from the university. I didn’t really know what was going on and I wanted to find out what the university was all about because I was detached somewhat. Facilitation provided that sense of community.

Many facilitators also said they saw themselves as representatives of the university and the Communication Department. For instance, comments such as, “It definitely gave me a greater perspective on the university and more appreciation for it. I feel I became a representative for the institution,” or “As facilitators, you are representatives of the department and of the university and you should try to be a good representative” exemplify this response. So too does the following statement:

I always felt like a little bit of a recruiter. I’d hear myself saying to lab students, “And if you want to learn more about this, take this or that communication class!” Because I had the knowledge I could talk about topics they brought up and I could answer the questions they had and then suggest they take an upper level course.
Peer Facilitation Benefits

Increased self-esteem and self-confidence. As the peer facilitators experienced positive changes in their self-esteem, their self-confidence increased. The two benefits were clearly interrelated. All the participants echoed the following comment.

The self-esteem and the confidence alone are amazing! I have learned just how much I can do! People say to me, “You always look so confident.” When people tell you, “You look so confident, and you seem to really know what you are doing,” you begin to say “Wow! I can really do this.”

Increased respect for self and others. Facilitators reported that they gained more respect for themselves and also for others.

As a peer facilitator, you learn how to respect yourself and if you already respect yourself, you learn how to show that you respect yourself. Your relationship with yourself grows too. You develop your self-concept and learn how to love yourself. You figure yourself out and how you communicate and how you show the world who you are.

Facilitators also said they felt less intimidated by people in positions of authority, because as they pointed out, as peer facilitators, they held positions of authority and quickly learned that arrogance and domination are not synonymous with authority. In the lab, they encouraged relationships with students based on mutual respect. As one participant remarked: “We’ve learned about positions of authority. We know you can have a position of authority and not be authoritative.”

Peer facilitators stated that along with the development of a better sense of self, they became more sensi-
tive to the needs of others, and they have become more aware of how gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, and other issues of diversity play out in the communication process. They became more open-minded and approachable. In particular, they noted that the facilitation experiences made them more empathetic toward professors. They became aware of the degree of preparation that professors must engage in, the amount of time they spend grading and evaluating, and the anxieties they must sometimes feel in the classroom. They also said it was important to realize that most of their professors do care about their students. “A lot of students think, ‘What does the professor care...I’m the one paying for this.’ But after facilitating I know they do care. It bothers me if a lab student doesn’t do well.” The peer facilitators also expressed that it bothered them when their professors were not treated respectfully.

I used to think it wasn’t a big deal for a professor to get in front of a class and teach, but after being in the lab situation, having facilitated myself, it allows me to look at professors in a whole new way. They might get nervous before they go to class and I had never thought about that. In one of the bigger classes I was in, the students always talked during lectures and did not show the professor any respect and that really bothered me because I knew how it felt. I used to think they got up there, they weren’t nervous, and it didn’t bother them if you didn’t want to listen but now I know it does and it is distracting to them when they are trying to get across this information and people aren’t helping them.

*Increased Desire to Succeed.* Peer facilitators reported that they became more motivated, disciplined,
perseverant, and focused as a result of their experience. They developed critical thinking and reflection abilities. They came to appreciate the importance of preparation, creativity, and hard work in the learning process. They also expressed this as an increased desire to succeed academically. They recognized they had to earn credibility with the lab students and the communication department faculty. Hence, facilitators felt compelled to excel.

For my first three years, I was basically a student who just wanted to have fun. I didn’t want to go to all my classes. I didn’t really care. I find that since I’ve become a facilitator, I have become more mature. I mean, if I have one of my lab students in one of my other classes, I can’t say, “I’m not going to that class today” because how will that look? How am I going to get the respect of the students in my lab if I only go to other classes once in a while? I found that being a facilitator made me a better student and I became very mature very quickly. I wanted the respect of my students.

In addition to the desire to succeed, participants felt they had acquired a better understanding of communication theory. They attributed this to the time spent reviewing communication theories in preparation for lab sessions, explaining those theories to their students, and engaging in discussion about the theories during their lab sessions. They also spent a substantial amount of time talking about communication theory when they attended their peer facilitators’ meetings and during informal dialogue with fellow facilitators.

When I took upper level interpersonal I was facilitating introductory interpersonal communication labs at
the same time so it was like I was getting extra help. And I could give the lab students a little more.... When I was doing 3 or 4 labs a week I was spending an extra 3 or 4 hours a week on interpersonal concepts. I was refreshing my own knowledge of the theories in lab, bringing it to class, then bringing what I did in class back to lab.

Peer facilitators also felt they continued to learn about the theory as they observed and listened to their lab students.

It placed the communication theory in a new perspective. In my mind, it made me see things differently. I think taking the basic courses gave me a basic understanding. But before I facilitated every lab I would review the information; I already knew it but I would refresh my understanding. And when I would watch the lab students doing the activities I would actually see how it all fits together. It’s great when you do it yourself as a lab student but then to see your students doing it…it just all fit together. It’s another level of understanding.

The overall self-development experienced by the facilitators made them feel better about themselves and others, and enhanced their commitment to the institution and to their educational success. These results are consistent with the literature in that a positive correlation has been demonstrated between self-esteem and academic success at the elementary level of education (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McLellan, 2000; Kugle & Clements, 1981, McInerney & Marsh, 2000) as well as at the postsecondary level (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Foster, 1998; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Further, it has been shown that extracurricular involvement also has a
positive influence on academic commitment (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994; Finn, 1989; March & Kleitman, 2002) and so too is retention associated with self-esteem and academic success (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Given the association between self-esteem, self-confidence, and involvement with academic success and retention, it would appear that the self-development experienced by peer facilitators could positively influence their overall success at university.

**Skill Acquisition**

In addition to an overall self-improvement, peer facilitators reported an improvement in their communication skills. Specifically, they noted improvements in their public speaking abilities, their interpersonal relationships, and in some miscellaneous areas that included time management, critical thinking, and conflict management. The essence of their discussion on these matters is explained next.

*Improved public speaking skills.* Peer facilitators were very much aware of their improved public speaking skills. The time they spent facilitating their lab groups provided ample opportunity for improvement. However, they attributed their enhanced speaking abilities to a decrease in their own communication apprehension levels. Further, a greater awareness of their communication styles and the strides they made to improve their weaknesses also proved beneficial both personally and professionally. This is illustrated in the following remarks.

When I got to the advanced level of public speaking, the fact that I had facilitated made me feel so much
more comfortable and confident and I was a much better presenter.

I perform as a musician and I used to get up and just mumble and then play a song and then mumble again. I felt after facilitating there was some sort of a confidence that built up in me. Learning how to communicate with people and knowing that in order for people to get it, and for them to understand why you are standing up there, you have to be able to tell them. It helped me in that way. I don't mumble into the microphone anymore. My mother watched me perform and she said, “I can tell you are a communication student!”

Their improved public speaking skills were also evident in other courses. The comments below demonstrate this.

I was always doing group work and making presentations in my business classes. In the beginning, I was shy and nervous. But now I feel so much better when I give presentations and I do a better job. I know it was facilitating in the lab that helped me improve.

When I think of all the classes I took this year, I can honestly say that I do not think I would have done as well in those classes had I not been facilitating and its simply because many of my classes were very interactive and we were expected to get up and talk about a certain aspect of what we were covering and I don’t think I would have been able to do that as well had I not been a facilitator. In one of the classes there was a lot of small group work and being able to talk in a group and being able to lead a group and keep the discussion focused on the topic at hand I think I definitely learned that from being a facilitator. So I know
Peer Facilitation Benefits

for a fact I would not have done as well in my other classes.

Improved interpersonal skills. Peer facilitators also reported the development of their interpersonal communication skills. In particular, they said that they had better interpersonal communication with families and friends, with the peer facilitators, and with individuals in authority positions. This is discussed below.

Peer facilitation had a positive impact on the personal relationships of the participants. This created a ripple effect that benefited their families and friends.

It [peer facilitating] does a lot for you personally. It has benefited my relationships, not just the friendships I’ve made here, but at the family level- whether it be with my fiancé, my mother, or my daughter. So, it’s not just me personally who has benefited. I think the impact on my family is positive as a result.

Interactions with friends change. You’re able to listen and you’re able to be more sympathetic and you’re able to get people out of tough times. There are a lot of times in your life when you need to call upon your communication skills to help somebody or to help yourself... or ask for help. People will come up to me and unload all kinds of stuff because they know I won’t judge. You learn how to just listen, which is an extremely important skill.

I don’t know if my relationship with my boyfriend over the past four years would have been as strong as it is if I hadn’t learned so much about relationships through this experience, like how to talk about things, how to go about things as a communicator.
Along with improvements in existing relationships, peer facilitators spoke highly of the friendships they developed with fellow facilitators. Many felt these relationships were unique because they were grounded in positive interpersonal communication principles.

Everyone [peer facilitators] is so supportive. There is no begrudging each other. When something good happens to one of us we feel, “Good for you, you deserve it.” We had these qualities coming in but they become reinforced by each other and our professors.

The group of peer facilitators covered an age span of forty years. Some were married, some were single or widowed, some had children and some had grandchildren. They were male and female and came from a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and different sexual orientations. These differences appear to have enriched the friendships among peer facilitators and did not seem to deter any peer facilitator from reaching out to another. The common link among the peer facilitators was their passion for the communication discipline. They worked to embody the communication ideals they were learning and sharing with their lab students.

We are so excited that we found each other. We all have this same sort of knowledge and passion and it just clicks! Something happens in the first facilitator workshop of the year when we are all there together.

These are relationships that develop because we are all facilitators and there is mutual respect. We all have a sense of pride about what we are doing. These are mature relationships, long-term friendships that come from the mutual respect and pride we all have.
Peer Facilitation Benefits

*Relationships with people of authority.* Increased confidence and the acquisition of new interpersonal skills had far reaching benefits that proved significant in the lives of these facilitators. One benefit came from the peer facilitators’ increased confidence when communicating with people in positions of authority. Specifically, a number of the participants indicated they now had more effective relationships with their physicians. The comment below was followed by a chorus of similar testaments.

I’m better able to communicate with my own doctor…I was faced with a medical concern over the past year and, if I didn’t have this communication experience, I wouldn’t have had the courage to say to my doctor: “You have to hurry up and help me!” For me to sit down with my doctor a couple of years ago and insist he do something for me…I couldn’t do that. Now I can say, “If you are suggesting this treatment, what is it going to do to me, how will it affect my body?” Before I would go to the doctor, he’d give me a prescription for something, and I wouldn’t question anything. I have learned how to ask the questions and be forceful. I know how to probe. I know how to delve deeper. I know that’s an incredible personal benefit.

Peer facilitators also indicated they were more confident when interacting with professors. Asking a professor for extra help or grade clarification, for example, can be a daunting experience for a student. Peer facilitators recognized they have the confidence to do that.

I think we are very fortunate to have confidence and we sometimes take it for granted. When students come to me with a problem I will suggest they talk to
their professor and they say, “I can’t talk to my professor!”

Miscellaneous skill development. At the end of the focus group sessions, peer facilitators were invited to list the skills they had developed as a result of their facilitation experience. In addition to those described in this section, they noted time management skills, problem solving skills, and conflict management skills. They also said they learned to be more adaptable and flexible in new situations and they thought they had developed their critical thinking and reflection abilities.

In all, it makes sense that students would improve their public speaking and interpersonal skills because these topics are the focus of the two basic courses that the communication labs accompany. Peer facilitators would have learned and practiced such skills on a continual basis throughout the semester. In some instances, facilitators conducted up to four labs per week per term over a two-year period. Their enhanced skills are in keeping with Cress’s (2001) research. She found that students who participated in educational and training programs showed a growth in their understanding of leadership skills, multicultural and cultural awareness, and personal and societal values.

External Rewards

The final major outcome of the perceived benefits received by engaging in the peer facilitation process can be classified as external rewards. Facilitators expressed that they felt better prepared for graduate studies and to compete in the job market. These are described below.
Success in further educational endeavors. The peer facilitators clearly indicated that they felt better prepared for post baccalaureate education.

I plan to go on and get my Masters and I think my facilitation experience will allow me to be a competitive candidate. Not everybody gets to facilitate.

I think the reason I was accepted into a Bachelor of Education program was because of my facilitation experience.

They told me it [facilitation experience] was the reason I was accepted into a B.Ed program.

Increased employment opportunities. Facilitators stated that the skills they acquired as peer facilitators proved useful when it came time to seek other forms of employment. In many instances, they said it was the facilitation experience that allowed them to secure jobs.

Recently I went for a job interview and they saw peer facilitation on my resume and asked me about it. I began to tell them what I did and they were fascinated with it. They couldn’t believe it! It was definitely a selling point. I know it helped me get that job. When they see that your university trusted you enough to do this and thought enough of you to allow you to be a facilitator, it speaks a lot for you as a mature, responsible individual. It definitely helped me get that job.

I went to see someone last week to help me prepare a cover letter for my resume and as soon as he saw that I was a peer facilitator he said, “This definitely has to be in there! Put this in bold letters right in the cover letter!”

It was suggested that benefits not only came from the actual facilitating, but also from the networks facili-
tators develop through their experiences in the lab environment.

I think it’s the opportunities that are presented to us when we are peer facilitators, not only in careers and getting a job, but it’s that immediate credibility we have. We form networks in the community as a result of being part of the Communication Department. We are given so many opportunities to develop a network.

Facilitators explained that they felt their professors, in particular their communication professors, were eager to recommend them for jobs and to offer positive letters of reference for admittance into advanced academic programs. Facilitators were also invited to participate in volunteer and paid communication training workshops, both on campus and in the greater community. This further enhanced their credibility and offered them more extensive experience and professional development.

Success in further educational endeavors could be connected to peer facilitators’ commitment to academic success and to their skill development – both of which make them better candidates for a variety of educational pursuits. In terms of increased employment opportunities, the importance of having public speaking, interpersonal, and leadership abilities in the workplace has been documented (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Fallows & Steven, 2000; Krzystofik & Fein, 1998; Messmer, 1999; and Parvis, 2001).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The perceived significance of the peer facilitation experience for the participants in this study is evident.
Similarly, many of the derived benefits identified in this study are also in keeping with other research in the area of peer tutoring. Olmscheid (1999) suggests that peer tutors increase their confidence and develop a sense of responsibility. As well, they improve their own knowledge base. Stauf (1999) noted that peer tutors reap personal rewards from the peer tutoring experience. Gaustad (1993) cited improved thinking and communication skills among peer tutors in a one-on-one setting. It appears that many of these benefits also reflect the experiences of peer facilitators who work with small groups.

What is also apparent is that although these descriptive themes are presented in a linear fashion, the outcomes experienced by the peer facilitators seem to be intertwined and connected. Self-development may lead to the type of skill acquisition described by the participants. And, there could be a link between self-development and skills acquisition and the kinds of external rewards reported by peer facilitators. Further investigation into the possibility of a causal relationship among the outcomes could result in the development of a model that depicts how the outcomes are related.

It should be noted that these peer facilitators worked within a well-developed program. Similar results may not emerge if peer facilitators are not given the necessary training, support, encouragement, and direction. We suggest that it is essential for coordinators of peer facilitator programs to remember that facilitators are students themselves and need the same considerations as the students they facilitate. When a peer facilitation program is soundly developed, consistently critiqued, and strengthened as is deemed necessary, all
vested parties can benefit from a rewarding experiential learning experience.

This study serves as a preliminary research project for other more in-depth academic endeavors. Future research may include a longitudinal study that investigates peer facilitation experiences. Speaking to former peer facilitators 5 to 10 years after the experience may provide valuable insight as to whether or not the benefits of the experience were long-term and, if so, under what circumstances. It would also be interesting to conduct a gender analysis of the perceived benefits of peer facilitation. Finally, given that this is a preliminary study with a relatively small number of participants, a quantitative testing instrument might be developed from these results and administered to other groups of peer facilitators to determine if the results can be generalized.

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Peer Facilitation Benefits


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Peer Facilitation Benefits


APPENDIX A

QUESTION SCHEDULE

Participants will be asked to provide brief introductions indicating how long they worked as a peer facilitator and when they were employed in the lab

• Tell me what kind of impact your peer facilitation experience had on your role as a university student.

• What kind of effect, if any, did your work as a peer facilitator have on your a) understanding of communication theory and concepts, b) your understanding of theories and concepts in other disciplines?

• Has your peer facilitation experience proved beneficial when applying for postgraduate university or college programs? If so, give an example.

• Discuss whether or not your role as a peer facilitator had an impact on your career choices.

• Tell me if and how your peer facilitation experiences have affected your professional life.

• Tell me about some of the personal benefits you feel you have gained through you work as a peer facilitator.
Speech Laboratories: An Exploratory Examination of Potential Pedagogical Effects on Students

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“Any student that is going to give a speech in front of anyone could benefit from the speech lab.”

— John

Currently, universities, colleges and other places of higher education throughout the country are including public speaking courses in the general education curriculums. Scholars continue to develop, test, and implement different strategies in order to better assist students enrolled in these courses. A new trend, that is gaining popularity within the communication discipline, is the development of communication laboratories to supplement these courses. The above quote was from John, a black 18-year-old male student, who was enrolled in a basic public speaking course and had recently concluded a visit to a communication laboratory.

The communication labs (otherwise known as oral communication laboratories, speech labs, speaking labs, speaker labs, etc.) are designed to specifically assist students enrolled in basic public speaking and commu-
nunication courses. Morreale (2001) states that these laboratories are beneficial because they support student attitude-change and the development of multiple communication skills. Additionally, Morreale, Ellis, & Mares-Dean (1992) indicate that these facilities provide assistance to students enrolled in basic public speaking courses by acting as supplemental tools for the students enrolled in these courses. Speech labs provide students with a facility to practice and videotape speeches (Teitelbaum, 2000) as well as receive verbal, written and videotaped feedback from monitors (otherwise known as lab attendees) working in the lab. Before communication labs can be fully endorsed, an in-depth analysis exploring the pedagogical effects of these labs on students must first be conducted. The purpose of the current research study is to contribute qualitatively to this ongoing analysis.

**RATIONALE**

Recently, more and more academic institutions are beginning to develop versions of speech laboratories to provide assistance to students enrolled in basic public speaking courses. A list of academic institutions that currently have a functioning speech or communication laboratory include, but is not limited to, Columbus State University, East Tennessee State University, Golden West College, Ithaca College, Luther College, San Jose State University, College of San Mateo, the College of William & Mary, Southwest Texas State University, and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (Morreale, 2001). Other labs have been developed at Butler
University, Depauw University, Hampden-Sydney College, Illinois State University, Mary Washington College, Mount Holyoke College, University of Central Arkansas, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of North Texas, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Richmond. Again, this list is not all-inclusive but it does indicate that the development of speech/communication labs is gaining momentum throughout the country.

One reason behind this increased development of speech laboratories is the recognition by educators, department chairs, and universities that there is a growing need for an out-of-class facility that provides students an opportunity to hone their public speaking skills. Previous scholars have echoed these sentiments. Ellis (1995) states that an instructional environment conducive to increasing students’ self-perception is attainable through the establishment of one-on-one speech laboratories. The lab environment promotes student goal-setting, accountability interviews, skill coaching for upcoming speeches, as well as various forms of feedback (e.g. video, written, and verbal) (Ellis, 1995). Additionally, Morreale (2001) found that speech labs also have the capacity to provide individual coaching and training to students for a wide range of communication skills (speaking, listening, interviewing, speech preparation, outlining, Internet research skills, etc.).

However, even though these labs are being developed at academic institutions throughout the nation, very little empirical research focusing on the labs’ pedagogical implications has been conducted. According to Owens, Hunt, and Simonds (2000), “Only a handful of studies have been conducted regarding the academic
benefits of participation in speech laboratories” (p. 2). The few studies that have been conducted, however, have attempted to investigate the effects of lab participation on student retention (Brownell & Watson, 1984), peer feedback (audio/visual) on communication skills (Berube, 1988), skill-competency (Ratliffe, 1984), and public speaking anxiety (McKiernan, 1984). More recent research has shifted focus towards the efficacy and enhancement of students’ classroom performance (Hunt & Simonds, 2002) as well as the potential benefits labs may have on an academic institution as a whole (Hobgood, 2000).

The previous research, all taking a similar perspective on this topic, has examined the speech laboratories’ effects on students from the researcher’s perspective. Very little research has been dedicated to examining speech laboratories and its’ effects from a student’s perspective. The current research study will attempt to fill in this existing gap in the research by examining speech laboratories from several students’ points of view. This research will be an exploratory investigation focusing on what students perceive to be the effects and implications of one specific speech laboratory that they had attended.

Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, We feel that the most appropriate and useful method to fully capture the students’ perspective on this topic is through a qualitative research analysis, specifically in-depth, student interviews. The decision to use this qualitative research method over some other quantitative analysis is supported by the argument that qualitative studies are more useful because they provide more rich, detailed descriptions of the human experience as
participants feel it (Sherman & Webb, 1990). Lindlof (1995) may have made the best argument for using qualitative research methods, such as interviews, for situations like the current study on speech laboratories. He states that in qualitative research, researchers interview people in order to “understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyze certain kinds of discourse” (p. 5).

In the current study, in-depth interviews allowed the students to generate the issues they felt were most important from their visit to the speech laboratory. The interviews were structured in a manner that gave the students an open opportunity to freely discuss their thoughts, feelings, and reactions (either positive, negative, or neutral) towards the speech laboratory. Due to the exploratory nature of the current research study and the limited prior research focusing on this topic, only one research question was developed to provide a starting point and a guide for the student interviews:

RQ1: What perceptions do students who are enrolled in basic public speaking courses have of speech laboratories?
METHOD

Participants

The participants were randomly selected from a list of students who had attended a speech laboratory at a large, Midwestern university. Each participant’s instructor was informed of their student’s selection and gave permission to the researcher to proceed with the student interview. Participants were individually contacted and asked to participate in the interview, which lasted approximately thirty minutes. The resulting sample consisted of six females and four males. Nine participants were 18 years old and the remaining participant was age 31. Six participants were Caucasian and four were African-American. Nine of the participants were freshmen and had visited the speech laboratory only once during the school semester.

Data Collection

The interviews followed a semi-structured design format that allowed the participants to introduce concepts and themes with limited direction from the researcher. Sample interview questions, ordered chronologically, were created beforehand to help guide the participants through the interview, but they were open-ended in nature, which allowed the participants the flexibility to comment on anything they deemed important. Because we wanted to gain a students’ perspective on the speech lab, free of influence from my own past research on this topic, we made a personal obligation...
not to ask questions during the interview that indicated or introduced any pre-conceived categories about the speech lab. Our interview questions strictly adhered to this rule, which allowed us the option of developing themes and categories inductively through this research. The actual interview protocol was divided into six sections of chronological questions:

**Demographic Questions.** The first portion of the interview consisted of standardized demographic questions for the participants. Participants were asked to provide their full name (changed to pseudonyms for publication), age, gender, race/ethnicity, and year in school (freshman, sophomore, etc.). Additionally, the participants were asked to indicate the number of times they had visited the speech lab during the current semester.

**“Grand Tour” Questions.** Each participant was asked several “grand tour” questions (Lindlof, 1995) simply asking them to describe their speech lab visit, from when they initially signed up for a lab appointment until they finished their speech presentation and exited the lab. These questions allowed the participants to bring up any details, feelings, or suggestions about the lab that they felt were important. Once a concept was mentioned, additional and more pointed questions were asked about those topics.

**“Before Lab Visit” Questions.** Participants were asked to describe their emotions, feelings, and expectations of the lab before the actual lab visit. Flexible time-frame boundaries were placed on this question, which allowed the participants to comment on anything they felt from the first day of the course semester until the
moment before they walked into the speech laboratory for their appointment.

“During Lab Visit” Questions. These questions asked the participants to discuss their feelings about the speech laboratory during their actual speech presentation. Anything that occurred, during this specific time frame was free for the participants to comment on.

“Immediately After Lab Visit” Questions. The participants were once again asked to reveal their thoughts, about the lab or themselves immediately after the speech lab appointment. The boundary for this section is more vague in the sense that the participants could comment on anything from how they felt seconds after finishing the lab appointment, to while they were filling out the current speech laboratory assessment form, to several days after the speech lab visit. This gave the participants the opportunity to determine what should be considered “immediately after the lab visit.”

“Long-Term Effects of the Speech Lab” Questions. The last section of open-ended questions focused on what the participants felt were the long-term effects of the lab. No arbitrary guidelines were set in place for these questions, which allowed the participants the option of commenting on any effect that they experienced or could potentially experience.

**Procedure**

Upon arrival for the interviews, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form, which included information explaining the research topic, withdrawing from the study, and confidentially. Additionally, this form indicated that the interviews would
be audio taped and transcribed verbatim. All ten participants agreed to sign this form. Each participant was interviewed and recorded in a private, campus room by the researcher, who was a graduate student at the time.

**Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967; see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and content analyzed. First, all transcripts were read to get an overview of categories that needed to be included for each item. The overview broke the transcripts into three distinct stages that closely resembled the last four sections of the interview question protocol: Before Lab Visit, During Lab Visit, and Impressions of Speech Lab. Participant phrases and ideas from the interview transcripts were unitized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Second, these independent participant responses, identified by brackets, were coded and grouped together into categories (Baxter, 1991). Third, the categories of participant responses were analyzed for similarities and regrouped together according to the three stages of the speech laboratory developed from the transcripts. Fourth, these categories were examined for emerging themes or connective relationships.

**Results**

When a student visits a speech laboratory, there is a chronological order of steps that occurs, typically beginning with students signing up for their speech lab ap-
pointments. They then come back to the lab at the scheduled appointment time and actually present their speech. Feedback is provided, the students then exit the lab, and within days they present their speech in the classroom. Due to this progression of events, interviews were structured to examine these steps chronologically. The participant responses were placed into three distinct stages of the speech lab process. The stages, corresponding to the last four sections (stage 3 is a combination of sections 5 and 6) of the interview protocol detailed above, are: Before Lab Visit, During Lab Visit, and Impressions of Speech Lab. In this section, all themes and categories that have emerged within these stages are listed, defined, and supported with interview data.

**Stage 1: Before Lab Visit**

*Nervousness.* The first major theme that developed within the “Before Lab Visit” stage was nervousness. Almost every participant mentioned experiencing nervousness at some point before going to the speech lab for his or her presentation. The nervousness experienced by the participants is broad and multi-layered. A variety of categories emerging within this theme represent the participants’ various experiences with nervousness. Deb, a black, 18-year-old female expressed several reasons why she was nervous about giving her speech in the lab.

Deb: I was nervous because I had never really given a speech before...of this magnitude...[and] I knew I had to do well on in order to get a decent grade in the course, ...I was nervous because even though I knew
it wasn’t for a grade [in the lab]... I was still nervous because I had to get up in front of somebody and give my speech and stay within the time limit.

Matthew, a white, 18-year-old male mentioned that his nervousness was natural and having a prepared speech lab attendee made him feel better about the speech.

Matthew: Well, I was a little nervous because I am a nervous public speaker in general. But I thought it [the lab] would be helpful because the person seemed prepared to...you know, she timed it and she had the same evaluation form that our instructor used for the final grades so there was a sense of competency there, it’s not like they didn’t know what they were doing. They had a good idea of how to help us and what exactly we had to do for the speech.

These data help show the variety of reasons why participants were nervous. This nervousness would carry over into the actual speech presentations that the participants made during their speech lab visit as well. Further details of this carry over will be discussed in the upcoming stages of the speech lab process.

Student Expectations. The second main theme that emerged within the “Before Lab Visit” stage was student expectations. This theme simply refers to the expectations the students had about the speech lab before they arrived for their initial appointment. The major category that dominated this theme focused on the size of the speech lab. Several participants had different expectations about the actual size of the speech lab. These expectations, or in some cases, the violation of these expectations, prompted a range of reactions from the participants. For example, Paul, a white, 18-year-old male,
was expecting the speech lab to be small, but as states, the size made it more personal:

Paul: I didn’t really know too much about it, I went down there to sign up the first time, but I didn’t really see what it was like and a lot of people were telling me that the place I gave the speech was really small...so that was pretty much how I envisioned it, it was really small and really personal too.

Another participant, Lisa, a white, 18-year-old female, expected her speech lab presentation to take place in a large, auditorium. But, as with Paul, the change in setting from what she had anticipated actually improved her speech lab experience.

Lisa: Well, we were trying to think about what it [the speech lab] would be and me and my friends thought...[we] would be in an auditorium and [at] a podium talking...[in] like a big area and we didn’t know what to expect. And then we saw it was just this little room and it felt a lot more comfortable being...in an enclosed area.

**Stage 2: During Lab Visit**

The second stage was the most discussed stage by the participants. Four primary themes emerged from their responses: Nervousness, Speech Lab Setup, Feedback, and Speech Lab Attendees. Nervousness was comprised of two main categories, which included “Types of Nervousness” and the “Speech Lab’s Effects on Participants' Nervousness.”

*Types of Nervousness.* The participants identified several different types, different degrees, and causes of
their nervousness that occurred during the speech lab appointment. George, a white, 18-year-old male, indicated that his nervousness increased while he waited for the speech lab attendee’s feedback.

George: ...I got more nervous waiting for what she was going to say...when you look at an audience you can tell [if] they don’t care or if they liked it... but they all have to clap. In the speech lab they don’t have to clap...so it is more nerve wracking.

Sara, a white, 18-year-old female: ...During the speech I had to stop a couple of times because I was nervous and I couldn’t concentrate on my speech and it was just the thought of me being in the room by myself and hearing my own voice made me nervous.

Speech Lab’s Effects on Participants’ Nervousness. In conjunction with the many of types and causes of nervousness that were identified, the participants provided detailed information on how the lab affected that nervousness. For example, Matthew experienced less nervousness while in the speech lab because he went for his group speech presentation and was surrounded by his classmates.

Matthew: I think that the group presentation, among the three you have to give... is a little easier because...you are working with other people on it... there is a routine, so instead of one person freezing up and then having nowhere to go, he had other group members to help him out.

John, found that the speech lab attendee’s demeanor during his lab visit helped to reduce some of his anxiety that had built up before the speech lab appointment.
John: It boosted my ego a little bit, made me a little more comfortable...seeing a smiling face, listening to a subject she probably didn’t care about, helped me at least relax and actually have a good speech come off in a better form.

Sara, an 18-year-old, white female also experienced a positive lab environment because of the speech lab attendee.

Sara: But once I got in there...the lady [working in the lab]...made me very comfortable and...[was] encouraging [me] just to take my time and so once I got going with my speech...she kind of made it easier for me, just the whole comforting aspect of it.

Speech Lab Setup. The second major theme of the “During the Lab Visit” stage, focused on setup of the speech laboratory and how that affected the participants. One participant, Sara, described the lab in detail during the interview and believes that the setup was appropriate.

Sara: ...it was very comfortable, you know, they’re professional with the camera and the TV and the visual aid...I liked it.

Diagram 1 helps to frame Sara’s comments. The presentation room of the speech lab is approximately 12-feet wide by 15-feet long. Privacy was an issue that was identified with regards to the lab setup because it helped several participants to feel more comfortable during their appointment. Beth, an 18-year-old white female felt that the privacy helped to reduce her nervousness by keeping her isolated from other people in the lab waiting to present their speeches.
Beth: ...[I] was kind of isolated from... the other people doing their speeches...[and] if you are nervous, say you have a peer or a friend that is sitting out there, you don't really want them to see you and especially if you're nervous about [the speech] because it is your first time through, then [the setup] helps a lot.

John agreed that the privacy of the lab was positive aspect of his experience.

John: ...You are excluded from the front area [of the lab]...once you actually go into the speech area...[where] you are going to present your speech. So that privacy issue is there, which is good.

However, not all of the participants felt that the setup of the lab was completely beneficial. Kim, a black,
18-year-old female, felt that the camera placement for the videotaping could be improved.

Kim: ...When she was taping me, [the video camera] wasn't towards [me]...it was like towards the side of something so I wasn't actually looking at the camera and it was...on the side of my face so I think the camera should be moved to where the [lab attendee] would be sitting at...

Feedback. The third major theme that emerged during this stage was the feedback that was provided to the participants by the speech lab attendees. The responses focused primarily on the three types of feedback that they received in the lab (verbal, written, and video) and in what areas of the participants' speeches the feedback concentrated. Deb provided details on the type of feedback she received in the lab.

Deb: I was given a sheet [from the lab attendee] that graded me and gave me points on what I did right and what I did wrong and what I need to do in order to fulfill the requirements of my speech and it took about fifteen to twenty minutes to go through all that...she gave examples and even though she was not my teacher, she does teach the public speaking class...[and] she just told me ways that I could fix it....and ways that I could improve.

Jen, an 18-year-old, white female agreed that the feedback she received was helpful because it came from a knowledgeable source.

Jen: She gave... a lot of detailed information, actually. More than I expected...she looked at it more as a how a teacher would grade it and [gave] points that a teacher would give...that was really helpful.
Paul described how the feedback he received directly improved his speech.

Paul: It was specific, she analyzed specific parts of my speech she didn’t just say like your presentation was good and stuff, she said what was specific about it and what specific parts I needed to take out and she determined with me...whether or not these parts were vital to my speech.

The second aspect of the feedback category focused on what specific areas of the participants’ speeches were touched on by the speech lab attendee. Sara found that the feedback she received focused on her references and credibility statement.

Sara: She timed me and told me... I didn't cite my references in the right place and that I have no credibility sources, so I went home and checked on that...[and] she was right, so that helped a lot to.

John found that he received helpful feedback through the use of examples.

John: She gave me examples in detail, on past experiences that she had because I don’t know how many speeches she has critiqued, but I would say in the hundreds... so it was easy for her to critique a speech and use that to the students’ advantage and... honestly, her examples were definitely helpful in that aspect.

Speech Lab Attendees. The last major theme that emerged from the “During the Lab Visit” stage was the lab attendees and how they affected the participants’ experiences. Almost every participant acknowledged that the speech lab attendees were very friendly and professional, which significantly helped the participants...
during their lab visit. Lisa, found that the one characteristic of the attendee that made her feel more comfortable was having a relaxed attitude.

Lisa: Like how his attitude was, he was more...laid back... he helped us, he was joking around with us and was real fun...that made it more comfortable.

She also mentioned that she appreciated that the lab attendee talked to her as if they were equals.

Lisa: ...If the people who are working there are just more laid back and more friendly and just talk to you like they are at our level and don’t talk down to you, I think that is much more helpful than saying... you did this wrong or you did that wrong. I think if they talk to you on a mature level... it would help you a lot more than just stating what is right and wrong.

The overall effect that the speech lab attendees had on the participants seemed to greatly enhance their speech lab visit. Conversely, from this, it is reasonable to assume that if the speech lab attendees acted more negatively or less supportive towards the participants, their lab experience may also be directly affected. Further research is needed to fully grasp the effects that the lab attendees have on the students, but the current study’s findings is a productive start in this area.

**Stage 3: Impressions of Speech Lab**

Sections 5 and 6 of the interview process were combined to make up the last speech lab stage: Impressions of Speech Lab. Two primary themes emerged under this final stage: Benefits and Limitations of the speech lab. The main benefits of the speech lab focused on the par-
participants’ relief, the clarification of speech components, and the practical usefulness of the lab.

Participants’ Relief. For the majority of the participants, there was a sense of relief that came over them once they finished presenting their speeches in the lab. The participants provided various reasons for this relief. Matthew experienced relief because his speech anxiety and nervousness had been somewhat reduced through the speech lab visit.

Matthew: Afterwards, I was less nervous. Again talking to the evaluator helped because I got to find out exactly what I was doing differently... afterwards there was more like a suggestive conversation, but there was a definite sense of relief afterwards.

Kim also mentioned that she was relieved as she immediately exited the speech lab because her speech lab requirement for her course had been fulfilled. Participants seemed to experience some type of relief because the lab helped to validate their current progress on the speech. Beth realized, through her lab experience, how much more work was needed for her speech to be successful.

Beth: I realized I had a lot more to go and needed to work more on my speech and I saw what else I had to do to improve it.

Through his speech lab visit, Paul was able to experience how it really felt to present his speech. This practical experience added to his relief.

Paul: I thought it was really comfortable in there and it just put me at ease and made me feel more comfortable...I think that it definitely gave me the feel of giving a speech, giving just that initial feel because I hadn’t really given a speech like that in a long time. I
mean, I did some in high school, but it had been a while and it just kind of got me back in the groove...

**Clarity.** The second major theme that emerged from this last stage was the clarification of speech components that occurred for some participants during their speech lab visit. Beth, had difficulty grasping certain speech concepts in class, but after the lab appointment, it was much clearer for her.

Beth: I didn't know what my instructor meant about “transitions' because when I thought of transitions, I thought they should go something like ‘First... and then Second,...’ but she wanted each part of the speech to run into each other. Mine were just really separate and they didn't run into each other whatsoever...[the lab attendee] actually explained what a transition was.... she gave me specific examples...

I then followed up by asking her if the feedback that she received in the lab accurately corresponded to what her instructor had taught her in class? Beth responded:

Beth: Yah, but it just didn’t click...when you have someone personally explain it to you, it is always better.

Jen also mentioned that she benefited from the speech lab, specifically the video taping of her speech, because it helped to reinforce and clarify some of the speech aspects she was still struggling with.

Jen: I think it really helped just to see, because like for me, I’m a visual person, so that helped, like I heard...what [the lab attendee] said but then [the video] kind of backed it up...I think that helped a lot.
Practical Usefulness. First, a majority of the participants felt that the speech lab was useful for many different reasons. Most importantly for the students, it helped to increase their grades on the final speech presentation. John was very pleased with the help he received from the speech lab and he feels that it helped him significantly improve on his final speech presentation.

John: I’m 99 percent certain that I improved a letter grade. I think if I would not have gone into that speech lab, I would have gave a “C” speech, honestly... It helped me move it to a “B.”

Sara, agreed that her final speech presentation also significantly improved because of the assistance she received at the lab.

Sara: Actually, I think [the lab] did [help] because I went home and viewed [the video tape] and I saw my mistakes and my weaknesses and I tried to work on it before I actually did the speech in the class. So I think the speech lab helped a lot...I would say [the lab] helped [me improve] about 45 percent.

The second major theme of the “Impressions of Speech Lab” stage is limitations that the students recognized. From the interview transcripts, only one significant limitation was indicated through the participants’ responses. The limitation focused on the number of attendees that provide feedback to the students during their speech lab presentation. Several participants mentioned that by having more attendees in the lab, the students would obtain much more feedback, which in turn would be more beneficial.
Kim: I think that they could have another person in the room instead of just one... so you could get more than one person’s feedback.

**DISCUSSION**

When examining the many different themes and categories that emerged from the participants’ responses, it is very apparent that several key issues are continually addressed throughout each of the three stages of the speech lab visit. The first theme that crossed over all three stages was nervousness. Almost every participant brought up some different aspect of nervousness during the interviews. In the first stage, many of the participants expressed some nervousness about the speech lab visit. This included being nervous towards giving a speech in front of a lab attendee that the participants’ didn’t know, to just simply presenting the speech itself for the first time. During the speech, the participants indicated that the amount of nervousness fluctuated throughout their presentation. Some experienced nervousness and then it reduced as they presented their speech, others felt more nervous while waiting for the speech lab attendee’s feedback. After the lab appointment, many participants commented on the fact that they felt some type of relief when they had finished their presentation. There is no conclusive evidence that the sense of relief occurred because the participants’ nervousness had been reduced or if there were other factors that allowed them to relax quickly. Further research will need to examine this relationship more closely in order to uncover the truth of this matter.
Feedback was another major theme that crossed over into multiple stages of the speech lab process. Feedback was primarily discussed during stages two and three by the participants. The different types of feedback used in the speech lab and the manner in which the feedback was presented were the most talked about aspects of this issue. The participants seemed to prefer having all three types of feedback (verbal, written and video) available to them for reviewing. Several commented on how helpful it was to listen to verbal feedback from the speech lab attendee immediately after the speech presentation, but then also have the opportunity to take the written and video feedback home to use as a reference for the needed improvements. Additionally, the feedback issue seemed to have the most overt effects on the students’ final speech presentation. The participants indicated that the feedback they received specifically helped to improve their grades on the final speech and in some cases this was an improvement of at least one letter grade. Not one participant mentioned that the feedback they received hindered their final performance in the classroom. These responses all seem to support Ellis’ (1995) claim that these laboratories are a benefit to students because they are designed to promote goal-setting with the students as well as provide them with the opportunity to experience various coaching techniques that may further enhance their speech performances.

A final theme that emerged from the participants’ interview responses was the overwhelming difference between the indicated benefits and limitations of the speech lab. During the interviews, the participants mentioned many more benefits than limitations from
their initial experience in the lab. The benefits mentioned included how the lab helped to reduce students’ nervousness, that going to the lab clarified speech components and concepts for the students, it provided some degree of validation of the students’ progress on their speeches, and overall, the lab provided the students with authentic speaking experience that helped them, in some cases, dramatically improve on their speech presentations. The participants indicated only one true limitation during the interviews and that focused on the number of attendees working in the lab. Currently, it is clear that the benefits of the speech lab being examined in this study heavily outweigh any potential limitations that facility may have.

With regards to the design and execution of the current study, several limitations were identified. First, the sample of participants could be larger and more diversified. Only ten students were interviewed for this study and the majority of the participants were 18-year-old freshmen. It is understood that this demographic represents the majority of students enrolled in basic public speaking courses and those same students represent those who are most likely to attend speech laboratories. However, before any generalizations can be made about the speech lab a more diverse sample of students needs to be studied. Also, the findings of this study are not necessarily applicable to all speech and communication labs. Different lab setups and designs may have an effect on the perceptions of students who visit.

Even with these limitations, much can still be learned from examining the participants’ lab experiences. The themes and categories that emerged through this examination do seem to provide initial support for
previous research conducted on this topic (Morreale, 1992; Ellis, 1995) claiming that communication laboratories are indeed a beneficial tool for students enrolled in basic communication courses. Further research is now needed to discover the full range of benefits that these labs are capable of offering to students.

**Best Practices for Operating Speech Labs**

After analyzing the themes and categories derived from this study as well as discussing the potential limitations of this research, it is important to detail specific strategies for creating, operating, and maintaining speech laboratories. In this section, several pedagogical strategies for operating efficient, effective speech laboratories will be offered.

From the results of this research and the experiences gained from operating a speech laboratory, there are several strategies that one may consider when creating or operating one of these facilities. The first strategy focuses on the training the speech lab attendees receive. In order for those attendees to fully help each student who comes to the lab, they must be able to provide assistance for public speaking skills deficits as well as help the students manage their public speaking anxiety. To accomplish this, the lab attendees must be trained to not only assist students with any issues dealing with problematic public speaking skills, but also help students cognitively restructure their negative thoughts about public speaking along with helping them to manage their emotional affective responses.

For this strategy to be effective, it may be necessary that speech lab attendees be trained on techniques such
as systematic desensitization (McCroskey, 1970), visualization (Ayres & Hopf, 1993), communication therapy (Motley, 1991, 1995), along with cognitive restructuring (Fremouw & Scott, 1979) and skills training (Phillips, 1977; Kelly, 1989). The attendees would then be able to implement the appropriate technique to address the students’ specific needs. It is not the researcher’s assumption that this type of extensive training could be expected of all graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), who currently make up the speech lab attendees. It may be more worthwhile and practical to split the duties and functions of the lab to separate parties. Professionals trained in treating individuals who suffer from high public speaking anxiety (PSA) could be hired to care for those students with the more complex cases of PSA. For those students who only need assistance for their public speaking skills, the regular lab attendees would be available to work with them in the same manner as the current lab setup.

One potential hurdle to overcome with this strategy is having the ability to recognize which students have skills deficits and which need the additional assistance provided by a professional. A solution to this would be to have students participate in a battery of tests at the beginning of the semester that would help to indicate their problematic areas of public speaking. Cognitive examinations could be performed to uncover students’ irrational beliefs about the public speaking process and public speaking skills tests could be used to understand which areas students need the most assistance with. The students could then bring the results of these tests to their speech lab appointment and the attendee could determine what type of assistance is needed. The lab
session would then be modified for that student based on their specific situations. This questionnaire could be created and designed originally for this purpose or portions of previously created measures could be modified to form a new instrument. Further research is needed to determine the most effective method.

Based on the findings of this research, an additional strategy for speech laboratory setup and design (in conjunction with the basic communication course) could be to require all students enrolled in the course to attend the lab at least once during the semester. With many basic communication courses becoming required at the collegiate level, those universities that have established speech laboratories can provide students with a supplemental tool that can be a benefit to all who are enrolled in those courses. It is not the researchers’ assumption that by requiring every student to attend the lab, all would do so each semester. But by making the lab a requirement, many more students would attend the lab compared to the number of those who currently participate. This would mean more students each semester would fully utilize the lab and would be gaining additional valuable assistance with their public speaking abilities. With this strategy, as with the previous strategies, more resources would need to be allocated for the speech lab to comfortably accommodate every student enrolled in the basic communication course. These resources would include having additional attendees working in the speech lab as well as adding more rooms to the facility itself to allow for multiple students simultaneously.

Through the participants’ suggestions, several specific improvements were offered regarding the design
and setup of a speech lab. First, all video equipment should be removed out of sight from students in the lab presentation room because it can be a distraction at times. Appointment times at the lab should be increased to allow students more time to receive feedback. Also, the participants indicated that having more than one lab attendee providing feedback would not only give the students various perspectives on their speech, but it also would help make the lab environment more realistic to the classrooms.

**Future Research**

The major themes and categories that have emerged from this study as well as the practical implications suggested previously need to be closely examined in order to fully understand the effects the speech laboratory have on students enrolled in basic public speaking courses. Specific areas of future research should focus on how speech laboratories clarify aspects of public speaking for students, which in turn reduces their uncertainty about the public speaking process as a whole. Results of a previous study examining speech laboratories conducted by Jones, Hunt, Simonds and Comadena (2002) suggest that students may use speech laboratories as a method for reducing uncertainty about public speaking, which the researchers termed Public Speaking Uncertainty (PSU).

In that study, the researchers also created the Public Speaking Certainty Scale (see Appendix A) that was successfully used to measure this potential relationship between speech labs and student uncertainty regarding the public speaking process. The Public Speaking Cer-
tainty Scale (PSCS) is a modified version of Clatterbuck’s (1979) CLUES7. Previous research studies using this modified measure have reported alpha reliability estimates of .78 (Jones et al., 2002). In future studies, researchers could compare students’ PSCS scores before and after visiting a speech lab to see if that experience has any effect on students’ levels of uncertainty about the public speaking process.

Additionally, future research should more closely examine the “relief” that the participants of this study experienced after concluding their speech lab visit. This is necessary in order to discover the origin of this response, which could then be enhanced for students.

Finally, the relationship between the lab attendees’ personalities and the students’ overall impressions of the lab should also be investigated. The current study only revealed that when the lab attendees were friendly, respectful, and more positive towards the students, their overall impression of the lab was more positive. Could the opposite also be true? If the lab attendees were not supportive during the visit, could the students’ perception of the lab be affected negatively?

**CONCLUSION**

At this point, the development of speech laboratories as a supplement for basic public speaking courses is a trend only a handful of universities currently embrace. However, this trend is gaining momentum. In order for everyone in the educational hierarchy, including students, teachers, course directors, department chairs, and university leadership, to fully realize the benefits of
speech and other communication laboratories, comprehensive examinations must be conducted to completely understand the effects these facilities signify. As for the speech laboratory from the current study, John may best summarize the usefulness of these facilities with the following quote:

John: I would say the lab is a very useful tool for anyone giving a speech or that is preparing to do a speech whether it is their first time...or as a freshman or a senior. Also not only does it ease your anxiety of giving speeches...you may receive a different side of a topic you never realized was there before.

Only through a dedicated effort to thoroughly examine speech laboratories will we be able to determine how accurate his assessment truly is.

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APPENDIX A

PUBLIC SPEAKING CERTAINTY SCALE (PSCS)

Rate your feelings towards the following questions by circling a number between 1 and 5. If you are EXTREMELY CONFIDENT with a question, circle a 1. If you are NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT with a question, circle a 5. If your confidence with a question falls between these, please circle the corresponding number 2 through 4, 3 representing that your feelings are NEUTRAL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How confident are you in your general ability to predict how an audience watching your speech will behave?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In general, how confident are you of your ability to accurately determine how much speech audience members like (or dislike) you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In general, how confident are you of your ability to predict accurately a speech audience member’s values?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In general, how confident are you of your ability to predict accurately a speech audience member’s attitudes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In general, how confident are you of your ability to predict accurately a speech audience member’s feelings and emotions?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In general, how confident are you in your knowledge of the public speaking process?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In general, how confident are you in your public speaking skills?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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Developed by Jones, et al. (2002).
Creating a Dialogue for Change: Educating Graduate Teaching Assistants in Whiteness Studies

Kristen P. Treinen

During a discussion about the need for anti-racist pedagogy, I was asked whether or not I believed anyone would announce that he/she is a “racist” educator. At first, this question seemed ludicrous — of course most educators would not claim that they are racist. The more that I reflected on this question, the more ironic I found it to be. The same educators who would not claim to be racist would also not consciously teach in racist ways. But, at the same time, I wonder how many educators reflect upon whether or not they engage in racist teaching practices? I wonder how many white educators understand the effects of their race on choices in curriculum, teaching strategies, and the ways students get differently privileged in their classroom? I believe that a great number of educators do work to include diversity in their classrooms and work to combat racist remarks made by students. However, overcoming racism and including diverse perspectives in the classroom involves a greater understanding of the extent to which racism is perpetuated in textbooks, grading procedures, and assessment techniques.

In this article I discuss the need to integrate an anti-racist pedagogy through work in Whiteness Studies in the college classroom. It is my hope to facilitate a dialogue with basic course directors, communication educa-
tors, and graduate teaching assistants about antiracist practices in the classroom. In order to bring about an antiracist dialogue, I begin this essay by framing antiracist pedagogical theory. Next, I discuss the relevance that antiracist pedagogy has for communication educators and the basic communication course. Finally, I offer a model for incorporating antiracist pedagogical theory and practice into the training and development programs for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs).

**ARTICULATING ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY**

Antiracist pedagogy emerged as a way to address the institutional and structural inequities in schools. Antiracist pedagogy is fundamentally an interdisciplinary approach that addresses “the histories and experiences of people who have been left out of the curriculum” (Lee, 1995, p. 9). Antiracist pedagogy works to move beyond the “people are different” perspective, and examine how and why particular groups are marginalized in our schools and larger society (Lee, 1995, p. 10). Furthermore, an antiracist pedagogy confronts racism as an institutional problem that moves beyond individual instances of prejudicial acts or attitudes. Duarte and Smith (2000) explain, “Antiracism does not seek to develop pedagogical practices that are designed for prejudice reduction. Instead this location produces an oppositional critique of racism in its systemic and institutional form” (p. 16). Thompson (1997) argues that “racism is a system of privilege and oppression, a network of traditions, legitimating standards, material and institutional arrangements, and ideological apparatuses that, to-
gether, serve to perpetuate hierarchical social relations based on race” (p. 9). Thompson conceptualizes racism as “structural and embodied inequities that are rendered “legitimate” and appropriate by particular conventions of policy, law, common sense, and even science” (p. 8). What becomes legitimized in our society is that White people are the norm and, as a result, get to set the standards for normalcy.

At the core of antiracist education is the study of Whiteness and its implication in the systematic nature of racism. For several years, scholars of color have been discussing the implications of whiteness; now white educators are beginning to understand the value of examining the implications of whiteness for whites. West (1990) maintains that “Whiteness' is a politically constructed category parasitic on blackness” (p. 29). Whiteness needs blackness to maintain its purity and normality. For instance, by focusing on blackness, whiteness becomes further hidden behind its veil or neutrality. The historical inequalities that non-whites have faced in our country are the direct result of placing whiteness in binary opposition with blackness. Shome (1996) argues that whiteness is “the everyday, invisible, subtle, cultural, and social practices, ideas, and codes that discursively secure the power and privilege of White people” (p. 503). Antiracist educators argue that through a naming and marking of the white center of power, space can be made for the voices of those oppressed by systematic racism. An antiracist pedagogy must make problematic how whiteness “as a racial identity and social construction is taught, learned, experienced, and identified in certain forms of knowledge, values and privilege,” otherwise it risks reinforcing the
dominant discourse in the classroom (Giroux, 1997, p. 295).

Anti-racist pedagogy “is fundamentally a perspective that allows us to get an explanation of why things are the way they are in terms of power relationships, in terms of equality issues” (Lee, 1995, p. 9). Anti-racist pedagogy treats racism as more than merely prejudice and demands that we “examine the unexamined assumptions concerning issues like textbooks and curriculum decisions” (Warren, 1999, p. 198). Anti-racist pedagogy includes examining the struggles of “racial minorities against imperial, colonial, and neocolonial experiences” and “insists on closely studying the sites, institutions, and ways in which racism originates” (Rezai-Rashti, 1995, p. 6). An important aspect of racism involves our fundamental assumptions about diversity. Moreover, antiracist pedagogical theory calls for us to critically interrogate whiteness—the hidden norm against which non-whites are judged. An analysis of the unquestioned normalcy of whiteness and a dismantling of the inherent power of whiteness will allow room for the cultural perspectives others.

An anti-racist pedagogy provides educators with a lens through which they and their students can question the taken for granted nature of whiteness in the classroom. If you have ever been asked what whiteness means and failed to come up with an answer you have encountered the power that whiteness possesses. Nakayama and Krizek (1999) explain that “whiteness has assumed the position of an uninterrogated space” (p. 90). As long as we do not know what whiteness means, it is allowed to remain invisible. Nakayama and Krizek (1999) go on to argue that “the invisibility of whiteness
has been manifested through its universality. The universality of whiteness resides in its already defined position as everything” (p. 91). Whiteness as an unmarked location is normative and as such sets the standards for all other groups.

A Justification for Antiracist Pedagogy in the Basic Communication Course

Analyzing Whiteness opens a theoretical space for teachers and students to articulate how their own racial identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and what responsibility they might assume for living in a present in which Whites are accorded privileges and opportunity (though in complex and different ways) largely at the expense of other racial groups. (Giroux, 1997a)

Through research in anti-racist pedagogy and work in whiteness studies, I have found a need for basic course directors, communication educators, and graduate teaching assistants to understand the implications and impact of racism and whiteness in the classroom. Several scholars (Derman-Sparks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 1995; Kanpol, 1995; McIntyre, 1997; Shome, 1996) reinforce the need for work in antiracist pedagogy. Antiracist pedagogues work to transform the dominant Eurocentric curriculum (e.g., middle class, heterosexual, male, able-bodied, etc.) to include “histories and knowledges that have long been silenced in the name of socially constructed sacrosanct norms” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 33). Rodriguez points to what is known as the hidden curriculum, a curriculum that reproduces
dominant ideological views and silences the views of students from minority groups (Darder, 1995, p. 331).

Transforming the classroom experience through work in antiracist pedagogy is not an easy charge. Those incorporating antiracist approaches in the classroom will face ethical issues ranging from the choice of materials to incorporate in the curriculum to the treatment of students in the classroom. For instance, in order to challenge the hidden curriculum, students must be challenged with issues of racism and whiteness. As a result, educators will have to make the choice to silence traditionally dominant voices while encouraging minority voices to be heard in the classroom. Students who have been silenced or faced with issues of racism may respond with feelings of guilt, discomfort, and anger. Understanding these reactions and working to help students work through and past these feelings is central for educators utilizing antiracist practices in the classroom. Educators might also encounter resistance from their students and their colleagues. Anderson, Bentley, Gallegos, Herr and Saavedra (1995) argue “teachers who attempt to interrupt and interrogate power relations that favor dominant groups are often viewed as ‘political’ and may face a backlash from educators of the dominant group. However, Anderson, Bentley, Gallegos, Herr and Saavedra (1995) also point out that the backlash may come from members of the non-dominant group who identify with the interests of the dominant group. Consequently, educators utilizing critical approaches in the classroom are often teaching on the defensive. As someone who works to implement antiracist pedagogical strategies in my classrooms, I contend the benefits of incorporating antiracist pedagogical strate-
gies is worth the time and effort taken to confront the potential obstacles and ethical choices an educator may face; however, I also believe that each individual educator must answer these questions for him/herself (Andersen, 1999).

There are several reasons why I argue antiracist pedagogical strategies should be implemented by communication educators. First, I explore why basic course directors, communication educators and graduate teaching assistants, our future colleagues in the discipline of speech communication, should address issues of race and ethnicity in the college and university classroom. Next, I address why communication educators are integral to transforming the college and university classroom for students of color. Finally, I discuss why basic course directors and graduate teaching assistants can be instrumental in helping transform the systematic racism faced in our institutions of higher education.

As communication faculty, basic course directors, and graduate teaching assistants, we are facing an increasingly diverse classroom. According to Wirt, Choy, Provasnik, Rooney, Sen, and Tobin (2003), “more than half of undergraduates were women in 1999-2000” and “the proportions of White students has decreased, while the proportion of students in each other racial/ethnic group has increased” (p. 66). As a result, “combined, minorities represented nearly a third of all undergraduates in 1999-2000” (p.66). While our undergraduate student population has become more diverse, the graduate student and full-time instructional faculty and staff have remained predominantly white. Wirt, Choy, Gerald, Provasnik, Rooney, Watanabe, and Tobin (2002) reported that nearly 80% of all graduate students were
white in 1999. While 9% of graduate students were black, nearly 6% were Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% of graduate students were American Indian/Alaskan Native. Full-time instructional faculty and staff are demographically similar to the graduate student population with slight differences in the amount of black faculty members in our colleges and universities. Zimbler (2002) reported that in 1998 the majority, or 85%, of full-time instructional faculty and staff were White. Approximately 6 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander; 5% were Black; 3% were Hispanic; and 1% were American Indian or Alaskan Native (p. 48). With such disparities between the ethnic and racial backgrounds of faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students, I argue that in order to be successful in the communication classroom we must deconstruct our current teaching strategies in order to transform our classrooms for all students.

Communication educators are central to helping transform the classroom experience for non-white students in our college and university classrooms. Antiracist pedagogical research and practice in the field of communication is important because it is these instructors who introduce undergraduate students to the principles informing effective communication. Communication educators teach the ways in which communication influences students’ thoughts, perceptions, and actions (Gouran, Wiethoff, & Dolger, 1994). A student’s race and the race of other communicators significantly impacts how these students think about, perceive, and engage in communication with others. Therefore, an antiracist pedagogue with work in Whiteness Studies would engage in a systematic analysis of what it means
to be White in our society, and how whiteness provides power and privilege in hidden ways. An antiracist pedagogue might also examine how communication processes are influenced by whiteness. Through a clearer understanding of whiteness and the role it plays in our educational institutions and wider society, we will not only help our students become better communicators but also help our students learn more about themselves — their identity — in the process.

Tanno and Gonzalez (1998) pose these questions to communication scholars: “Where is multicultural identity to be found? How is it formed and maintained?” (p. 4). The study of antiracist pedagogy within the discipline of Speech Communication is also important because communication scholars argue that culture and identity are created through the process of communication — through our interactions and interpersonal relationships. Our communication helps us construct our cultural reality and our identities. Consequently, communication also helps our students learn more about cultures other than their own. For example, we teach students that communication helps them express, sustain, and alter our cultural backgrounds (Wood, 1997). Through conversations and interactions with family, friends, and acquaintances, our students have the ability to represent their cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes to friends, family, and wider society.

What antiracist pedagogues purport to do (i.e., identify and break down the systematic nature of racism in our educational institutions) is imbedded in our taken for granted communication patterns as researchers, scholars and teachers. Our patterns of communication reflect our cultural values and perspectives. For in-
stance, while many scholars have taken great strides to include cultural communication throughout their basic communication course textbooks (Brydon & Scott, 2003; Kearney & Plax, 1999; Wood, 2001; Wood 2003) the dominant culture view (which is the Eurocentric, White male perspective in the U. S.) is the view most often represented in the textbooks and curricula (Churchill, 1995; Levine, Lowe, Peterson, & Tenorio, 1995). Furthermore, when culture is explored in our basic communication course classrooms it is often the “other” that is studied. In other words, the “White” person is implied as the normative first person perspective present in the text (Treinen & Warren, 2001). These patterns become so imbedded in our everyday communicative practice that we rarely question or critique whether or not they are racist.

Basic course directors play a significant role when serving the undergraduate student population. For example, Trank (1999) argues

The basic course is the only course within our discipline that is required by a significant number of other departments and colleges for graduation surveys over the past 2 decades have indicated that the basic communication course is required for noncommunication majors in a majority of the institutions across the country. This unique characteristic provides healthy departmental enrollments and excellent visibility across campus. . . . The ultimate responsibility for the quality of this course with several sections inevitably belongs to the director of the course. (p. 447)

Basic course directors have important decisions to make concerning content and pedagogical strategies when considering how to best serve the undergraduate
students from diverse backgrounds. Trank (1999) contends that basic course directors must serve “as the educational leaders for the most critical program within most undergraduate communication departments” (p. 450). Trank (1999) explains that a liberal interpretation of a National Communication Survey of more than 2,000 institutions reported close to 2 million students are served each year by the basic communication course (p. 450). When considering the goals of communication education, the increasingly diverse student population in our colleges and universities, and the importance of the basic communication course to colleges and universities, basic course directors are in a key position to help GTAs develop new and meaningful pedagogical tools.

GTAs are in a particularly significant position to critique and destabilize the way that culture is represented and explored in the curriculum. Although GTAs have little impact on the decision of which materials will be used in the basic communication course and the overall course requirements, GTAs often teach stand-alone sections of the basic communication course with total responsibility for the pedagogical strategies and methods used to transmit the communication theory. While teaching the stand-alone courses, graduate teaching assistant’s have the opportunity to reach a vast number of students on a college campus. For instance, Cano, Jones, and Chism (1991) explain that at some large institutions, “TAs teach as much as 38% of the course sections offered during a given semester” (p. 88). More recently, Staton (1999) argues that GTAs are responsible for teaching nearly half of all undergraduate instruction (p. 42). For example, when I was a graduate teaching assistant at a small Midwestern university,
GTAs were responsible for teaching approximately 25 sections of the basic communication course. These courses enrolled approximately 22 students per section each semester. In one semester, these GTAs collectively taught nearly 550 students. At another large Midwestern university where I served as Assistant Director of the Core Curriculum, GTAs taught approximately 60 sections per semester of the basic communication course. These courses averaged 20 students per section. In one semester, GTAs collectively taught nearly 1200 students. Currently, I serve as Basic Course Director at a small Midwestern university. The GTAs that I supervise teach 25 sections of the basic communication course each semester. These courses average 28-30 students per section. In one semester, these GTAs will collectively teach 750 students. These statistics underline the importance of graduate teaching assistants to the educational environment at several universities and colleges throughout the United States.

While I believe that it is important for all communication educators to begin working with antiracist pedagogical theory and practice, I will focus the remainder of this essay on how to incorporate antiracist theory and practice with basic course directors and GTAs. These educators are central to transmitting the foundations of communication theory to our undergraduate student populations on most college and university campuses. Once GTAs have a firm foundation in pedagogical strategies such as how to administer a college course, how to evaluate and assess student learning, what teaching strategies to employ, and how to manage a classroom, a basic course director can introduce
antiracist pedagogical theory for points of exploration and discussion.

**IMPLEMENTING ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY IN THE BASIC COURSE CLASSROOM**

A graduate student training and development program is a unique opportunity to introduce GTAs to antiracist pedagogy. For many GTAs, this is their first exposure to teaching practices and issues surrounding pedagogy in the classroom. A GTA training program also allows a space to challenge and confront future pedagogical issues that graduate teaching assistants may encounter. As Thompson (1997) argues, there is a need “to create performative spaces in which the commonplaces of racism can be unsettled—in which racism can be addressed as a framing of meaning rather than as natural” (p. 35). In what follows, I offer one potential model for integrating an antiracist pedagogy into the training and development program utilized with graduate teaching assistants. What I offer is not the only approach to antiracist pedagogy; rather, it is a place to begin the discussion about implementing antiracist pedagogical approaches with GTAs for use in the basic course classroom.

A useful model for introducing antiracist pedagogy through work in Whiteness studies with graduate teaching assistants (or other communication educators) is articulated by Rodriguez (1998) in his article *Emptying the Contents of Whiteness: Toward an Understanding of the Relation Between Whiteness and Pedagogy*. First, Rodriguez (1998) asserts that work in whiteness studies should “not only uncover the hidden curriculum...
of normalizing systems but also bring to light and teach subjugated histories” (p. 33). The training of GTAs in antiracist pedagogy must start with the basic course director engaging in an analysis of the current curriculum of the basic communication course. For instance, the Basic Course Director may ask him/herself who decided which cultural perspectives are being presented in the textbook that will be used? More importantly, who created the representations of cultural others that the students will be reading about? How is race, including whiteness, being articulated in the textbooks, syllabus, activities, and assignments required in the basic course? All too often the representations in college classrooms are from a Eurocentric perspective. At the same time, the curricula and the methodologies used in the basic course are being examined, the histories and knowledges of those who have been systematically silenced need to be brought to the forefront. Sleeter and Montecinos (1999) argue that educators “who successfully teach children from oppressed communities actively affirm the cultures, ideologies, memories, languages, and communities of the children” (p. 117). For instance, one might consider whose communicative practices and realities are represented in the textbook that GTAs use, and, second, how do these representations push other perspectives to the margins? Because GTAs teach a required course with core-curriculum requirements, these issues should be considered before graduate student training and transferred into the training and development of the GTAs.

Next, a pedagogy of whiteness “should attempt to reconfigure whiteness in antiracist, antihomophobic, and antisexist ways” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 33). Basic
Course Directors need to give GTAs the opportunity to critically reflect on what it means to be white and be “cognizant of themselves in relation to history and place, that is, in this case, able to define and acknowledge their own whiteness” (Titone, 1998, p. 167). Just as conversations about African Americans or Latino/as should not essentialize the experiences of all members of these groups, whiteness should be exposed as something that is ever changing and possible to recreate in positive ways. During conversations about what it means to be white, the (white) graduate teaching assistants may experience feelings of guilt or shame. As Sleeter (1996) explains “the more we critically attend to our behavior, the more guilty many white people feel because we realize the degree to which we adhere to racial boundaries, as well as boundaries of social class, language, and so forth” (p. 145). These conversations about whiteness can take place throughout the course of a graduate student conference, but should also continue throughout the training and development of the GTAs in order to help these teachers move from feelings of guilt to an understanding of how an understanding of racism and whiteness can bring about social and transformative change in our basic communication course classrooms. These discussions could be continued as part of developmental workshops, or in a course on pedagogy offered to graduate students. If these critiques and discussions do not take place, whiteness is allowed to remain the invisible and naturalized center of power in the classroom.

Rodriguez (1998) also argues that any pedagogy of whiteness must “be thought of as a critical pedagogy of whiteness in the sense that it must deal, in some way, with the issue of power” (p. 35). Graduate teaching as-
assistants students should be asked regularly to discuss the role of the teacher in the classroom. These discussions provide an opportunity for conversations about power in the classroom. For instance, a critical pedagogy of whiteness would prompt a number of questions for explanation. How does the traditional style of lecturing (i.e., teacher behind the podium, or the banking model of education) reinforce power structures in the classroom? Whose style of public speaking is valued in the speech communication classroom? Often instructors of the basic course are still teaching the public speaking style taught by Plato and Aristotle. Clearly, their speaking style is fundamental to our discipline; however, as Nakayama and Krizek (1999) maintain, “Plato and Aristotle, from a privileged class were not interested in theorizing or empowering ways that women, slaves, or other culturally marginalized people might speak. The rhetor was always already assumed to be a member of the center” (p. 90). Through critical conversations about power and empowerment in the classroom, graduate teaching assistants can begin to rethink their role in the classroom.

Finally, a pedagogy of whiteness “must examine culture, especially popular culture, for a political struggle demands attention to culture — understanding what’s out there, resisting cultural messages that disempower us, creating circulating alternative visions” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 35). The products of popular culture can be used to interrogate how whiteness and racism shape our daily lives. Case studies and critical incidents could be used to examine how to integrate the interests of the students (computers, sports, movies, parties, etc.) into the classroom curriculum as sites of learning. Address-
ing popular culture, as sites of political struggle will inevitably provide GTAs with a clearer understanding of how invisible whiteness is in our society. Giroux (1997b) argues that movies can provide “exemplary” representations of dominant readings of whiteness. For his analysis, he uses two movies (Dangerous Minds and Suture) to examine the pedagogical implications for examining whiteness (p. 296).

The examination of popular culture by GTAs during training and development programs could also provide ideas for how these teachers could then use popular culture in their own classrooms. It is especially important for graduate teaching assistants of the basic communication course to examine popular culture in order to help students relate their everyday exposure to televisions, movies, music, and news to what they are learning in the classroom. As Johnson (1999) asserts, communication studies “has a particularly important role [in Whiteness Studies/antiracist pedagogy] as communication is concerned not only with the means of communication, but also the construction of meaning through communication” (p. 5). The constant bombardment of popular culture images on our students provides the perfect opportunity to analyze how whiteness is constructed in our [students and teachers] daily lives. bell hooks (1997) argues that

since most white people do not have to “see” black people constantly (appearing on billboards, television, movies, in magazines, etc.) and they do not need to be ever on guard, observing black people to be “safe,” they can live as though black people are invisible, and can imagine as though they are also invisible to blacks. (p. 168-169)
Asking students to consider why there are so few representations of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, or Asian Americans on billboards or in magazines could create a dialogue that begins to investigate the invisibility of whiteness in popular culture. We might ask our students, for example, how the television show *Friends* perpetuates the “invisibility” of whiteness? Or, we might ask our students to explain how whiteness gets constructed on *Friends*. Through an investigation of popular culture representations, whiteness becomes marked and scrutinized — it can then no longer be the taken for granted norm by which all non-white others are judged.

The training and development of GTAs in antiracist pedagogy involves more than figuring out where to include materials about diversity in the curriculum. An antiracist pedagogical approach to training graduate teaching assistants begins with an examination of the materials that the GTAs will be using in the classroom. Next, GTAs must be given the opportunity to question white identity and its implication in the system of racism, to critique and analyze the power structures in the classroom, and to investigate how popular culture sites reinscribe the normalcy of whiteness. Antiracist pedagogy should also be viewed as a process that is ongoing and ever changing. After the initial graduate student training, the GTAs must continue the work they began in their classrooms and in discussions with colleagues.
CONCLUSION

One of the most serious problems confronting teachers is that they cannot recognize their own biases. There is an attachment to the colorblindness among educators, who forcefully contend they operate on the principle that all children are the same and should be treated the same. By denying racial differences, teachers are refusing to recognize [students’] full range of social experiences, histories, including membership in racial groups as well as the possibility of painful episodes of discrimination. (Rezi-Rashti, 1995, p. 12)

Few educators would enter a classroom and intend to perpetuate racism. However, if studying “other” cultures becomes acceptable, without recognizing that race will not be recognized. Simply adding the voices and perspectives of cultures other than white culture will not alleviate the inequities that minorities experience in the classroom. Treating students as though they are all the “same” does not benefit them — it only allows an instructor to further distance her/himself and her/his students from the system of racism.

Antiracist pedagogy through work in whiteness studies demands a critical examination of the center of power [whiteness] in “the hope that the center will fall apart” (Warren, 1999, p. 197). An antiracist pedagogy seeks not only to glance outward at the cultural margins, but it should “also include critical and focused attention inward toward the powerful center of racial privilege” (Warren, 1999, p. 198). Educators engaged in antiracist pedagogy find their classrooms offer a site to begin the critical examination of racism, of what it
means be white, and the implications of white privilege in our society.

What I proposed in this essay is one way for basic course directors to expose graduate teaching assistants to antiracist pedagogy. If communication educators want to create the spaces for learning how to combat racism, anti-racist pedagogy is a necessary and essential component of teacher training and development. Educating graduate teaching assistants in antiracist pedagogy is especially important when one reflects on the vast number of students GTAs will encounter and the stark contrast between the race of students, communication faculty, and GTAs teaching the basic communication course; the future of the professoriate.

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Public participation is the very soul of democratic citizenship; yet increasingly, a wall separates us from the world outside and from others who have likewise taken refuge in private sanctuaries. Concerns about community permeate nearly every aspect of American life from corporate boardrooms to classrooms of higher education (Shepherd & Rothenbuhler, 2001). An important theme in Putnam’s (2000) chronicle of the collapse and hopeful revival of American community is the relationship between social change and generational change. Far from being the civic-minded generation of their predecessors, baby-boomers and Generation X seem less likely to be involved with their community ranging from participating in Parent Teacher Associations, voting in political elections, writing letters to the editor, and attending church functions. Despite positive correlations between education and civic involvement as well as higher levels of education among Generation X and their successors, growing evidence suggests Generation X prefers to “bowl alone.”
The spectator mentality of Generation X is chronicled in Sacks’ (1996) account of teaching in postmodern America (see also McMillan & Cheney, 1996). As “consumers” of an educational product, Generation X students are often highly demanding. Sacks attributes this in part to an increasingly materialistic and media-driven society that has created a “culture of young people who were born and bred to sit back and enjoy the spectacle that engulfed them” (p. 9). While Sacks paints a dim picture, we do not believe that his students are too much different than the students we have taught. Yet, we also believe that many of our students yearn for opportunities to create community(s). The challenge becomes, how do we engage our students in the learning process in ways that promote life-long learning and civic engagement?

Paralleling the decline in civic engagement during the late 20th century and the rise of the consumer mentality in the classroom, we witnessed a growing movement in higher education toward more accountability for connecting what we do as teacher-scholars to a larger social context (e.g., Boyer, 1990; Cushman, 1999; Swick, 2001). The communication discipline has been at the forefront of such changes (e.g., Applegate & Morreale, 1999; Cheney, Wilhelmsson, & Zorn, 2002; Conville, 2001; Shepherd & Rothenbuhler, 2001), with Craig (1989, 1999) offering a useful argument that communication is a “practical discipline” through which scholars can engage in creative projects that both contribute to our disciplinary knowledge and address societal issues. Of particular note is the emergence of the service-learning movement in higher education in general and communication studies specifically, which is intended
to: (a) help educators better intersect with broader host communities, (b) encourage students to be active agents in the learning process, (c) illustrate connections between what students learn and how they live, and (d) encourage educators and students alike to become agents of social change rather than spectators of public affairs (Kezar & Rhoads, 2002). In our attempts to meet the needs of local, state, national, and international communities, the discipline is returning to its classical roots and Aristotelian concerns for the reflexive relationship between discursive interchanges and community (Depew & Peters, 2001).

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 defines service-learning as an instructional method allowing students to systematically apply course material in community based projects (Campus Compact, 2001). Derived from John Dewey’s (1927) perspective on experiential education and pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s as a learning model, service-learning projects encourage students to integrate theory with practice, reflect on their roles as citizens in a democracy, and provide meaningful service to others. The academic component of service-learning requires the connection between course curriculum and community service. Unlike traditional volunteering, service-learning offers participants the opportunity to bridge classroom objectives with community outreach. Service experiences take on new meaning when students not only summarize their experience but also reflect upon how the work itself connects to course material and objectives.

Our purpose is to contribute to the growing discussion of service-learning by focusing on the pedagogical justification for service learning and its usefulness in
speech communication basic courses. We draw on diverse literature as well as our own teaching and learning experiences and one author’s experience as the faculty director of a campus-wide service-learning center. We begin by organizing extant literature around two key themes: (a) the connection of self to subject matter and (b) the connection of self to community(s). Next, we illustrate the potential usefulness of service-learning in speech communication basic courses. Woven throughout the manuscript are what we believe to represent “best practices” leading to rigorous learning experiences for students and meaningful service to society. Finally, we end with a few cautionary notes concerning the use of service-learning pedagogy.

CONNECTING SELF WITH SUBJECT MATTER

For many of our students their civic lives begin in school, which is second only to their family as a formative socializing force (Jablin, 2001). Through both formal and informal socialization students are taught (or not) the virtues of democratic participation, public discourse, and even economic mobility as they consume the capital of knowledge. The importance of educational institutions as socializing agents holds both promise and peril for the future of civic engagement. Sacks (1996) argues that students are generally unengaged and apathetic about learning. If students lack the motivation to learn, how can they suddenly materialize into citizens committed to civic engagement? Likewise, Postman (1985) argues that the materialistic and glitzy MTV culture has forced educators to adopt less rigorous and
even shallow techniques for entertaining (rather than teaching) students. Regardless of which perspective is used, the conclusion is the same: Students of Generation X (and their successors) do not demonstrate the same promise for civic engagement evident in previous generations. We do not necessarily maintain such a pessimistic viewpoint. We agree with Sprague (1993) that the most important arena for communication praxis is in our classrooms. As teachers we have the power to inspire, excite and engage—it is our responsibility to determine the appropriate techniques for using such power. Service-learning has become one of our most powerful tools for creating and maintaining student engagement. In this section we discuss service-learning in terms of its ability to connect self with subject matter.

Most teaching efforts at the college level are directed at matters of procedural knowledge — presenting theories, methods, and findings of our field (Aleman, 2002; Novek, 1999). Consequently, we often overlook the pivotal perspective of subjective knowing. When subjective knowing is dismissed, students may lose a sense of not only having, but owning their voices and opinions. The capacity for connected knowing must be nurtured to acquire more powerful thinking strategies. Feminist writers have long argued for reconfiguring teaching and knowing in the classroom in ways that connect students with the production of knowledge (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Clinchy, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Stanton, 1996). For instance, Stanton describes education as relational — a relationship that involves knowledge, attentiveness, and care directed not only at disciplinary material but also to students’ experiences and ever-evolving identity construction. Service-
Service-Learning

learning represents a pedagogy that allows students to explore and understand themselves—who they are and what they can become. As such, Novek (1999) describes service-learning as a feminist pedagogy because “service-learning is a useful strategy for challenging the (traditional) power relationships of traditional pedagogy” (p. 231). By connecting self with subject, students become part of learning communities in which knowledge is co-constructed and often emerge better able to articulate their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Connecting self with subject matter through service-learning illustrates Parker Palmer’s (1998) call for “courageous” teaching and learning. Palmer uses the principal of paradox to understand classroom dynamics and stress subjective engagement. He argues that teaching and learning require a higher degree of awareness than we ordinarily possess — an awareness that is heightened when we are caught in creative tensions. For example, Parker suggests that classrooms should honor the “little” stories of students and the “big” stories of disciplinary knowledge. Service-learning allows teachers to induce this creative tension. Because service-learning provides students with community-based experiences, space is created to hear stories of personal experience and identity construction in which the students’ inner teachers are at work. At the same time, the big stories of our discipline can be used to help frame students’ narratives and help them make sense of their experiences. “Teaching always takes place at the crossroads of the personal and the public,” argues Palmer, “and if I want to teach well, I must learn to stand where these opposites intersect” (p. 63).
Extant literature suggests that when service-learning is deliberately designed and rigorously implemented, it can help students build a bridge between academic texts and their experienced realities — the stories of a discipline and the stories of students' lives (e.g., Artz, 2001; Eyler, 2000; Driscoll, 2000; Gibson, Kostecki, & Lucas, 2001; Novek, 1999; Shue O'Hara; Tucker & McCarthy, 2001; Zlotkowski, 2000). In optimal circumstances, a reflexive relationship occurs between theory and practice; service-learning experiences provide opportunities for students to use classroom material to inform their service experiences, and concomitantly, students use service experiences and their sense of self to examine, critique, and shape systems of thought. The true potential of service-learning is thus realized when students can evaluate evidence, judge conflicting claims, and understand material from a variety of perspectives. This standpoint reflects recent calls to engage in theorizing as transformative practice (Barge, 2001).

Viewing scholarship as transformative practice focuses our attention beyond a translation metaphor (e.g., Petronio, 1999) and on the relationships between theory and the lived experience and identities of the parties involved at the particular moment (Barge, 2001). Theorizing as transformative practice honors the contribution of those we work with and moves us to co-create a better life with them. Opportunities for critical thinking about the process of service-learning and the connection between self and subject matter (e.g., journaling, class discussion, essay questions, public presentations) are critical for the service-learning experience itself and to foster a lifetime of reflection for students (Cheney et al.,...
To summarize, we argue service-learning is an important pedagogy because it helps students connect with the subject. We now address how students make connections with their community(s) through service-learning experiences.

**Connecting Self with Community(s)**

Colby and her colleagues (2000) remind us that a primary purpose of the first American colleges and universities was the development of students’ characters as well as their intellects — especially their moral and civic development. Reflecting this orientation, Howard (2001) argues that for pedagogy to truly be called service-learning, it must emphasize “purposeful civic learning” and directly and intentionally prepare students for active civic participation and engagement in a diverse democratic society (see also Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Conners, 1998; Seifer, 1998). Civic learning is an important educational goal in an era where student interest in politics is declining (Sax, 2000). Indeed, research has documented learning outcomes of increased social awareness and civic responsibility when students participate in community service (Astin & Sax, 1998).

The research of Moely and her colleagues (2002) reinforces the benefits of having students connect with their community(s) through service-learning. They utilized the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) at the beginning and end of a semester to measure the attitudes of 541 undergraduate students — 217 who were doing service-learning and 324 students...
who were not. Students who were doing service-learning showed significant increases in (a) their plans for civic action, (b) assessments of their own interpersonal, problem-solving, and leadership skills, and (c) agreement with items related to issues of social justice.

One outcome of “purposeful civic learning” facilitated by community service emerges as students develop their “social capital.” The core idea of social capital theory is that connections among individuals — and corresponding norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness — have value, and so civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2000). Yet many students have not been socialized to truly appreciate social capital apart from networking for job-related contacts. As Putnam illustrates, in the last third of the 20th century, only mailing list membership to organizations whose members never meet has continued to expand, while “active involvement in face-to-face organizations has plummeted” (p. 630). We have seen this phenomenon in some of our students who might be referred to as “resume joiners” — involved in many organizations in name, but only active participants in a few of these.

McKnight (1995) contends a byproduct of decreased involvement and increased individualism in recent generations is the creation of systems to achieve the desire of most human services — care. Yet this is not possible because “care is the consenting commitment of citizens to one another. Care cannot be produced, provided, managed, organized, administered or commodified ... Care is, indeed, the manifestation of a community” (p. x). Rhoads (1997) concurs that central to the process of community building is an ethic of care, which may be
fostered among students by community service participation including service-learning activities. The framing of care as commitment of citizens to one another highlights the importance of social capital. Students need to be aware of the connections among themselves and others; as Putnam (2000) describes, we need to widen awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked.

The more our students engage their community(s), the more they realize that people in general are trustworthy and operate with norms of reciprocity. We argue that service-learning provides opportunities for students to increase their social capital in ways that many pedagogical strategies cannot. Specifically, service-learning activities typically create opportunities for developing “bridging” social capital, which is outward looking and encompasses people across diverse social cleavages (Putnam, 2000). Individuals who are engaged with “bridging” their communities are generally more tolerant; the more people are involved with community organizations, the more open they are to gender equality and racial integration.

Loeb (1999) argues that many of our students sit on the sidelines not because they lack understanding of the complexities of community issues but rather because they do not believe that individual involvement in the public sphere is worthwhile. In this culture of individualism, people often feel there is not enough time to take care of anyone outside of “me and mine” and are caught up in busyness, consumerism and cynicism (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Daloz Parks, 1996). Those who find the time to serve others are thus “cast in the forms of heroism, altruism, activism, and volunteering.” This
creates (mistaken) beliefs that in order to become civically engaged we must be larger-than-life—someone with more time, energy, courage, vision or knowledge than most people could ever possess. Impulses toward involvement are dampened by a culture that does not view heroism as the work of ordinary human beings. Subsequently, we often become what Arendt (1961) once called “inner immigrants,” privately outraged at our society’s directions and problems, but publicly silent because we mistrust our ability to make a difference.

Extant literature suggests that service-learning can increase students’ self-perceptions about their abilities to make a difference (e.g., Elwell & Bean, 2001; Tucker & McCarthy, 2001; O’Hara, 2001). One outcome of service-learning we have witnessed in ourselves as well as our students is the cultivation of confidence in our abilities to make unique contributions to our communities. Additionally, service-learning seems to expand students’ awareness of the diversity of community organizations and their unmet needs. At a time when it seems that too often we leave social change to some distant heroes, service-learning provides opportunities for students to find their voice and create visions for a better future. Service-learning can connect students in the basic course with community by “challeng[ing] them to think about the larger social issues and how they might be able to contribute to change as members of a connected society” (Rhoads, 1997, p. 164).
ACADEMIC SERVICE-LEARNING IN COMMUNICATION BASIC COURSES

Daly (2002) argues that communication educators must find ways to make what we teach relevant to communication experiences outside of the classroom. He contends that “we have an ethical responsibility to address the concerns of people who want to become better communicators” (p. 381). The basic course is a foundational class which fosters new learning opportunities and exposure to the discipline of communication (Dance, 2002). Thus, it is vital to engage basic course students in learning opportunities that embrace the age-old dialectic of theory and practice. This can and should occur through active participation in service-learning projects in the basic course. In this section, we discuss various ways service-learning programs can be implemented in the basic course. While we particularize our suggestions for service-learning projects according to the specific type of basic course (public speaking or hybrid introduction to communication), many of our suggestions can be adapted across types.

Public Speaking Basic Courses

Public speaking courses offer rich environments for implementing service-learning programs. Service-learning can enrich the classroom environment while still achieving the basic goals of speech preparation, organization, and delivery. Furthermore, service-learning is a flexible pedagogy — depending on teacher needs, it can be designed for individual or collective assignments.
As one potential assignment, teachers can require speech topics (informative or persuasive) that include a community concern. Students would then investigate the community topic and develop a project allowing them to engage in the learning process through community involvement. For example, if a student chose to speak about the Big Brother/Sister program, there are various ways that she could engage in community participation. The student might present her speech to community and university organizations encouraging further participation in the program — acting as a spokesperson/recruiter while also practicing the very techniques of public speaking she is learning in the classroom. Subsequently, the student might even serve as a Big Brother/Sister, engaging in the community involvement she has suggested of her audience during the speech.

Another way we can involve our classes in service-learning is to choose a community issue (large enough to meet the needs of the class size) and have students choose topics of interest that fall within that broader issue. For instance, if the community issue chosen for or by the class was education, students would have a variety of topics to choose from — ranging from financial support for teachers to healthy eating habits in elementary schools. The audiences could range from the Board of Education to kindergarten classrooms. All students would target their speeches to a specific audience, which encourages active engagement in audience adaptation as well as a hands-on, “real world” application of public speaking activities. As a variation, the class could be broken into small groups that work together to present
speeches collectively, which also allows students to practice their group communication skills.

Primary objectives of public speaking courses include enhancing speaking and listening skills through learning new vocabularies, developing distinctive patterns of speaking, and learning about the multi-sensory process of symbolic interaction through which we define ourselves and our environment (Friedrich & Boileau, 1999). Community based projects afford basic course instructors opportunities to evaluate students’ achievement of these objectives in ways that also encourage students, through first-hand experience, to reflect on the role of symbolizing in a diverse, democratic society. Many community settings and social topics are characterized by co-cultural issues including gender roles, family structure, religious and spiritual identification, space and distance orientations. Service-learning in the public speaking course becomes a vehicle for understanding the diversity of challenges facing speakers in a postmodern world.

It is important for basic course instructors to remember that structured formal feedback is essential in the learning process. Unless service-learning results in substantive cognitive development, we believe that it has no place inside the classroom. When we integrate service-learning in our courses, we award academic credit for the learning associated with service and not for the service itself. If applied properly, service-learning pedagogy can be more rigorous than traditional teaching strategies. Students are not only required to master the standard text and lecture material (e.g., rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, style, and de-
livery), but they must also apply those concepts/theories in an appropriate context.

When designing service-learning projects, a key question for basic course faculty is “how can I assess student performance in order to fairly evaluate the learning outcomes from the service experience?” What did each student learn? To what degree did students fulfill the course objectives? First and foremost, service-learning (like any other assignment) should represent an authentic assessment opportunity. At the heart of the public speaking course is the intersection between speaker, audience, and speech. Assessment of service-learning projects should include analyses of students’ abilities to analyze (and adapt to) community audiences, conduct and critique research, develop and organize arguments using valid and reliable evidence and sound reasoning, and create identification with audiences.

**Hybrid Introduction to Communication Courses**

Hybrid introduction classes span the field of communication by teaching aspects of interpersonal, group, organizational and/or public communication. Consequently, the nature of the class offers several possibilities to engage students in service-learning projects. When teaching group concepts and skills, student groups might identify a need of the community and then develop (i.e., coordinate, plan and enact) a program to address that particular need. For example, a group could identify a need for supporting the American Red Cross and coordinate a blood drive on campus or in the community. Here the students would be engaged in working as a collective group aimed at serving a com-
mon goal as well as actively participating as community members. This would also serve to illustrate and use the skills of organizational communication, in that the students would be working closely with an established organization in the community.

Students can also be engaged at the interpersonal level. One possibility is to develop a community reading program at local schools or the public library. Students could serve as mentors for children in the community in their reading while at the same time practicing skills of interpersonal communication by interacting with young children. Similarly, classes could coordinate community activity fairs (for education and/or entertainment) for families to interact on a personal basis with college students in their community. These fairs would provide students an opportunity to utilize group, interpersonal, and organizational skills attained in the class. From this project the students gain practical application of classroom learned skills and the community gains a positive relationship with the university and an opportunity for family activity.

It is our responsibility as educators to create concrete reflection assignments to assess the connection of the service experience to course objectives (Gibson, Kostecki, & Lucas, 2001). Weintraub (1999) suggests, “for service-learning to be pedagogically sound, reflection must also be a key element in the service-learning process” (p. 123). One way to assess students’ understanding of course material and application to community need is to require regular journal entries applying the communication concepts to their experiences outside of the classroom. Another option for assessment is final papers encapsulating the entire service-learning experi-
ence through an illustration of communication theory and practice. These evaluation methods allow students to articulate what they have learned through the coursework and allow instructors to assess the merit of the service-learning assignment. For instance, basic course instructors can encourage students to reflect on connections between theories that have relational components (e.g., attributional confidence, social exchange theory) and the service-learning experience. At the same time, students can write about issues of uncertainty reduction, information processing, identification, group roles, and managing conflict as they emerged through the service-learning project.

It is important to note that given the nature of the basic course (lower level/younger classes), some students may not possess the appropriate maturity level to appreciate and engage in the activity in a meaningful way. Therefore, it is necessary that the instructor is aware of this potential hindrance and actively takes into consideration methods to overcome it. Mandatory regular assessment and instructor observations of the service-learning project can aid in the management of this potential problem. Students also could be required to keep committee logs documenting hours of participation and levels of participation over time. Overall, these examples serve as a starting point for basic course instructors — variations of these projects can be adapted to best serve the needs of the community as well as the classroom.

As previously argued, by connecting self with subject, students become part of learning communities in which knowledge is co-constructed, and subsequently often emerge better able to articulate their knowledge,
skills, and abilities. These examples of academic service-learning can aid students and instructors in the process of developing a sense of identity through active engagement with course materials in personal experiences outside of the classroom. When they have opportunities to apply communication theory to relevant real world experiences, students may more fully understand their position or identity within the subject matter at hand. Weintraub (1999) suggests, “service-learning works because it bridges theory and practice and allows students to meet the goals of any given course while accomplishing something worthwhile” (p. 123). This connection between theory and practice should not be ignored in the basic course, but should instead be embraced.

Further, these assignments (or ones like them) provide means for students to better understand their role in the community through civic participation in service-learning programs. Many of the options we have outlined above provide students with exposure to various opportunities that promote long-term community involvement. One of the outcomes of service-learning programs is that it benefits both the student and the community by creating lasting partnerships with the potential for future involvement. As we have argued, engaging students from Generation X and their successors in community issues can be difficult. Service-learning provides meaningful opportunities that aid in the bridging of self and community.
A Few Cautions on Service-learning

Service-learning, like any pedagogical tool, presents risks and rewards. Instructors need to be aware of potentials and pitfalls before committing themselves to a service-learning project. Throughout our reflections we have emphasized the importance of community. Yet we would be remiss to imply that all communities and the social capital that bind them are positive. Some forms of bonding social capital can encourage intolerance and prejudice toward other “different” communities. In fact, communities are often defined by exclusion as well as inclusion (Shepherd & Rothenbulher, 2001). In addition, scholars across disciplines have questioned whether community/social capital, liberty and tolerance are inherently in opposition. As Putnam (2000) reflects, there is a perception among many that “community” restricts freedom and encourages intolerance.

Yet because service-learning is an academic endeavor, classroom reflection can center on these very questions. Trethewey (1999) challenges educators to adopt a critical standpoint when using service-learning by encouraging students to ask questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice as well as the ways that others’ lives are shaped by such forces. How can we create strong communities that are not disenfranchising? Who should be planning social justice, through what processes, toward what ends, and for whose benefit? Through programmatic reflexivity, students may come to understand the socially constructed nature of societal problems and solutions as well as how individuals they encounter in the service-learning expe-
rience are positioned in certain ways by such social discourses.

One service project is not a panacea for deeply rooted social problems, and educators must reflect on concerns the long-term effects of one semester’s project on an agency (Crabtree, 1999). A semester (or quarter) system is often too short to allow for bona fide participation at the community-level. This long-term issue needs to be confronted by faculty and students if service-learning is to be implemented ethically and responsibly. Additionally, the issue of potential exploitation must be addressed. Individuals and organizations within communities should not be exploited for the learning opportunities of (sometimes) elite college students. “We must recognize that communities are not voids to be organized and filled by the more knowledgeable; they are well-developed, complex, and sophisticated organisms that demand to be understood on their own terms” (Gamson, 1997, p. 13). Artz (2001) describes a phenomenon called “service-learning-as-charity” in which middle-class students become aware of particular injustices, generally participate in community service intervention, but stop short of serious consideration of the systemic practices and relations that give rise to the social conditions at hand. Problematizing the service-learning experience itself may lead to critical awareness and perhaps lasting social change.

Another immediate response to the call for educators to participate in service-learning is that there is not enough time for instructors or professors to do everything they want to in a course, especially in light of professional pressures on faculty which often place emphasis on refereed publications (Stacey & Foreman, 1999).
One author served as faculty director of a campus-wide center whose mission was to institutionalize service-learning across campus. Time and again, she heard faculty suggest that service-learning takes too much time and too many resources. We recognize that many service-learning projects take more time and energy than traditional classroom assignments and that reward structures tend to devalue teaching innovations and service. We also believe that if service-learning is to reach its true potential, tenure and promotion considerations must favorably recognize the student learning and community outcomes associated with service-learning projects as well as the time commitment on the part of faculty. However, too often service-learning is perceived as taking time away from the study of course content and requiring additional resources that could be used for other existing needs. Service-learning need not be an addition to current course requirements. Likewise, service-learning should not change or add to what we teach; rather, it changes how we teach. Some of the traditional classroom content accumulation activity is replaced with more dynamic information processing activity.

Service-learning pedagogy does require educators to reconsider the belief that time spent infusing students with knowledge is the sole or most important function of higher education. It is important that faculty reserve enough class time for meaningful reflection. Additionally, educators will usually spend more time planning a course with a service-learning component —time spent cultivating relationships with community partners. In fact, an important principle in developing a service-learning based course is “intention” which can occur
months before the actual class begins (Gibson, Kostecki, & Lucas, 2001). Authentic and meaningful service-learning experiences require educators to clearly connect learning objectives and desired outcomes with community needs before the experience begins. Campus-wide centers for service-learning can play an important support role for faculty in the planning and implementation of service-learning. Such centralized centers can cultivate campus-community connections, match course content with service sites and their needs, help instructors design assessment procedures for the service-learning experience, and trouble-shoot problems that may occur throughout the learning experience. Ultimately, the question to resolve is this: Are resources (e.g., classtime, preptime, etc.) well spent, or could they be better spent in other ways? As proponents of service-learning, we affirm its use because of personal experience and ample evidence that service-learning positively impacts students’ personal and social development and enhances cognitive learning (e.g., Astin & Saks, 1998; Corbett & Kendall, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, 2000).

**Conclusion**

Universities are often accused of being out of touch with the publics they serve. Generation X and their successors are often accused of lacking civic-mindedness. Professors are often accused of being overly esoteric. Communication studies can and should measure its success, in part, by how it comes to terms with the full array of social issues that characterize our age (Cheney et
Service-learning pedagogy is a way to unite these various community stakeholders and engage in self-reflection and dialogue around values, skills, and interests. Service-learning requires a willingness to take risks and embrace uncertainty on the part of the teacher, especially the risk of inviting open dialogue and not knowing where it will lead. Yet, some of our most rewarding teaching and learning experiences occurred through the messiness of student-teacher-community dialogue.

As an introduction to the 2001 special issue of Southern Journal of Communication on service-learning in communication studies, editor Richard Conville relies on Northrop Frye’s notion of the “educated imagination” to suggest that service-learning is a powerful pedagogical tool for educating the imaginations of our students. Students’ imaginations of how society can be, and their ability to help create it, can be cultivated through experiences provided by service-learning. “Experience educates; thus service-learning educates the imagination: by joining community service with classroom theorizing, our students enlarge their vision of the society they want to live in” (p. 185). We would add to Conville’s analogy that because service-learning helps students connect both self with subject and self with community, as pedagogy it is a vehicle to engage basic course students and ourselves as agents of social change rather than as mere spectators of public affairs.
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Assessing Sensitivity: A Critical Analysis of Gender in Teaching Basic Communication Courses

Laura C. Prividera

Some learn and some do not, some progress and some do not, some earn the credentials of schooling and some do not. Some fit schools and some do not. Some few appear especially to prosper as students and as human beings, but many more do not. And many who do not are girls and women. (Stone, 1994, p. 3)

Over the past three decades, scholars have become increasingly attuned to how gender influences individuals’ educational experiences. Sexism, oppression, and marginalization characterize the academic climates for many female students at American colleges and universities (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Campbell, 1991; Carfagna, 1998; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Maher & Tetreault, 1996; Martin, 1994, 2000; Peterson, 1991; Rakow, 1991; Rich, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996; Smithson, 1990; Weiler, 1991; Wood & Lenze, 1991). The differential and unfair treatment women receive in the educational realm stems from a gender bias expressed through instructors, textbooks, and other students. This discriminatory treatment in the academy is the result of traditional patriarchal valuing of teacher-centered and authoritative classrooms, hierarchical relationships, competition among students, and individualistic and rational thinking.
According to feminist and critical pedagogues, our current educational systems are in need of examination, critique, and change if they are to serve female and male students equally and equitably (Belenky et al., 1986; Freire, 1993; hooks, 1994; Maher & Tetreault, 1996; McLaren, 1998; Rakow, 1991; Rich, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Weiler, 1991). Institutions of higher learning were originally designed by and for men (Martin, 2000); most educational systems continue to preserve patriarchal interests through course content that excludes women’s experiences and teaching practices that exclude women’s voices (Belenky, et al., 1986; Campbell, 1991; Carfagna, 1998; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Hanson, 1999; Maher & Tetreault, 1996; Martin, 1994, 2000; Peterson, 1991; Rakow, 1991; Rich, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sandler & Hall, 1986; Sandler, et al., 1996; Weiler, 1991; Wood & Lenze, 1991). As noted by Maher and Tetreault (1996), “many women students (and some men) have educational values and approaches that are at odds with the assertive, competitive, and hierarchical ideology of the academy” (p. 3). This “chilly” academic environment silences female students thereby having a significant effect on the direction their future careers and lives take (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Gender bias in the academy is particularly problematic as women represent a significant and burgeoning number of students entering undergraduate institutions (Maher & Tetreault, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). One way to address these issues is to incorporate “gender sensitivity” into instructors’ course content and pedagogical practices.

Gender sensitivity “requires careful monitoring of our gender interactions and urges direct intervention
when necessary to equalize opportunities” (Houston, 1994, p. 131). Wood and Lenze (1991) describe gender sensitivity as valuing both men’s and women’s experiences in education through textbook choices, course content, and pedagogical practices. The term gender sensitivity as it is used in this study is not only defined as including gender fairness in the presentation and content of course material but also to include the recognition and criticism of past systems of knowledge that have marginalized women.

Women’s studies scholars have found that women experience a number of benefits in gender sensitive educational environments, including higher levels of self-esteem, confidence, internal locus of control, and academic achievement (Belenky et al., 1986; Carfagna, 1998; Harris, Melaas, & Rodacker, 1999; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). When courses and pedagogical practices are sensitive to the diverse ways in which students know and learn, women and men both benefit. For example, Sadker and Sadker (1994) argue that in gender sensitive classrooms, men may become more adept at expressing emotion and showing care to others. According to Sandler et al. (1996), the content of courses should be gender sensitive across disciplines. Unfortunately, the gender sensitivity displayed in women’s studies programs has not necessarily been seen in other disciplines.

Scholars in the communication discipline have also begun to examine course content and pedagogical practices in terms of gender sensitivity (Peterson, 1991; Wood & Lenze, 1991). Wood and Lenze (1991) argue that “instructors are the most important source of change in institutional policies, attitudes, and behaviors regarding gender sensitivity” (p. 18). Yet, Sprague
(1993) argues that conversations on teaching in the field of communication have become marginalized. In Peterson's (1991) case study at the University of Maine, he found that the marginalization of gender issues was most evident in basic communication courses. Other communication scholars have also exposed the gender bias that imbues communication textbooks (Campbell, 1991; Hanson, 1999) and theories of communication (Bowen & Wyatt, 1993; Spitzack & Carter, 1989). By excluding issues of gender in course content, teachers not only fail to prepare students to contribute to a diverse world but also continue to marginalize many students in their academic pursuits (Elenes, 1995).

Additional research needs to be performed on how gender sensitivity is incorporated into communication educators' course content and pedagogical practices (Bowan & Wyatt, 1993; Hegde, 2000). The communication discipline needs to be sensitive in its representations of gender and scholars must continue learning about how gender issues are perceived, constructed, and enacted in the communication classroom. Therefore, in this essay I explore the following questions:

RQ1: How do communication teachers conceptualize and incorporate gender issues into their course content for basic communication courses?

RQ2: Do communication teachers who instruct basic courses employ pedagogical strategies that are sensitive to issues of gender? If so, how?
**METHOD**

The goal of this project was to provide a descriptive analysis of how communication teachers who instructed basic courses conceptualized gender sensitivity in their course content and pedagogical practices. In addition, I was interested in critiquing their perspectives in light of liberal feminist theory so I could advance claims about communication teachers’ gendered ideologies. In order to achieve these goals, I drew on interpretive and critical paradigms of research.

**Study Participants**

The participants for this study were recruited from institutions located in midwestern communities. I recruited 15 participants from seven educational institutions (five private and two public) offering communication majors. All 15 of the study participants identified themselves as white. Four of my participants were women and 11 were men. I recruited teachers at the rank of assistant professor or higher who instructed basic communication courses such as interpersonal communication, public speaking, and/or the hybrid course. Most of these basic courses were designed to fulfill general education requirements at my participants’ respective institutions.

The five private institutions ranged in size from 1,000 students to 4,000 students. Three out of the five private institutions had a Christian affiliation. The demographic composition of these institutions was fairly
homogenous with a predominantly white, middle class, traditional college-aged student body.

The two public institutions each had approximately 20,000 students. These institutions were more heterogeneous than the private institutions; their students were more diverse in age, ethnicity, and class. However, over 74% of the students at both were white.

Data Collection

In order to study gender sensitivity in basic communication courses, I employed in-depth interviews and participant observation. These methods were selected for their effectiveness in gathering descriptive data on how teachers process, view, and incorporate gender topics and sensitivity in their course content and pedagogical practices.

The interviews that I conducted were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis and interpretation. The in-depth interviews followed an interview schedule with approximately 20 questions most of which were open-ended. The ordering of questions varied from interview to interview to preserve the naturalness of the conversational process. Each interview lasted from one to two hours. The interviews yielded 251 pages of transcripts.

I also observed instructors in their classrooms as a complement to the interview data. Participant observation allowed me to experience the classroom as well as my researching role from multiple vantage points. I observed at least three hours of classroom time for each of the participants. To preserve the naturalness of each classroom, I did not audio or videotape the sessions. Rather, I took fieldnotes during and immediately after...
each class session generating 70 pages of observational fieldnotes. The extent of my involvement in each class session was limited as I was situated in all classes as a passive observer.

**Data Analysis**

My data collection and analysis procedures were influenced by the “constant comparative method” (Lindlof, 1995). Through this method of coding data, I was able to gain a strong sense about how communication teachers conceptualized gender issues in their basic courses.

After my first few interviews took place, I began documenting similar themes that emerged among my study participants. This gave me the opportunity to probe future participants. Once my data collection phase was complete, I reviewed interview transcripts, classroom fieldnotes, and supplemental documents several times. I specifically focused on material that related to communication education, gender, and feminism. In addition, I focused on language that dealt with the following areas: course content, identity, feminism, gender equity, gender discrimination, pedagogical practices, teaching philosophies, stereotyping, time constraints, epistemology, communication climates, language choices, and overall experiences in American classrooms. I identified these areas as central to examine because I see each as relating to how teachers respond to gender sensitivity.

To emerge as a theme in my analysis it had to arise in at least five interviews and/or observations. As noted by Fetterman (1989), studying patterns of talk or be-
behavior represents a form of reliability and “looking for patterns is a form of analysis” (p. 92).

**Thematic Descriptions**

Six themes characterized the way many communication educators treated gender issues and sensitivity in their basic courses. I discuss the themes as follows: (a) historical traditions, (b) course standardization, (c) patriarchal language, (d) neutral positioning, (e) authority, and (f) technological prowess. My liberal feminist theoretical framework influenced the identification and presentation of these themes and the stories they tell. I hope that these themes are read as subjective, fluid, interconnected, and at times overlapping as they are not meant to be exclusive categories.

**Historical Traditions**

The history of communication sets the stage for how knowledge claims are made in our field. Many of my study participants viewed the historical roots of communication as integral to their course content and pedagogical choices.

Will stated, “I frequently joke with the faculty that if I had my way we’d still be using Aristotle’s *The Rhetoric* . . . I’m not sure that we’ve learned all that much since Aristotle and the five canons of rhetoric.” Larry too argued that Aristotle’s principles were central to how he framed his public speaking course. He argued that the only new invention since Aristotle’s profound work was the Internet. The passion of Don’s perspective on the
historical tradition explained what the classics meant to him. He stated, “I rely a lot more on some classical rhetorical canons as far as things that the classical rhetoricians taught and spoke about like Aristotle’s canons, Cicero, Socrates . . . There are certain enduring values . . . of humanity that are no different today than they were three, four, or 5000 years ago.”

Tom echoed some of the previous research participants’ sentiments when he described the importance of the classics in choosing his interpersonal communication textbook as compared to textbooks designed by feminist and critical communication scholars. Tom believed that contemporary textbooks neglected the rich historical tradition of communication. He like the other participants preserved the centrality of the classics. Tom stated:

. . . I will never be a teacher that will go to a feminist interpersonal textbook because to me that neglects . . . all those great things from Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero and all the great people that have studied in communication up until the 80s when this really became popular.

Tom wanted to preserve the validity of traditional communication frameworks in his basic courses.

Men have long been depicted as representative figures of history as well as the public domain (Campbell, 1991; Hanson, 1999). This tradition was reflected in the talk of many of my research participants and it was evident in the choices teachers made with respect to the examples they provided students for public presentations. For example, Martin Luther King (MLK) was identified by almost all participants as the prime example of a persuasive and/or ceremonial speaker. Kather-
ine described important speaker models as, “... MLK, John F. Kennedy ... or Ronald Reagan.” Will identified representative public orators for his courses as Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, and Abraham Lincoln. As Will spoke about these historic figures he noted that he “used a wide range of video.” Will’s perception that he makes extended use of “a wide range of videos” obscures the fact that his examples were all male. Will, like my other participants, represented patriarchal figures as standard in the basic courses I examined.

Course Standardization

The theme course standardization describes the similarity in how basic course instructors conceptualized their courses. Ben did a nice job summarizing this theme with a response about the extent to which he incorporates gender issues into his basic communication course. Although Ben argued that gender issues were important, he also stated that he frequently does what is easy. “To do what is easy is to present standard courses, in standard ways, covering standard topics, using standard approaches. And I do that a lot of the time and I do it out of an economy of energy.”

The meaning of standard for public speaking classes was simple. Teachers were concerned with student aptitude in composing and delivering informative and persuasive speeches. In the interpersonal communication course, most study participants identified standard topics as the self, perception, nonverbal and verbal communication, language, emotions, and relational communication. The hybrid course represented a combination of these topics with an emphasis on public speaking.
Gender issues were not central topic areas in basic communication courses. Common responses for why were that (a) gender issues were dealt with elsewhere (b) teachers did not reflect on the importance of gender in basic courses and (c) instructors did not have enough time in basic courses to examine these issues.

Almost all of my research participants pointed out that their department offered a specialized upper division course in gender and communication. Many instructors saw this course as an appropriate outlet for conversations on gender. When I asked about the centrality of gender to basic communication courses, Sue stated, “I don’t know that gender should be central. I think it’s an important area. Certainly in upper level courses, certainly in graduate school . . I’ve got many majors — I wouldn’t make in central. I’m trying to do something a bit more generalist.” Like Sue, Larry stated, “Since we have a course in it . . . I don’t bring it up.” Mary noted that one of her colleagues focuses on courses related to gender therefore it is not something that she spends time with in public speaking. David stated, “there are a number of places where it’s already being addressed and I don’t think I’d feel comfortable making a special point of it in interpersonal.”

David acknowledged that he did not really think about incorporating gender issues into his course. He stated, “I just don’t think a lot about it. Yeah – I’m not very self-reflective on that point.” Katherine expressed similar views to David when she responded to my question about the extent to which gender issues are included in her course content. She stated, “oh my, I may have a big gap there.” Will’s comments were similar to David’s and Katherine’s sentiments. Will noted that
gender issues were “not really relevant to my public speaking course.” Al stated that gender was not something he thought deeply about. “I don’t know. No I haven’t thought of it and no I don’t think of it as much. I don’t think about the different ways that men and women make sense of the world.”

Time was also a common explanation for why gender issues did not surface in basic courses. Katherine stated, “Perhaps I could address it more. I don’t. I don’t do it that much because it seems like there are so many other things that are covered . . . the basics of what a supporting material is — how do you organize this speech, how do you organize the main points.” Will did not see the relevancy of gender issues to basic public speaking and noted that these issues were only addressed “indirectly” in his course. He stated, “but I think that’s the extent to which they should be addressed in the basic public speaking course. Once again you can’t put everything into every course.” With reference to exploring gender in Bill’s basic course he stated, “I don’t know that I necessarily do that . . . there’s really not an opportunity for me to steer them into a proactive . . . gender activity.” Larry asserted that simplicity was most important for his basic courses and he viewed gender issues as obscuring more standard topic areas. Larry stated, “I mean we look at it with regard to audience analysis . . . but we don’t — I don’t say that we belabor it. You have to move the class along as quickly as possible and if we’re going to do this then what we better do is make it as clear as possible.” Time was frequently framed as a way to exclude the discussion of gender issues in basic courses and my participants’ responses il-
illustrated how gender topics were at the margins of their basic course content.

Patriarchal Language

Many of the stories of my participants were consistent with the viewpoints of Spitzack and Carter who wrote that, “to examine the language of scholars in the communication discipline is to come face to face with masculine socialization” (1989, p. 21). The theme patriarchal language illustrates how the patriarchal linguistic system was preserved in many basic communication courses. My participants’ responses to gender bias language illustrate this point. For example, Bill stated in reference to challenging the generic use of “he:”

I think that is oversensitivity and I’m not trying to be unkind to females but I’ve never once read the word “he” in a generic sense and thought it excluded women . . . now I try to do it when I lecture. I do try to say “he” or “she” or if I say something where it’s “he” I might say well you know that women too but I think if we try to do that in everything we do everybody’s going to get paralyzed and we’re going to have presentations that are twice as long.

As with many of my study participants, Bill used the conventional system of patriarchal language.

Many teachers noted that it did not bother them if students used language that had a distinct masculine root or bias. Gina stated, “It doesn’t bug me if they do it, because I was brought up in that time when it didn’t make any difference.” Will did not require gender-neutral language in his classes and like Bill, Will provided a justification for why challenging masculine roots were
simply not necessary. When asked how he would advise a colleague who was bothered by gender biased language Will stated:

I guess the first thing I’d ask is whether it’s disturbing the class or lessening the students’ effectiveness. If not, then maybe we don’t have a problem. If you try to force someone – this sentence you use “he” and the next sentence you use “she” and then you’re back to “he” and then to “she” you can get very artificial and very weird sounding.

The traditional patriarchal linguistic system was represented as normative by many of my participants. Some teachers such as Larry, Gina, and Mary reported that they tend to overlook gender biased language. In fact, when I asked about students using masculine roots in language or the generic “he” during their presentations, they said they probably would not notice these behaviors. These teachers also noted that this subject did not emerge in their course content or in their teaching style. For example, Larry noted that he may not catch masculine specific language because the subject is not particularly salient to him. When I asked Gina if this subject emerged in her basic course she stated, “no I can’t say that it has.” Finally, Mary noted that even though she hoped to promote gender-neutral language, she said she frequently misses sexist language practices when they are exhibited.

Most of my research participants were comfortable with patriarchal language practices as they knew them. In fact, a statement requiring gender inclusive language did not appear in most of the syllabi or presentation evaluation forms I examined. Many of my study partici-
pants did not challenge status quo language conventions in American culture.

**Neutral Positioning**

Many research participants perceived the study of gender as taking a position on social relations between men and women. Therefore, teachers tried to frame social interactions as genderless. Instructors felt that by excluding gender issues from their course content they maintained neutrality and hence they were gender sensitive. The theme neutral positioning illustrates the subjectivity and partiality of teachers’ knowledge and experiences with gender issues. “No knowledge or teaching can be neutral because all emerge from some ideological position in society and all influence the development of students in one direction or another” (Shor, 1996, p. 56).

My study participants tended to view questions on gender as exclusionary to men so they felt more comfortable stressing perceived neutral terms such as “human,” “individual,” or “person.” Don displayed neutral positioning when asked about the importance of making concepts from women’s studies a more natural area of inquiry within communication. He stated:

> Initially I would say no . . . if we are going to have a women’s area then we need to have a whole section dealing with the man’s area . . . although I can understand if there has been sort of this built in assumption and bias that all previous communication has been from a male point of view. But I don’t buy that argument. I still think we are in the business of human communication.
Will also commented on the importance of responding to others in a “human” or “person oriented” way. For example, when I asked him whether he thought he was a gender sensitive instructor, Will stated, “I think that’s unfair because I’m person oriented. You respond to the individual. You don’t respond to that’s a male or that’s a female.” Like Don and Will, Larry stated, “Hey listen I think everything is women’s studies and men’s studies . . . Why can’t it just be that we study humanity?”

Even though my participants felt they were neutral and gender sensitive, several pointed out that their attention was drawn to male students. For example, Tom and Sal worried that they overlooked male students because they felt that female students were more participatory. Tom stated, “What I’ve noticed here is when I ask a question a lot of times it’s the female hands that go up and not as many males . . . it just seems like the women feel more comfortable participating in class . . . It’s to the point . . . where I’m really worried that some of the guy’s education is suffering.” Sal noted that many of the males in his class perceived communication as “very sensitive, something very touchy feeley.” He further noted that he has tried to “shift the focus” of his course from the “sensitive improvement of relationships” to being a more “effective communicator.” Sal hoped this language would be more inclusive to his male students.

A number of my participants commented on how they engaged in bantering and playful conversations with male students. For example, Will stated, “I guess I would tease a male student more — be a little rougher. I frequently would take a teasing approach to get at some habits that they have to change.”
noted that his interactions with male students were more likely to take on relational dimensions whereas his interactions with female students tended to be more task driven. Katherine discussed the frequency with which she engaged in bantering with groups of male students. Sometimes Katherine noted that she had to work to calm these students down so they could settle in to her class. Ben shared responses similar to Katherine as he noted that he was drawn to groups of male students by their “rowdy disruptive male gregarious behaviors.” It was clear from my observations and discussions with communication teachers that they were frequently drawn to male students for a variety of reasons. Yet, almost all of my research participants believed they maintained a neutral identity both with how they viewed gender and how they related to students.

Authority

Authority describes how my research participants created classroom environments and enacted pedagogical practices that were teacher-centered and traditional. Authority was established through forms of address and pedagogical practices, such as orderly communication climates, structured lesson plans, traditional classroom layouts, student passivity, and lecturing. Even though many teachers acknowledged tensions in positioning themselves as authority figures or using pedagogical techniques that were teacher-centered, many instructors reverted to these practices.

One of the first ways that teachers situated themselves in the classroom was through their own naming process. Most of the teachers in this project used sur-
names and titles for themselves and first names for students. This tended to put distance between teachers and students placing the teacher as an authority figure and knower in contrast to the student who is placed in a submissive and passive position as the receiver of knowledge (Shor, 1996).

Other enactments of the theme authority related to teachers’ implementation of traditional pedagogical practices in the context of their classroom climates and their structuring of lessons plans. For example, Ben noted, “I like an ordered climate. I like a kind of semi-orderly thing and I tend to run things where I’m often the center of attention. . . . I can tolerate a little bit of calling out . . ..” Ben went on to say that his daily lesson plans reflected his interests rather than the interests of his students. He stated, “I like to talk about stuff that I find interesting that I feel very comfortable talking about and that I think is useful to them. The old maxim is that people teach what they know and so I’m attracted to teaching things that I know.”

Bill also discussed how his views of course material affected what and how he taught. “Now I’m not a believer in this trendy idea that students should do all the learning themselves and lecture and the teacher leading the class is passive . . . a lot of my students . . . I don’t think they have the training to be self-directed learners.” Katherine shared a perspective similar to Bill in regards to students’ capabilities as self-directed learners. Her views were best illustrated by how she assigned speech topics for her public speaking course. Katherine explained, “We don’t let students choose topics for the informative speech. This prevents about two weeks of wasted time.”
resistance to relinquishing authority because they believed that students could not be self-directed learners.

Gina explained how she viewed students’ learning and the role that she as the instructor played in that learning process. She stated, “I used to think I could have this funnel and drill this little hole and just pour it in but it doesn’t work.” When I asked Gina what does work she indicated “repetition” frequently helped her students remember course content that she deemed important. Gina, also described her preferred classroom climate, “I have the right to require them to do the work I want them to do. I teach to the highest in the class and keep them moving forward and then try to pull the rest up.” Will shared some of Gina’s sentiments with respect to how he viewed students in his class. He noted, “It’s students’ obligation to learn. It’s my obligation to head them in the right direction as to what he or she needs.”

Class after class I watched teachers who clearly occupied their space. Teachers controlled many of the classroom interactions and many students remained passive as they sat in the standard row formation. Teachers were almost always positioned standing in front of the classroom. Some communication teachers positioned themselves behind a podium using the floor space in that region but once again not stepping into the space occupied by students.

Lecture dominated as the primary teaching method in the classes that I observed. Sue stated, “lecture is the basic. What I try to do is have what I refer to as an interactive lecture.” Similarly, Ben stated, “sometimes I just feed them information kind of through lecture and sort of explication and then I try to get them to discuss or comment.”
Even though Ben relied on lecture he also viewed this teaching method as problematic and flawed. He explained, “It puts limits on the kinds of activities they can have.” David experienced tensions similar to Ben when using lectures in his interpersonal class. He stated, “well I do depend on some element of lecture. I haven’t figured out a way to get around that.” He elaborated, “I don’t mind lecturing and in some ways I prefer it because at least I can get straight what I want to say.” As with David and Ben, Tom experienced tensions with lecture and he went to great lengths to try to articulate how lecture was a part of his teacher identity both in terms of how students viewed him and how he views himself. Tom stated, “I’ve found I guess through my years of experience that you have to do a certain amount of lecturing or else a certain amount of knowledge is not going to be gotten across.” Tom also felt that lecturing was a pedagogical technique that students expected. “They look at you like you are not doing your job if you don’t lecture. I mean I feel guilty when I show a good video sometimes because it’s like oh . . . He should be teaching.” Tom located himself as a provider of knowledge and viewed his students as the receivers of knowledge.

The maintenance of authority was accomplished through how teachers’ enacted their pedagogical techniques to convey important communication concepts. Many of the teachers I spoke with were comfortable with authority. I am reminded of Shor’s (1996) self-reflexive perspective on teaching. “Being in control may help my self-image and my professional image, but the truth is that it guarantees nothing about student learning” (p. 106). For those who felt tensions with
authority, they still fell back on traditional teaching methods such as lecture as a way to convey important communication concepts.

Technological Prowess

Through the interview process, I asked teachers how they would like to improve their pedagogical talents or knowledge of communication. The most common responses from teachers centered on their ability to incorporate technology into their classrooms. My reasoning for including technological prowess as a theme that relates to gender issues is twofold. First, mastering technology was perceived as a more worthy area to devote time to than gaining a deeper understanding of how gender influenced students’ communication experiences. Second, the perpetuation of technological advancements was indicative of the privileging of individualism and logic – technology has implications for gendered meanings.

In discussing technology, teachers were comfortable addressing their perceived deficiencies or lack of knowledge on this subject matter. For example, Don stated, “I would have to admit that I am somewhat behind the eight ball when it comes to current technology. And I wish I could find someplace where I could go and kind of get a crash course in classroom technology for dummies.” Larry noted, “You have to teach yourself technology. One thing I’d like to do would be to incorporate better the segment dealing with Powerpoint in the class.” Mary talked about wanting to spend a significant amount of time learning new technologies. She stated, “I would like to totally immerse myself in the technology
end of teaching. I would like to spend more time with web assignments . . . I would like to work more on Powerpoint if I ever have an opportunity.” Sal spoke about technology being one of his interests. He noted, “I’m interested in technology and how it incorporates into the learning process. I would want to learn more software that I think would benefit students.” David also noted that he would like to become better acquainted with technology with specific reference to the incorporation of web page usage and design for his classes. Ben too talked about the importance of technology and the implementation of communication courses online. Technology was revered as one of the most notable ways that my research participants could improve their pedagogical practices.

THE PROBLEM OF PATRIARCHY
IN BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSES

I used liberal feminism as a way to learn about whether and how communication teachers incorporated issues of gender into their basic courses. My most significant finding was the pervasiveness of patriarchy and tradition in the talk and teaching practices of many communication educators who instruct basic courses. Even though patriarchy is fraught with bias it functions invisibly under the pretense that its system of organizing is normal. Berger and Luckmann (1967) write that people build societies through patterned interactions and behaviors. These patterned behaviors or habits become “taken for granted routines” and they are often left unchallenged (p. 57). Thus in this study I mark, chal-
Assessing Sensitivity

I am troubled when I reflect on the words of Spitzack and Carter (1989) that, “the ideology masked in contemporary communication research reflects the history of patriarchy in American culture” (p. 27). Yet, the theme of historical traditions illustrated that many communication teachers valued the public oratory skills and theorizing of male scholars. Although presenting our communication history is significant, it is also important to be critical about the history we teach. Most of my participants did not challenge what the classic material signified (i.e. truth, objectivity, dualistic thinking, hierarchy, and patriarchy) or the impact that it has on teachers’ pedagogical choices. Men represented the norm for public presentations as did characteristics of men’s speech that convey assertiveness, power, independence, strength, and certainty. By uncritically privileging patriarchal values, teachers may perpetuate the mind over the body, objectivity over subjectivity, and rationality over emotions. Positioning knowledge from a perspective of patriarchal privilege may have an adverse impact on women’s learning. Gender sensitivity could be facilitated by problematizing the patriarchal nature of our historical roots.

Women may remain invisible in our field through course standardization that excludes gender issues from the content of our basic courses. Institutions, departments, and students frequently support course standardization as we are socialized for practices that do not disrupt the status quo or the nature of knowledge construction both of which exemplify and preserve patriarchy. However, gender is central to our understandings
and identities – it forms a solid base for all communicative interpretations and meanings. Yet gender issues were perceived to be beyond the scope of basic courses.

Course textbooks structured the content and syllabi of many basic courses. Many of my research participants did not perceive gender issues to be central topics in their textbooks and teachers did not see the inclusion of gender issues to be a significant criterion in their textbook selection. The findings from a number of studies were consistent with my study participants’ perceptions (Bowen & Wyatt, 1993; Campbell, 1991; Hanson, 1999).

Enactments of gender sensitivity may be more likely if we disrupt the imposed boundaries that course standardization perpetuates. Classroom spaces need to become more active arenas for challenging patriarchal normativity. Critical and feminist scholars frequently use classroom spaces as ways of evaluating and reevaluating belief systems that create knowledge and social structures (Overall, 1997; Shor, 1996). From my discussions with communication teachers, their course materials were chosen based on the perceived normativity of required course elements so it is these required elements that we must hope to change if we are to create more gender sensitive environments. In order to disrupt course standardization, we also must disrupt discourse practices that reinforce dominant ideologies.

Patriarchal language patterns were preserved in many of the basic courses I studied. Many of my participants did not reflect on the implications of patriarchal language on students’ learning. Students were not encouraged to critique language practices that maintained the universality of men as the standard by which others
are evaluated. In fact, many teachers seemed to find conversations on the male bias in language patterns as being petty or unimportant as these conversations took time away from more “substantive” course material. Yet, language functions as a way to maintain male dominance in our society as the experiences of women are muted by a language not of their creation (Ardener, 1978; Kramarae, 1981; Spender, 1990). Embedded in our language are the cultural values and symbols deemed most appropriate in society. Our language practices do not function equally in men’s and women’s lives as women are marginalized through a language that represents their experiences in inaccurate and biased ways (Kramarae, 1981; Spender, 1990). Students and teachers may continue to preserve patriarchal language practices until we interrogate the routine ways in which language is used.

Many of my research participants did not critique the use of the generic “he” as well as other terms that contained male roots. Yet, when individuals read “he” as well as male specific language, they think and visualize men (Gastil, 1990; Todd-Mancillas, 1981). Although this is not a new finding, I found it is one many teachers in basic courses may perpetuate.

Feminist communication scholars have worked to create new words and meanings that include the multiple ways women learn and construct knowledge (Kramarae & Treichler, 1992). However, few of these studies made it into the content of my research participants’ basic courses. For example, gender inclusive language was not listed on any of the public speaking evaluation forms I reviewed nor did most teachers make this a central area of discussion. Many teachers who
preserved patriarchal principles did so believing that these patterns of interacting were neutral.

My participants spoke from a position where gender was not marked; hence they denied the importance of an analysis of gender and preferred to use phrases such as human and person. However, we live in a gendered society and students are gendered beings (Pagano, 1994). Freire (1993) describes we can never be neutral. Our actions and inaction all convey meaning. The perceived high status of the neutral teacher supports principles such as objectivity, rationality, truth, logical thought, and the mind/body split to the exclusion of subjectivity, multiple truths, emotions, care, feelings, imagination, and the body. These patriarchal principles suit the learning styles of men often to the exclusion of women (Belenky et al., Carfagna, 1998; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Philbin, Meier, Huffman, & Boverie, 1995). “The cultural devaluing of women further complicate the inclusion of feminist and gender studies within the communication discipline because, by having the right to claim impartiality, patriarchal culture hides behind the guise of gender neutrality” (Spitzach & Carter, 1987, p. 28).

In order to promote more gender sensitive environments, it is important to dispel the myth of the neutral teacher. Smith (1994) argues that we are all embedded knowers. By using an outsider perspective, individuals can gain a better sense of their embeddedness or the subjective ways in which they construct knowledge and make claims about our worlds.

Authority illustrated the pervasiveness and dominance of tradition and patriarchy in the creation of the basic course classroom climate. All too often students
remained passive recipients of knowledge, as forums were not created for them to interrogate the structures that keep them voiceless (Freire, 1993; hooks, 1994; Shor, 1996). Course content and pedagogical practices were driven by the teacher, as many students were not empowered to participate in the material they studied. In fact, teacher-centered environments may foster complacency in students where submission to authority is normalized (Freire, 1993; hooks, 1994; Maher & Tetreault, 1996; Shor, 1996). Submitting to authority often translates to submitting to patriarchy. Classroom environments that foster relationships in which students feel dominated normalize unequal power relationships that women are exposed to on a daily basis. It is the authoritative habits of teachers in classrooms that need to be challenged (Shor, 1996). Habits such as traditional spatial arrangements, unilateral decision-making, and formalized lectures may foster dominance, control, and inequality.

When instructors work to make classroom spaces more democratic, new possibilities can be opened for teachers and students. Sharing authority through negotiating syllabi and making students' experiences more central to course content can function to produce more gender sensitive environments (Bogden, 1994; Overall, 1997; Shor, 1996). Democratic environments empower students. Through empowerment, students have the opportunity to develop their voices and perspectives on social relationships and sense making in our world. When individuals are empowered, they can transform themselves and the organizing principles that govern our society (Brunson & Vogt, 1996). Many of my research participants felt that they had to authorize knowledge for
Assessing Sensitivity

students to learn effectively. Yet this educational format often has the effect of preventing students from developing the critical skills they need to evaluate practices in the social world. Perhaps one of the most recent ways that educational environments may deny women and men equal and equitable educational experiences is through technology.

The benefits of technology that teachers described lacked a critical or feminist critique of the values that technological environments support. At a surface level, technology may appear neutral. However, embedded in technology are the values of a culture (Pacey, 1983) and those values are gendered (Benston, 1988; Kramarae, 1988; Rakow, 1988). Often, technology embraces the values of patriarchy through promoting individualism, separatism, objectivity, rationality, and logic and ignores women’s ways of knowing that include interconnectedness, imagination, emotions, and the body (Benston, 1988; Kramarae, 1988; Rakow, 1988). Benston (1988) argues that:

Women are excluded from education and action in the realm of technology. They do not have the same access to technology or the same experiences with concepts and equipment as men do. They are not expected to act from a technical view of the world. Instead, women’s world is one of people, nurturance and emotion. (p. 23)

As human interactions and processes become more scientific, women’s ways of learning may become devalued. Scientific viewpoints are associated with patriarchy. Often, all of society is held to a standard that technological inventions achieve without attention to the gendered implications of technology.
The important point to be made with reference to technology is that women’s and men’s experiences and perceptions of technology are frequently different. Thus, “the challenge is to develop a more inclusive understanding of the social relations and ideologies of technological processes” (Kramarae, 1988, p. 7) so that the values and experiences pertinent to men are not favored over other individuals.

Through my thematic analysis, I have shown how gender issues were marginalized and minimized in the talk of many of my study participants. My themes illustrated that gender was not central to many basic courses. Rather these topics remained at the margins of teachers’ course content and pedagogical practices. Leaving gender at the margins results in classroom climates where female students may not realize their full potential as human beings. I argue that communication scholars must mark gender as an integral concept in basic communication material if they are to enact gender sensitivity in the classroom.

**CONCLUSION**

Critical and feminist scholars argue that educational systems are gender biased and this foundation needs to be changed to promote equity and equality for all students. In order for our communication classrooms to encourage students to develop critical perspectives of the world, we must move away from patriarchy as the centering force in our course content and pedagogical practices. I agree with Peterson (1991) when he writes that, “without an institutional focus,” revising our communi-
Assessing Sensitivity

cation courses to be more gender sensitive will, “remain ghettoized in special courses or programs taught by idiosyncratic faculty” (p. 60). Pagano (1994) writes that, “when we teach, we tell stories” (p. 252). It is my hope that this study encourages communication educators to think deeply about the stories they tell.

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Education as Communication: The Pragmatist Tradition

Chad Edwards
Gregory J. Shepherd

Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative.

*John Dewey (1916, p. 5)*

Basic communication course textbooks often justify communication pedagogy by pointing to linkages between communication practices and democracy (Zarefsky, 1996). We are all familiar with such claims: vibrant democracies require citizens capable of engaging in public discourse; healthy democracies demand citizens educated in the ways of rhetoric, proof, and argumentation; strong democracies are populated by engaged and informed voters, skilled in analyzing the issues of a given day. And indeed, the obvious character of this association might speak to its firmness. But in *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey long ago pointed us to a more important association:

The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. . . . But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is
primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (1916, p. 87).

It is this second, deeper explanation, which informs our approach to teaching the basic course. Fundamentally, we take the basic course in public speaking to be a site where associated living is experienced, and where a social actor practices the democratic art of understanding and articulating his/her own behaviors and beliefs in terms of the behaviors and beliefs of others, even as those behaviors and beliefs join with and provide direction for others while others’ behaviors and beliefs make sense of and influence the behaviors and beliefs of said social actor. This democratic practice of associated living is, as Dewey insisted, communication itself—“conjoint communicated experience.”

In the pages that follow, we provide a quick overview of this pragmatist educational metaphysic, discuss a few consequences of metaphysical beliefs about education, and offer brief concluding remarks.

**The Pragmatist’s Educational Metaphysic**

Because all belief structures regarding teaching imply corresponding ideas about life, learning, the relation of teachers to students, and the aims of education; and
because they are consequential not only for instructors and students, but for societies and cultures as well, we prefer the term *educational metaphysics* to that of *teaching philosophies*. The latter seems to privilege instruction and instructors to the neglect of student experience, relationships and educational structure, while the former more fully captures the integrative, non-dualist, and melioristic spirit of the pragmatist tradition which sought to transcend the worn dichotomy of the practical and the ideal.

In recent years, the transmissive approach to education has been heavily challenged from various academic paradigms; most notably perhaps, from feminist-women’s studies (see, e.g., hooks 1994; Maher & Tetreault, 2001) and neo-Marxist philosophy (see, e.g., Apple, 1993, Friere, 1970, Margonis, 1993). However, despite the soundness and prevalence of critique regarding the transmissive educational metaphysic, it has maintained its entrenched place in the typical university classroom. Armbruster (2000), for instance, noted that listening to lectures occupies nearly 80% of students’ time in class. In short, despite mounting calls for active learning, critical thinking, and engaged education, mainstream practice continues to embrace transmission models.

Mainstream, or “transmissive,” educational philosophies position the instructor as one whose job it is to effectively impart disciplinary information. The educational experiences of students may then be assessed with tests designed to measure their comprehension and retention (Doll, 1996). Because the instructor is the sole possessor of knowledge, it becomes important for students to accept and remember these “truths” with
minimal resistance, and unnecessary (and undesirable) for students to critically evaluate or challenge the “giveness” or “facticity” of claims made by the instructor or to hold course material accountable to their stock of lived experience. Palmer (1998) has characterized mainstream educational philosophy as that which:

centers on a teacher who does little more than deliver conclusions to students. It assumes that the teacher must give and the students must take, that the teacher sets all the standards and the students must measure up. Teacher and students gather in the same room at the same time not to experience community but simply to keep the teacher from having to say things more than once. (p. 116)

Because communication is handed a menial role of classification and transmission in this traditional metaphysic (i.e., as a vehicle for the transference of knowledge — a troubling theoretical characterization in its own right, see Shepherd, 1993, 1998, 1999), the instructor and students never fully realize an educational community. Put simply, social actors fail to create together anything in communication. In contrast, creating something in communication is the defining activity of the educational experience in the pragmatist’s metaphysic.

Though the pragmatist educational metaphysic was first forwarded more than three quarters of a century ago, it has not much been realized in educational practice. Indeed, until quite recently, pragmatism has been systematically suppressed both within and outside academia (Minnich, 2002). The socio-cultural conditions of the present, however, warrant revisiting the pragmatist tradition, which anticipates post-modern influences on
pedagogy (e.g., co-construction, relationality, and contingency), but does so without requiring wholesale adoption of the post-modern project and its most debilitating critiques (e.g., those regarding relativism and nihilism, cf., Shepherd, 2001).

Understanding the pragmatist’s educational metaphysic requires appreciation for Dewey’s belief “that the measure of the worth of the administration, curriculum, and methods of instruction of the school is the extent to which they are animated by a social spirit” (1916, p. 358). He was not, of course, referring here to the need for pep rallies and ever-present cheerleading squads, but rather to his insistence that while “Informational statements about things can be acquired in relative isolation . . . realization of the meaning of the linguistic signs is quite another matter. That involves a context of work and play in association with others” (1916, p. 358, italics in original). Essentially, pragmatist educational beliefs rest on the premise that the classroom is a “learning environment that is a practical, simplified version of society” (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 231), or in Dewey’s terms, “a community life in all which that implies” (1916, p. 358). Education, in this view, is more about the co-construction of beliefs, the making of social ties, the working out of all manner of things together, the experience of communication, than it is about the teaching of content, the acquisition of knowledge, or the development of mental or behavioral skills.

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1 The third anonymous reviewer’s insights were instrumental in the formation of this argument.
One result of this metaphysic is an instructor and classroom of a very different sort from one born of mainstream educational philosophies. If individuals “regard truth as something handed down from authorities on high, the classroom will look like a dictatorship” but if instructors “regard truth as emerging from a complex process of mutual inquiry, the classroom will look like a resourceful and interdependent community” (Palmer, 1998, p. 5). Dewey defined education as “that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (1916, p. 76). Dewey’s model of instruction thus maintained that the instructor be seen as a resource and guide person for learning—the educator’s main role is to provide advice and assistance to the students in their quest for meaningful experience. Ozmon and Craver (1999) argued that the pragmatist instructor’s undertaking is to aid students in directing, controlling, and guiding personal and social experiences so that the student can be a good community member in a democratic society. It is in this guiding through experiences, that praxis or “a union of theory and practice in reflective action” can start to develop and productively inform and change future action for the both the instructor and students (Schubert, 1991, p. 214). In this way, the educational aims belong to the students and not the institution or the instructor.

Because of the centrality of experience and the goal of praxis, the pragmatist educator maintains that a productive classroom requires an open environment and an attitude toward instruction that encourages experimental inquiry of socially constructed and contingent beliefs, values, and truth claims (Gutek, 1988). “Learning,” ac-
According to Palmer (1998), “does not happen when students are unable to express their ideas, emotions, confusions, ignorance, and prejudices. In fact, only when people can speak their minds does education have a chance to happen” (p. 75). Instructors must embrace the freedom to experiment with a variety of techniques and choices of content designed to assist students in developing productive ways of knowing, constructing truths, and testing ideas for their practical consequences. This requires a relinquishment of the notion that the role of teachers is to dispense absolute answers to abstract problems. For if we, as educators, view truth as a social construction with intersubjective agreement, and our own existence as precarious and potentially uncertain, we have to examine each social and human problem as it arises instead of attempting to locate permanent and stable solutions.

**Consequences of Educational Metaphysics**

Consistent with the pragmatist belief that the goodness of an idea is to be judged by the practical consequences of its adoption, we present several empirical and theoretical advantages of the pragmatist educational metaphysic. All too often, the connection between educational philosophy and educational practice is overlooked (Ozmon & Craver, 1999). In one attempt to affirm and empirically articulate the link between educational theory and practice, Edwards (2003) investigated the outcomes associated with various educational belief systems and demonstrated that both instructors and students ascribing to a pragmatist metaphysic of
education garnered a number of educational advantages over those ascribing to more traditional (or “transmissive”) philosophies of education.

In Edwards’ study, student and instructor participants completed a modified version of the Witcher-Travers (1999) survey of educational beliefs and a host of educational and communicative outcome measures. Results showed that pragmatist instructors were more satisfied with teaching as a career. This association is important, because as Bess (1977) suggests, “[u]nless faculty members perceive the teaching enterprise as a continuing source of profound satisfactions in life — satisfactions arising out of the fulfillment of deep-seated human needs—they will rarely have the sustained role commitment that is necessary for creativity and excellence in performance” (p. 244). And Bess’ argument received support in Edwards’ study, as instructors embracing a pragmatist metaphysic were found to have won significantly more teaching awards and honors than were their more transmissively-oriented counterparts. Such honors and awards are undoubtedly related to the greater career satisfaction pragmatist educators express, but they are also certainly attributable to another of Edwards’ findings: pragmatist instructors were rated by their students as more nonverbally immediate than were transmissive instructors. Of course, nonverbal immediacy has been linked with a plethora of desirable educational outcomes including teacher effectiveness (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), student motivation (Christophel, 1990), student perceptions of instructor attractiveness (Rocca & McCroskey, 1999), student affective learning (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Frymier, 1994), student perceptions of teacher caring
Pragmatist

(Teven, 2001), and instructor clarity (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), and continues to be lauded by instructional communication scholars as one of the most consequential factors in teaching/learning encounters.

Students in Edwards’ study who held a pragmatist educational metaphysic also fared better along a number of lines. Most notably, they exhibited higher levels of affective learning and greater motivation to learn. Interestingly, their perceptions of the nonverbal immediacy level, caring, and attractiveness of their instructors were higher (regardless of the educational philosophy of the instructor) than were those perceptions among students who embraced a transmissive metaphysic. This result accounts some for the greater communication satisfaction pragmatist-oriented students reported experiencing between themselves and their teachers.

The pragmatist educational metaphysic not only enables a richer and more effective practice, it represents a justified theoretical move (if such a division can be made). If the Communication discipline is to evolve from theorizing communication as transmission and toward a conception of communication as constitutive and ontological, (a move that seems to be well underway), so too must our theories of education reflect a greater understanding of the role of communication in calling into being both relations and relata.

Take, for instance, the typical mainstream transmissive model of education, which holds that the purpose of education is for instructors to deposit their knowledge and expertise in the minds of students. Such a belief is probably related to a corresponding model of communication as transmission, or as a vehicle for the expression of one’s thoughts, feelings, ideas, and beliefs to another.
Pragmatist

If the role of education is transferring knowledge from one individual to another, then communication has to take on the role of transferrer — it must serve as a vehicle or vessel for the transmission of the knowledge. Pragmatist educational beliefs, on the other hand, emphasize the mutual interplay between students and instructors and the co-created and value-laden nature of knowledge and truth. If education is a joint construction of participants, then communication must be something other than a medium for relaying truth or knowledge. Individuals with pragmatists educational beliefs likely have beliefs about communication that stress the role of communication in constituting social selves and realities that enable people to enter into authentic human relationships, or dialogue.

PRAGMATISM AND THE BASIC COURSE

Generally speaking, communication education embodying a pragmatist metaphysic would appear quite different from most current instructional practices. Instructors would care more about student engagement with than absorption of course material. That is not to say, of course, that educational content must be subordinated to educational process. The rather sharp distinction now drawn between pedagogical content and process has not always existed; the two previously being conceived as comprising an “indistinguishable body of understanding” (Friedrich, 2002, p. 374). Pragmatism, with its characteristically non-dualistic spirit, promotes a classroom enlivened by the active intersecting of lived everyday experiences and traditional course material.
(canonical, disciplinary understandings). Instructors in such a classroom are interested primarily neither in imparting stand-alone course “knowledge,” nor mostly in the use of pedagogical techniques aimed at eliciting positive student evaluations. Rather, students and instructors in the pragmatist classroom are urged to confront and test the utility of the belief in one truth claim over another, and to keep education centered not on student or teacher, content or process, but on a “subject” co-constructed by all involved and held accountable to both stocks of lived experience and academic theorizing.

More specifically, the pragmatist communication classroom would feature assignments that maximize students’ opportunities to creatively engage in civic affairs and participate in community life. A customary assignment in most mainstream basic communication courses requires students to single out a topic of their interest and prepare/deliver a speech to be assessed along a number of standard (objective) criteria produced by the instructor. Consider the ways in which this assignment might be transformed in a pragmatist course. For example, students might not even deliver a prepared speech, but instead partake in a small group discussion with other students and the instructor in which a creative solution to a community or civic problem is developed. Or, the student might engage in a simulated press conference, in which classmates and the instructor ask questions about the issue at hand. One advantage of such an approach is that it refuses a construction of audience and classmates as passive recipients of information or targets of persuasion, recasting them, instead, as active collaborators in communication and classroom community.
This is not to say that an individual speaking assignment has no place in the pragmatist classroom; rather, if and when a student delivers a stand-alone speech it would not, ever, be experienced as "stand alone." Instead, the speech would be done only in the context of other speeches already given or about to be given, never in presumed isolation from the experiences of others in the classroom community. This would, at the very least, reanimate the rather stale notion of audience analysis that often appears in our basic course textbooks and classrooms.

One obvious way to facilitate an engaged and connected speaking situation is to center attention and energy on a general problem or topic of interest. For example, a consequential social issue of general concern (e.g., healthcare or new technologies) might be selected as a focus of assignments, thereby allowing students and the instructor to share ideas and solutions to various problems about a general concern of interest.

Additionally, students and instructors, as a situated community of learners and teachers, could create the grading criteria for assignments together. Collaboratively designed rubrics could replace standard grading criteria, facilitating engagement with course material, critical thinking and evaluation skills, and a feeling of ownership and responsibility to meet co-constructed standards of performance.

In the pragmatist's classroom, the purpose of each assignment is never the transmission of information (or persuasion of that information), but rather the encouragement of a collective and creative endeavor designed to rely on the array of experiences present as it reconstructs and reorganizes those same experiences. The
community of learning is enhanced in such classrooms because all parties have a stake in the significance of problems addressed, the goodness of solutions derived, and the creation of truths collectively tested. Dewey (1916) argued:

In final account, then, not only does social life demand teaching and learning for its own permanence, but also the very process of living together educates. It enlarges and enlightens experience; it stimulates and enriches imagination; it creates responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought. (p. 6)

**CONCLUSION**

John Dewey is, arguably, the most significant and recognized philosopher of education in American history; yet the core of his educational metaphysic has not been much realized in American schools (cf. Ryan, 1995), and especially not in American Universities and Colleges. Dewey believed that education, as he defined it, was critical for democracies, and could only and necessarily be achieved in communication. It is in our nation’s classrooms that individuals of diverse demographics and backgrounds have the too rare opportunity of coming together to form conjoint experiences. Where, we might wonder, is the possibility of this occurrence more obviously likely than in the basic communication course where interaction itself is the featured subject? We have been given the time, space, and resources in our classrooms to provide students with experience in associated living. The pragmatist tradition reminds us
of this gift and calls us again to its concomitant responsibility.

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Teaching and Learning in a Spirit of Friendship

William K. Rawlins

Although over a quarter of a century has passed, I remember taking the basic course in Communication as an undergraduate at the University of Delaware. The course was called “Com 255 — Fundamentals of Speech Communication,” and the format was what we communication educators commonly term “the hybrid course,” involving units on rhetorical and communication theory, interpersonal and small group communication, and information and practice concerning individual and group public presentations. I still remember much of the content of that course, and I recall us gathering writing samples from walkways and bathroom walls around campus for our group presentation on “Graffiti as Communication” (and noticing together and reporting how the graffiti differed in the women’s and men’s restrooms).

But what I remember most was being treated with respect and interest by the teacher of the course, an M.A. student named Ms. Paula Roberts. Having been raised in a conservative small town in rural southern Delaware in a nuclear family of a mother, father and four sons, I came to the course with virtually no understanding of what was then termed “Women’s Liberation.” In fact, when Paula first mentioned the ideas in class, my reaction was basically, “Huh?” In our class-
room she thoughtfully engaged me as well as others about our ignorance and misgivings; and after class she took the time to listen and talk with me about these ideas, which were obviously shaking me to my core. Over the course of the semester, under her guidance and through our multiple occasions of speaking together inside and outside of class, my window on the world, my conceptions of myself, and my communication practices with other persons were altered and broadened.

I believe that all of us who teach the basic communication course share strong convictions about its potential for affecting our students in similar ways. I hope and surmise that each of us has stories to tell from our perspectives as teachers about the impact our course has had on students during the time we have taught it, as well as how teaching the course continues to improve and educate us as teachers and persons. For my part, I will say that some of the most striking and palpable changes I have witnessed in students during my career as an educator have transpired in and through the basic course. Frequently, students take our basic course very early in their college careers. They are excited; they are open. But typically they are also quite concerned about how they might appear when they speak in class. To greater and lesser degrees they are vulnerable.

In my opinion, these existential feelings are part of walking into any classroom although they may take on special significance in the basic course in communication, regardless of whether it is presented in the hybrid or public speaking format. Recognizing this, I want to consider how the ideals and practices of friendship can provide an edifying ethic for the interactions and relationships of educators and students. To this end I
examine: (1) three facets of friendship in the Western tradition; (2) four dialectical tensions of the educational friendship; (3) a collection of six virtues I associate with teaching as friendship; and (4) some limitations of the educational friendship that should be noted.

Three characteristics are associated with friendship in the Western tradition, namely affection, equality and mutuality (Aristotle, 1980; Brain, 1976). Friendship always involves a measure of affection for others, but from classical times different degrees and types of caring can characterize two different forms of friendship. On one hand, there is *eros*, a form of love toward particular persons that seeks exclusive and intimate bonds with them. By contrast, *philia* is a more out-reaching regard for others, associated with a friendship based on good will and wishing the other well for his or her own good. Further, when persons experiencing philia toward each other include a pursuit of the common good as part of their dealings, we can speak of political or civic friendship (Hutter, 1978). And while it is true that in smaller classes and over time through repeated individual contact, we can and do develop more particularized close friendships with students, my primary concern here is with fostering the climate of political friendship in our classes. Good will can be contagious (as, conversely, can bad will, distrust and bad faith), and performing our time together as an avowedly caring pursuit of the common good helps promote hospitable conditions for learning.

To anticipate possible concerns about quality and evaluation, in my experience caring for students does not mean diminished commitment to academic standards. When we care about students, our standards may
be raised, both our expectations of them and of ourselves in teaching them and evaluating their work.

Equality is a more difficult, if not structurally impossible, feature of friendship to achieve. Teachers possess rightful and (hopefully) learned authority in classes (Watt, 1982). We also embrace the responsibility for facilitating and evaluating students’ learning while acknowledging our power to grade their performance. Despite this power, the spirit of friendship always promotes the search for “levelers” in relationships, that is, places or spaces for speaking as equals. The stance of friendship involves de-emphasizing the structural inequalities patterning teachers’ relationships with students and highlighting at every opportunity the potential equality in our mutual desires to learn. Towards that end, for example, my syllabi have identified me for some years as “Co-Learner,” rather than “Instructor,” and students have remarked on the tone this establishes. Finally, both teachers and students must aspire to this stance for the mutuality of civic friendship to occur in our classes. As teachers we should seek to demonstrate and cultivate mutual respect, trust and good will. For example, I never request documentation from students for their absences or late work, etc. I trust in their word and hope that they in turn will trust mine and be honest with me.

Granting these three characteristics, pursuing educational friendship involves four dialectical tensions with space permitting only a brief review here (for discussion, see Rawlins, 1992; 2000). The Dialectic of the Freedom to be Independent and the Freedom to be Dependent addresses the critical concern of how much and in what ways freedom should be exercised in facilitating
learning. The stance of friendship encourages students’ freedom to grow and take risks while simultaneously preserving their option to depend on the teacher’s knowledge and experience when needed. But how do you give guidance without restraining choice too much? And how flexible and vulnerable can a teacher become without risking the student’s confidence in his or her grasp of the issues? We must not force students into independence if they are not ready, nor should we tacitly socialize them into being overly dependent on us or others.

The Dialectic of Affection and Instrumentality formulates the issue of how much teachers are permitted to care for students and how much this caring can occur as an end in itself versus as a means to the goals of education. I contend that we should care for each of our students, even if only through the generalized good will and positive feeling conveyed in a large lecture course. Of course, in smaller classes particularized caring and confirmation are possible through the various ways we respond to and interact with our students. It is a worthy practice to enlarge the circle of caring in today’s violent and distracted world as well as to try to make students feel good about themselves. We are in their trust.

The Dialectic of Judgment and Acceptance addresses the ongoing challenges involved in communicating acceptance and recognition of students as persons while fulfilling our responsibilities for evaluating their performances. As is the case with all friends, I believe that when persons feel that a teacher wishes them well and truly cares about them and that her or his evaluative standards have been developed and communicated in this manner, grading can be conducted in a spirit of learning and concern for improvement. A key issue here
is whether abstract standards, which may be utilized in good faith, are emphasized to the neglect of a caring stance toward students.

Finally, the Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protective ness acknowledges the tensions between encouraging the expression of vital and tough truths to keep ourselves honest as a community of inquirers, while at the same time being respectful and discreet about matters that might hurt or threaten others. This is a delicate line to walk that once again requires thoughtful performances and sometimes intervention by teachers, but always in a spirit of friendship and the possibility of living respectfully with our differences.

While recognizing these inherent and persistent dialectical tensions, I would like to celebrate six virtues aspired to in educational friendship. (1) *Encouraging the practices and classroom climate of a fair-minded, respectful, and caring political community.* A classroom is a public context for inquiring and thinking together and for performing our identities. It is a political space enhanced by the stance of friendship. As Arendt (1958) observed,

> What love is in its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere, respect is in the larger domain of human affairs. Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politike,* is a kind of ‘friendship’ without intimacy and without closeness; it is regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us. (p. 243)

(2) *Connecting course-related learning to the lives we are living.* Teachers are encouraged to be involved persons interacting with other persons, telling stories that dramatize their relationship to the matters under con-
sideration, and linking the material to their own lives as a model for students to do the same. Importantly, in telling these stories to each other, we don’t separate facts from values or living from learning together. We recognize and respect the diversity of political convictions and religious sensibilities informing our presence and reasons for being in our classroom together.

(3) Taking seriously the temporal registers of classroom discourse. Too often, classroom discourse finds itself confined to a limiting temporal orientation. For example, there is authority associated with the past and established facts, the way things have (always) been done. There is power derived from tradition in teaching. While prior ways of speaking often contextualize our present ways, we should consider the extent to which a teacher’s and discipline’s traditions should dictate a student’s future. There are also risks with too much talk about an enduring present. Such discourse may function and be heard by students as apologies for the status quo. Repeated descriptions of what is can begin to sound like constraining conceptions of what should or ought to be. Emphasizing present practices may inadvertently encourage conceptions and skills for fitting into predetermined situations and a normalized sense of what currently exists. A final temporal discourse addresses the future and possibilities yet to come. It is a language of making choices (in the richest senses of the words) and changing one’s personal and social contexts. Speaking in this way, the classroom becomes a place for praxis, for trying to talk about and go about our selves and our worlds differently than they currently are or have been in the past.
(4) Being sensitive to the narrative qualities of learners’ lives. The teaching friendship wants to hear how languages, voices, and events of the past both limit and enable the present. We want to talk about their practical and moral legacies for our classroom conversations and for the communities we are creating. As in all friendships, we want to listen to the particulars and details of other persons’ stories, to understand their meanings for the teller and the reasons for their telling. Learning in a spirit of friendship involves exploring the opportunities that different versions of the present afford for individually and collectively authoring our futures.

(5) Pursuing dialogue in teaching and sharing knowledge. Dialogue composes the intellectual heart of teaching and sharing knowledge in a spirit of friendship. Teaching as friendship learns from Bakhtin (1981) that all language use is an emergent, generative, and contested project. In Stewart and Zediker’s (2000) words, a dialogical stance involves “letting the other happen to me while holding my own ground” (p. 232). Learning involves real and spirited interaction, with conversation addressing issues that matter, asking questions leading to more questions, creating choices, and taking chances. A love of conversation enlivens the practices of this educational outlook.

(6) Emphasizing the intrinsic importance of classroom interactions and conversations with students. Reflecting Bakhtin’s (1993) insistence on the ethical import of “once-occurrence,” every moment of teaching is conceived as a rich and unique opportunity to live in learning and friendship with students and to validate them as persons. We need to listen thoughtfully to stu-
dents when they are speaking and to meet them where they are. Our attention to detail matters when we are addressing students. How carefully are we listening to what is being said (or reading what is written)? What does our posture and tone of voice say about our regard for any student we encounter? What is occurring on the identity level of our discourse? Who are we allowing ourselves to be in our words with each other? What kinds of examples of respectful interaction and regard do we perform for our community of learners? I believe the benefits of this approach to education are immediately redeemable; we do not need to wait to experience or realize the value of what we are learning together.

Despite its virtues, there are limitations to the practices of educational friendship described here. First, the contingent and relational qualities of our subject positions can simultaneously allow and disallow teachers and students to speak with each other in certain ways. As in all political circumstances, the participating teachers’ and students’ personal attributes, identities, and cultural backgrounds affect the concrete accomplishment of educational friendship. Relative ages, races, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientations, and social and professional statuses can markedly influence the opportunities for and perceptions of this way of teaching. Even so, I do not mean to speak here as categorically as it may sound. I strongly believe and hope that every person has a choice in how to address others in the moments they share of being alive. However, personal and community prejudices can affect our choices knowingly or in spite of our efforts to get beyond them.

Second, it may be argued that a fundamental, structural inequality inimical to friendship between teachers
and students persists. Under these conditions, the educational friendship can mystify students, with real differences obscured and the teacher feigning affection for students and acting in their best interests from a power position while actually pursuing self-serving goals. This critique might further contend that teachers own their superior positions and therefore students understand the nature of the traditional relationship. I would respond to these valid concerns in a few ways. First, the approach to teaching and learning I discuss here is not for everybody. Many teachers, as well as students, may feel more secure and effective in traditional roles. It is indeed imperative for all teachers to reflect continually and critically on their stances and actions toward students undertaken in the name of education (Brookfield, 1995). As a classically asymmetrical situation, there is always the potential for bad faith and exploitation, but these are not inherent faults, in my opinion. Finally, like dialogue within parenting and therapy relationships, teaching may only achieve intermittent moments of real friendship, of self- and other-recognizing good will pervading a community (Cissna & Anderson, 1998). Even if these moments are temporary, I still believe the stance and political climate of educational friendship are worth attempting to foster a learning community.

Communicating as educational friends is a risky undertaking. Teachers risk vulnerability when they speak more openly about and encourage students to question the reasons for pedagogical decisions and the connection of course material to their lives. The ambiguity of cultural scripts for friendship can make it difficult to draw clear boundaries for actions and discourse. In short, this approach may impose unexpected emotional labor on
both teachers and students. The injunction for teachers to care about and respect their students and for students to regard the teacher and fellow learners likewise (or act as if they do) can become additional responsibilities of class membership. Meanwhile, it is difficult for teachers and students to feel certain about how everyone else is experiencing their side of the friendship. Cultivating and sustaining the mutual trust and good will necessary for educational friendship can be a delicate, comprehensive, and ongoing challenge.

Despite the constraints, I believe that we can practice teaching and learning in a spirit of friendship, as a caring relationship with students that aspires to speaking and inquiring as equals and encourages shared responsibility for learning together. Celebrating educational friendship promotes edifying communicative stances of teachers with individual students and toward classes as collectives. I feel reverence for the privilege of being in a university classroom as a co-learner, which I try to convey to fellow students in my classes. I feel ecstatic about the joys of thinking, reading, speaking, and learning together inside and outside of classroom settings. I try to model and facilitate those joys of co-learning in every way I can and in a spirit of friendship with students. Clear thinking, speaking, and writing are counterparts so I try to demonstrate and encourage vivid, informed, thoughtful, and creative thinking and self-expression in my courses.

Students should feel safe taking intellectual risks so that they may learn something new. Accordingly, I emphasize good will and respectful interaction between persons in my classes. I want students to feel that their presence in our classroom community matters and that
their words will be heard and valued. I try to encourage a dialogical spirit in my classes. I am deeply concerned with our treatment and regard for one another as well as the subject matter.

It is vital in our basic communication course for students to connect what we are learning together with their everyday lives. Encouraging and developing well-chosen examples in our conversations and presentations enhances this process. I believe that much of what we teach in the communication field is immensely valuable to society. I also strongly believe that every single person makes a difference, and in our classrooms and writings we have the opportunity to cultivate and recognize that potential.

Toward these ends, I have tried to demonstrate my good will and my friendship by becoming the best listener I can be and to hear something of significance whenever a student speaks. I also begin every course with the assertion that no question is too big or too small, and I try to behave in ways that affirm this belief. In my judgment, learning about communication best occurs in a social setting that aspires to excellence in communication practices and that encourages self-respect and respect for others.

Teaching in the spirit of friendship as I have described it is not a step-by-step method or a handy solution. Instead, it is a risky approach toward facilitating learning that involves conscientious and disciplined practices, persistent orientations and sensitivities, and lived convictions. The rewards of these activities in our basic course (as elsewhere) are their ongoing accomplishment, enriched interactions with fellow learners leading to enhanced humanity and education.
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“When you see a new trail, or a footprint you do not know, follow it to the point of knowing.”

Uncheedah, the grandmother of Ohiyesa
(Nerburn, 1993)

As a basic course instructor I have often struggled with the routine nature of the course. While I am completely committed to its mission, theoretical scope, and performance opportunities, I have found it difficult at times to break frame and rethink how I approach the material, the students, and what we are doing together. The standardization of texts, written assignments, performances, and examinations, while necessary for consistency across sections, has contributed to a personal sense of pedagogical stagnation that, at times, has limited my engagement with the material and my students. I know from conversations with colleagues across the country that I am not alone in this feeling. We express to each other our angst, and try to remind ourselves just how special this course is and how deserving our students are of an experience that has the potential to be transformative. The basic communication course provides the opportunity for students and instructors alike to practice new skills, challenge assumptions, and de-
velop meaningful relationships, but sometimes as instructors we need to be mentally reinvigorated as the routine begins to invade our optimism.

How, though, do we create a space for this renewal? Many of us are overwhelmed with the demands of the academic life—teaching, research, and service—not to mention family, friends, and recreation. Finding time and energy during the academic year to alter our practices or make major shifts in our philosophy can be difficult if not impossible. Dedicating oneself to a major switch in philosophy and practice can require significant time and energy. The challenges of such a transformation, while beneficial, can be overwhelming.

Reinvigoration, however, does not mean that we must engage in wholesale changes of philosophy or practice. Sometimes examining our current approach through the language and principles of a different context is exactly what we need to spur our imagination and creativity. For example, I am currently engaged in a line of research regarding how traditional Sioux organizing practices may inform contemporary organizational communication philosophy. One area that has fascinated me is the virtues of the Sioux. As the traditional Sioux attempted to manage the challenges of their daily lives, they drew strength from four virtues that every member of the tribe aspired to achieve: bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom. As I read more about these virtues I started to make connections to the classroom, and found myself searching for ways to incorporate them into my teaching, evaluation, and relationships with students. They became something for which to strive and a common lexicon for my students and I to use as we discussed our day-to-day interactions in the
Classroom. I soon found myself and my students reinvigorated as we worked together to uphold our version of the four virtues. As a nervous student would get up to give a speech it was not uncommon to hear another say “be brave,” or when others would do something kind their peers would thank them for their generosity. While my teaching practices did not undergo any major changes, how I thought about the course material and the relationships with the students was transformed.

In this article I discuss the four virtues of the Sioux, and make connections to instruction in the basic communication course. My intention is to offer a set of ideas that may equip the reader with an alternative way to think about course material, pedagogical practices, and classroom interrelationships. This is not to be confused with a fully articulated teaching philosophy that affords unique or particular classroom practices. My research efforts and pedagogical experimentation have not yet led me to that level of development. Instead, the following pages will raise as many questions about what we currently do as they provide suggestions for new or innovative practices. I begin with a brief discussion of the social structure of the Sioux, which is followed by an articulation of the four virtues and their connection to the basic course. The essay concludes with the limitations of and concerns with using these virtues to inform our pedagogical practices.

Before I provide a brief overview of the social structure of the traditional Sioux, I need to qualify two points. First, I am not a member of the Sioux tribe, nor do I teach in an institution that has many (if any) Sioux students. My understanding of these issues is based on my current line of research (as I noted earlier), which is
itself still in the formative stages. I am by no means an authority on Sioux life, but I am an eager student ready to apply what I have learned to my areas of interest. Second, the following discussion is offered in the spirit of discovery and good faith, and is not intended to reduce thousands of years of Sioux culture(s) to a few basic elements and their applications in the classroom. Researching the virtues has provided me with a fresh mindset with which to approach teaching, and my hope is that the reader finds similar rewards. The side-effect of this is that the remaining pages will not read like a how-to manual for translating the virtues into a list of teaching practices. Instead, I offer suggestions where possible, but do not want to limit the opportunities for the reader to discover connections for him/herself.

While a complete description of Siouan social structure and practices is not warranted here, a very brief sketch may provide a useful context for understanding the four virtues (for in-depth discussions of traditional Sioux culture see Deloria, 1998; Gibbon, 2003; Hassrick, 1964; Walker, 1982). Prior to the coming of the Europeans to North America, the Sioux occupied large portions of present day Minnesota and Wisconsin as well as the Northern Plains (what is today South Dakota and portions of North Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming). The Sioux can be distinguished as Lakota, Nakota, or Dakota; all are Sioux, but the different terms refer to dialect differences and distinct geographical location.

The social structure that allowed the Sioux to live communally in harmony with one another and nature was the kinship system (Hassrick, 1964). The kinship system, complex and multifaceted, connected each member in a “great relationship that was theoretically
all-inclusive and co-extensive” (Deloria, 1998, p. 24), thus making relevant the phrase *mitakuye oyasin* (translated “we are all related” or “all my relatives”). To treat others as relatives (versus mere acquaintances) was to be kind, generous, courteous, and unselfish to them all. Since “relatives” implied a group of people much larger than direct blood relations, the Sioux were constantly focused on maintaining these relations.

Developing and maintaining kinship relations and the consequential aspects of Sioux culture was a matter of oral communication; the Sioux did not rely on written materials to document their history or educate their young. Social lessons and historical activities were passed on through stories from the elders, which “very directly enabled an entire culture to survive because they carried the culture within them” (Marshall, 2001, p. xiii). Tales and allegories, as they were told and retold, instructed the young and reminded the old of appropriate practices, behaviors, beliefs, and perhaps most importantly of the four virtues of bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom. These four virtues were the bedrock of Sioux culture, and the behaviors connected to them made it possible for the kinship system to function effectively and efficiently.

As we begin to examine our practices and relationships in the classroom in light of the four virtues, two overarching points regarding the nature of education emerge. First, the process and product of education can be (re)conceived to emphasize a concern for the community. Education, from this perspective, is not only intended as a means of self-improvement, but as a way to strengthen the community as it faces the challenges of its environment. Community, in this case, refers to both
the classroom community and the broader communities with which the members are affiliated. Palmer (1998), in *The Courage to Teach*, talked of teaching as creating “a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (p. 90). Palmer wants us to conceive of community not as creating intimacy (as in a therapeutic model of community), but instead in terms of public mutuality, which embraces the sharing of resources, space, conflicts, problems, and ideas. The Sioux enacted community in much the same way as Palmer outlined it for instruction. Community, for the Sioux, was developed as a means to confront the challenges of and embrace the gifts from their environment. Survival was predicated on cooperation, sharing of information and natural resources, and respect and concern for the welfare of others in the community.

Second, knowledge is an *active* process. The Sioux recognized that the behaviors and actions that facilitated the production and maintenance of community were not imbued at birth; they had to be learned. That learning was a matter of constant and consistent repetition of messages (e.g., stories, tales, allegories, directives) until the culturally preferred actions became a normal part of the individual’s mental processes. As indicated in the opening quote from Uncheedah—“When you see a new trail, or a footprint you do not know, follow it to the point of knowing”—education is a process of discovery that involves personal energy, dedication, and a commitment to learning. Both teacher and student must be willing to take risks in the pursuit of knowledge, which brings us to the first virtue—bravery.
Bravery (Woohitike)

The Lakota word for bravery, woohitike, means “having or showing courage” (Marshall, 2001, p. 141). For the traditional Sioux, bravery certainly applied during battle, but the virtue was not limited to warriors or times of physical confrontation. Marshall (2001) argued that bravery needs to be taken in context; there are many times during life’s circumstances where bravery is necessary. “Bravery is a requisite virtue because life demands it...Any challenge is also an invitation, a standing invitation” (Marshall, 2001, p. 155). Charles Eastman (a native born Sioux) posited that bravery, as practiced by the Sioux in everyday life, referred to the degree of risk involved with a particular activity, and with risk came honor (as cited in Nerburn, 1993).

Bravery, while relevant to most every instructional situation, is particularly important to the basic communication course given the heavy performance component coupled with the well-documented fear of public speaking that many students have. One typical approach used by many basic course instructors to help students confront their fear is to let them know that they are not alone—that the majority of Americans fear public speaking as well. From my experience, this tactic has never been particularly successful. Despite my best attempts to follow this statistic with evidence that instruction and practice will help reduce their fear, few students believe me. They have already left on a mental trip saying to themselves “if that many people are afraid of public speaking, there must be a good reason for it!” However, fostering the virtue of bravery seems to have a
more significant and long-lasting effect. Students can see the performance assignments as opportunities to exhibit bravery rather than situations to “just get through.” This cognitive switch from fear to bravery is not automatic; the instructor must help facilitate the process by explicating and modeling bravery.

I have found that describing bravery as a concept is fairly simple to do, but modeling it is a bit more difficult. In my experience, students tend to be riveted by stories of traditional Native American life, and are eager to hear how the virtue of bravery was embodied. I have described the virtue to them much as I have in the first paragraph of this section, and then followed the description with short depictions of bravery, such as in the movie *Dances with Wolves*. I then ask students to talk about bravery of all types that they have experienced in their lives. Students seem to appreciate the connection between the Sioux embodiment of the virtue and how they have lived it. Modeling bravery, however, is more complicated because by definition it involves personal risk. I have attempted to model bravery for my students in several ways. For example, if I am trying a particular assignment, lecture, or exercise for the first time about which I am unsure of how it will go, I will tell them this and let them know that I am going forward with it, despite the possibility of failure, because of the value associated with the risk. Another example of modeling bravery is doing an impromptu speech with them. I pick a topic from the hat just as they do, so that they can see that I am willing to take the same risks that I am asking them to take. While these are relatively simple examples, they do make the point to the students that bravery is relevant to them in the basic course.
Regarding our own need for bravery as instructors, Palmer (1998) argued that we must confront and understand our fears as teachers. Far too often we are consumed and paralyzed by the fear of not being liked, popular, or funny, and the result is a diminished self-concept and a decreased level of effectiveness. We need to be brave enough to try new or different instructional techniques, exercises, or assignments in the classroom without fear of failure. The honor, and the reward, is in the risk.

Assuming that our students are not interested in being intellectually challenged and hence unwilling to take risks will certainly lead them to feel that way, and will definitely compel us to teach in ways that reinforce their passivity (Palmer, 1998). However, if we model bravery in our approach to the basic communication course, our students will be more likely to reciprocate. It is bravery that will provide them with the courage to give their first public speech, to critique their own performance and the performances of their peers rigorously, and to follow that unknown trail to the point of knowing. Bravery will compel them, and us, to do what is in the best interest of learning and the community.

I would like to end this section with an extended quotation from Marshall, as he discussed how we can teach and learn bravery:

If you don’t think you know how to be brave, look around; you’ll find someone who does know. Follow him or her. If you follow long enough, you’ll learn to have courage, or the courage within you will rise to the top. When that happens, turn around, and don’t be surprised if someone is following you. (2001, p. 158)
Generosity (Conteyuke)

The Lakota word for generosity, conteyuke, means “to give, to share, to have a heart” (Marshall, 2001, p.180). For the Sioux, possession of excess material goods was only useful to the extent that they could be shared with the community. It was believed that “the love of possessions [was] a weakness to be overcome” (Eastman, as cited in Nerburn, 1993, p. 28). This sensibility is best captured through a paraphrase of an ancient sentiment: “The Earth Mother gives us all that she has. We must do the same” (Marshall, 2001, p. 190). The Earth Mother served as the ultimate role model for the Sioux, giving everything she had for the sake of her people.

The Sioux would enact this virtue in many ways in everyday life, but perhaps none more noteworthy than the giveaway. Giveaways were done as a way of honoring someone in the family (e.g., a loved one who had recently passed away). The members of the sponsoring family would quite literally give everything away that they owned—tipi, horses, utensils, and even the clothes on their backs. All of this was done to honor the individual. There was no greater way to honor someone than to be generous to the community.

So what does generosity look like in the basic communication course? As instructors we should consider what we have to give—time, knowledge, kindness, compassion, patience—and give as much as we can. This generosity of mental and physical resources should be bestowed not out of contractual obligation, but out of desire to strengthen the community. Generosity should not be determined by the minimum requirements of a
promotion and tenure document, or in comparison to the generosity of our colleagues around campus. Our level of generosity with our time and talents will be directly proportional to the ability of our individual students to learn, grow, and be generous in return. The literature on instructor immediacy and supportive communication in the classroom would seem to support this claim (see for example, McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2002; Teven, 2001).

I think it is safe to say that most instructors already understand and embody the virtue of generosity to some extent. This profession and the communication discipline in particular tend to draw people with this sensibility. Basic course instructors in particular can demonstrate generosity in a variety of ways including: providing several draft opportunities for written and performance-oriented work, holding individual meetings with students in which audio/video recordings of their performances are reviewed in-depth, and volunteering their time and energy to train members of the university or local community on effective communication skills.

Students, however, may not be as prepared to execute this virtue in the classroom, not because they are unwilling or unable, but because they might not have been challenged to do so. We need to make this virtue explicit instead of hoping that generosity will occur automatically, and we need to show the breadth of what generosity means in the classroom. For example, we can show that giving a public speech can be a generous act if appropriate care is taken in preparation and delivery. What greater an opportunity to be generous to the community than to research a topic of interest and
importance to the class, develop a suitable structure, work fastidiously in rehearsal, and present to everyone an insightful speech designed specifically to improve their lives. Additionally, we can encourage audience members to give thoughtful and meaningful critiques of their peers’ performances so that they might improve their skills for the future. Generosity, for instructor and student, demands that we all think in terms of “us” instead of “me.”

**Fortitude (Cantewasake)**

With fortitude we begin to see the conceptual and practical overlap among the virtues. Cantewasake, the Lakota word for fortitude, means “strength of heart and mind” (Marshall, 2001, p. 159). Fortitude, while akin to bravery, refers more to internal strength than to external acts of courage. Marshall referred to fortitude among the Sioux as “quiet strength” that comes with flexibility (2001, p. 173). To demonstrate the relationship between flexibility and fortitude, Marshall tells the story of walking with his grandfather near a river bottom when a great wind arose. A sandbar willow tree bent in the mighty wind but did not break, while a tall oak, rigid and strong, snapped in several places. Fortitude, as the story teaches us, does not come from physical strength, but from flexibility and the ability to remain mentally strong in the face of adversity.

Perhaps in no other class is fortitude as relevant for both instructor and student as in the basic communication course. Because our ability to communicate is so intimately tied to our sense of self, critiquing it and
having it critiqued by others tests our internal strength. For instructors this means two things. First, call on your fortitude to help you provide the necessary and often times difficult critiques that your students need of their communication performances. Without fortitude, we may be less rigorous in our evaluations, opting instead to spare our students’ sense of confidence and our own angst. Remember, however, that a lack of rigor does not serve the community. Developing members with excellent communication skills serves the greater purpose of community development. Second, do not forget, though, that your students’ fortitude may not be as developed as yours. Fortitude, as with wisdom, comes with experience and surviving the tests that life gives us. As you provide your students with critiques, do so in a way that recognizes that their internal strength is still developing.

**WISDOM (WOKSAPE)**

Due to its intangible nature, wisdom was considered the most difficult of the four virtues to attain for the traditional Sioux (Hassrick, 1964). The Lakota word for wisdom, woksape, means “to understand what is right and true, to use knowledge wisely” (Marshall, 2001, p. 196). For the Sioux, having wisdom meant understanding not only what to say and do, but what not to say and do (Marshall, 2001). With that understanding of wisdom, we can see the close connection this virtue has with communication. Hassrick extended this connection when he stated that “Wisdom meant, in part, getting on
well with people, and as a leader, inspiring others” (1964, p. 39).

While wisdom was often attributed to the Sioux elders, it was not reserved only for them. A person with extensive experience who was able to demonstrate an understanding of the proper use of knowledge could be considered wise. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about wisdom, however, was that those who possessed it were valued for their ability to help the community make informed decisions.

There are many applications of the virtue of wisdom to the basic course, most of which are obvious, but let me discuss two of the less obvious. First, the Sioux understanding of wisdom demonstrated their belief in the connection between speech and thought that Dance (2002) suggested we reinstate in our courses. The Sioux understood that wisdom was a cognitive as well as a behavioral phenomenon; thought and speech could not be separated. The lesson for the basic communication course, then, is to continue the momentum toward integrating critical thinking with our performance activities. Perhaps the Sioux — an oral tradition society — could see that connection more easily because of the primacy of communication in their lives.

Second, the virtue of wisdom implies that the one who is wise is worthy of our attention. I believe that this legitimates our attention to developing competent public speakers through individual-based performance assignments, as well as the oft derided pedagogical practice of lecture as a useful pedagogical tool. Granted, public speeches and lectures can be done poorly, but finely crafted, relevant presentations can allow the community to benefit from the wisdom of the presenter.

BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE ANNUAL

Published by eCommons, 2004 291
This does not mean, however, that the presenter is granted full license to ignore the thoughts and ideas of his/her audience. In fact, it means quite the opposite. Wisdom is gained through exposure to ideas and differences, which can only be garnered if all members of the community are considered to have voices worthy of being heard, and they are allowed and encouraged to participate actively in the teaching and learning process.

We certainly have no shortage of viable philosophies of teaching for the basic communication course, so this essay is not intended as an argument against or an alternative to them, but as a friendly addition. Feminist pedagogy, critical pedagogy, learning communities, and other philosophies are all valuable standpoints from which to operate in the basic course. I offered the four virtues of the traditional Sioux as another way of informing relationships and instruction in the basic course. Some may even find these virtues as particularly relevant to their existing philosophy.

As with any perspective on teaching, certain limitations and concerns accompany the ideas I have forwarded here. To conclude this essay, I would like to discuss three of these issues. First, adoption of the Sioux virtues as I have described here should not be confused with infusing the basic course with the cultural assumptions and values of the tribe. One consequence of forwarding the ideas I have in this essay is the belief that their adoption means the adoption of an alternative form of pedagogy. While the current discussion celebrates the virtues of the Sioux, it falls well short of advocating a Sioux-based pedagogy. This form of pedagogy would look dramatically different, especially with regard to our instruction on appropriate communication.
patterns, forms of proof, structure of argument, types of assignments, and classroom relationships. For example, given the importance of storytelling in Sioux culture, issues of time constraints, outlining, and adequate support would have to be changed dramatically, as would the value placed on consistent eye contact and appropriate vocal variation.

Second, emphasizing the virtues focuses attention on the relationship between the individual and the community as it is related to education. Attending to bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom in the classroom shifts the process and product of education from self-improvement to self-improvement for the greater good of the community. While this cognitive shift has obvious altruistic benefits, it is called into question by American ideals of individualism and consumerism (see McMillan & Cheney, 1996 for a discussion of the consumerism metaphor). Education in our society has long been promoted as a means of improving one’s own lot in life, and the recent shift to thinking of the student-as-consumer has reinforced this idea. Students who have been raised to think of education in this way will more than likely have a difficult time thinking of their education any differently. I have noticed that students are intrigued by the virtues, try to abide by them as best as possible, but find it difficult to commit to them completely because the notion of individual labor for the promotion of the community is foreign to them. It is difficult for the instructor as well, given the time, energy, and dedication to individual and community development demanded by this orientation.

Finally, misappropriation of the virtue of wisdom may lead to a pedagogy that unjustly privileges the
voice of the instructor, while devaluing the voice of the student. Honoring the virtue of wisdom means that experience and history are valued, and those possessing wisdom should be given the appropriate license to share it. As noted earlier, I believe that this legitimates both the practice of lecture and our focus on developing competent public speakers. Abuse of this concept, however, would lead to a classroom governed solely by the instructor, for the good of the instructor, which is antithetical to the cultural context from which this notion was borrowed. It is important to remember that traditional Sioux society was not a dictatorship; open discussions were commonplace, and many voices were valued. Therefore, as Palmer (1998) has encouraged us to remember, we must engage in multiple forms of instruction to honor the contributions of our students. The virtue of wisdom celebrates individual voice, but does not privilege it over community well-being.

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The Public Speaking Classroom as Public Space: Taking Risks and Embracing Difference

Margaret R. LaWare

There have been several books and articles by academics turned teaching philosophers (hooks, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Tompkins, 1996), who talk about the significance of teaching in the direction of building a community in the classroom and ultimately a community in the University at large. While I believe this is a very useful concept, particularly in terms of what can be accomplished in the public speaking classroom, I also feel that the metaphor or concept of the classroom as public space is useful and generative. Ideally, public space can be understood as the place where people from different backgrounds and social locations can meet, talk, argue and confront their differences. Public relationships are something distinct from personal friendships and familial relationships, and as Dewey (1946) and others have pointed out, these relationships are vital to a democracy. Thinking of the public speaking classroom as a public space is significant, I believe, particularly in light of social theorists who argue that public space is on the collapse (see Sennett, 1976).

Fundamentally, public space is about providing a space where people can develop an awareness of their connections to and effect upon the world outside of themselves. And, public speaking assumes that public
space exists, that the opportunity to have some impact on the world outside of oneself is possible, since public speaking is ultimately grounded in the fundamental values of a democracy. The public speaking classroom also provides a space that compels students to listen to each other. That said, public space, as it has existed, is not necessarily an ideal space and my thinking about the public speaking classroom is informed by critiques of public sphere theory, particularly feminist critiques as well as critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. In other words, not all voices have been weighed equally in the public world. As Nancy Fraser (1986) has shown, women’s experiences, arguments and reasoning may be discounted or given little credence because they are uttered by women. Some also argue that young people and young adults also face invalidations and lack of “voice” because of age (Sazama, 1999). As Paul Loeb (2001) points out, “most (students) enter our campuses with an attitude of civic resignation, believing their actions on major public issues can’t matter” (p. 3).

There are three principal ways that thinking about the public speaking classroom as a public space informs my philosophy of teaching in the Basic Course. These three ways include understanding the situations and perspectives of my students, most of whom are traditional age students (18-22). As indicated previously, many come into the classroom feeling powerless to effect change. I think there is relevance in applying critical pedagogies, “pedagogies of the oppressed” in Paolo Freire’s (1993) terms, to understanding how these young adults have been socialized into seeing themselves as marginal to the world outside the University. Second, the notion of the classroom as public space reminds me
of the ways I need to take risks as a teacher, sharing my own thinking and questioning and my engagement in the public world. As Parker Palmer (1998) reminds us, the classroom is ultimately where the public and personal intersect, a space full of danger and possibility.

Further, such positioning points to the opportunities I have to engage students on difficult public issues such as racism and sexism and establishing the context that allows marginalized voices to be heard. Foss and Foss's notion of Inviting Transformation has had a profound affect on my thinking in this direction. Third, particularly in light of the events of September 11, 2001, I am more convinced of the importance of bringing the outer world into the classroom, to encourage students to speak about and respond to topics of significance given the recent world events. I will address each of these three issues related to the public speaking classroom as public space in my teaching, in terms of what I have been doing and thinking about most recently regarding presentation of material, structures of assignments and training of graduate students.

**YOUNG ADULTS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE OF THE CLASSROOM**

I have been teaching the Basic Course as a lecturer and assistant director for the past five years, coordinating teaching assistants in a lecture/lab format that enrolls 600 students per semester. Previously, I only taught public speaking as a stand alone class with 24-28 students in a classroom. One of the key concepts I have carried over from the classroom into the lecture hall is
the concept that emerges from feminist theory and feminist pedagogy of shifting the positioning of faculty as “power authority” in the classroom, to encouraging and supporting the power (and voice) within each student.1 This presents much more of a challenge in the lecture hall, but in my position of mentoring graduate teaching assistants, I can encourage teaching relationships that both support the unique perspectives and approaches of my graduate students, and in turn encourage them to create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom. One of the ways I try to shift those dynamics of “power over” to supporting the “power within” is through close and affirmative listening. It sounds simple, but there is a great deal of conscious effort and restraint involved in such listening. I try to hold back my own critiques and suggestions until I hear out my graduate students and encourage them to “think through” their struggles and dilemmas related to problems with students or grading, trying to be affirming, modeling what I would like to see them do for their students.

My thinking about students, or young people and young adults as a marginalized group in society, has relevance for dealing with both undergraduates and graduate students, many of whom may have just finished undergraduate programs. Because they are labeled as “young” and “inexperienced,” and students (i.e. still learning) and everything that becomes associated with these terms (often negative), students are treated

1 Starhawk’s *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex & Politics*, first introduced me to this notion of immanence or power within as radically subversive of a system built upon the notion of “power over.”
as not powerful. They are told that they are not ready yet to make any contribution because they lack sufficient knowledge or not the right knowledge. Young people face systematic oppressions from various societal institutions including schools, colleges and universities which results in their feeling disconnected from a sense of community and even a disconnection from themselves. As Palmer (1990) explains, “Students are often marginal to the society by virtue of their youth, their lack of a productive role, their dependency on the academy for legitimation. Deprived of any sense of public place or power, they withdraw into the private realm where they keep their thoughts to themselves and, sometimes, from themselves” (p.15). But, the oppression is not just one suffered by students, as Richard Schaull writes in the introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “our advanced technological society is rapidly making objects of us and subtly programming us into conformity to the logic of its system” (p.15). As teachers of public speaking, encouraging students to think and express their thoughts to others, we are up against a fair amount of counter-conditioning on our students and on ourselves as teachers. It is useful to remind students of their power since they see little of it in the media which ignore the unique contributions made by young adults, particularly movements and organizations that have had an impact on the world. For example, as Loeb (2001) points out, the American student antiapartheid movement during the mid-1980s and early 90s played “a key role” in passing sanctions on South Africa. Further, it is important to recognize our own power as teachers to influence students and promote self-reflection and even, as hooks (1994) points out, healing, particularly
when we make efforts to incorporate ourselves wholly in the process and step outside our fears in the classroom and in the lecture hall.

One of the points I make early in public speaking, whether in the classroom or in the lecture hall, is that the skills learned in public speaking are not only useful for work environments but also in fostering social change. I always feel the need to make arguments in support of public speaking, since most are taking it as a required course. I point to social movements led by young people such as the Chinese democracy movement and the Anti-Apartheid movement and point out that public speaking is vital to any movement. Unless you can communicate your ideas, experiences and perspectives to others, unless you risk taking a stand, you can not motivate others to change or take action.

**The Basic Course and the Meaning of Risk**

In order for students to listen to and absorb new viewpoints and possibilities for change, students must engage themselves wholly in the process. They need to risk showing themselves publicly. And, in thinking about the assignments in the class, beyond their introductory speeches, they can hide behind any number of “tried and true” topics. We often provide a list of topics that have been done in the past and many students, according to our TAs, tend to just choose a topic off the list. That obviously guarantees that they are not risking much. I am increasingly convinced that encouraging students to take risks means that I need to take risks as a teacher, especially in the lecture hall, where students
are particularly attentive to the way I conduct my lectures. Hooks (1994) points to the importance of teachers showing themselves as whole people, sharing their narratives and becoming vulnerable.

I have taken up her call to presenting myself as a whole person, though the lecture hall clearly presents some obstacles and challenges. Still, trying to communicate caring concern about my students, about myself and the world seems to be a way to take those important risks in the lecture hall. I make an effort to make it evident that I care about my students questions and concerns about the course as well as their ideas. Freire (1993) talks about the importance of dialogue in a liberating pedagogy. And, he points out that authentic dialogue cannot take place “in the absence of profound love for the world and its people” (p. 70). He continues, “Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause - the cause of liberation” (p. 70). I communicate my caring (and, I think, love) by listening to students, by not resting on my existing Power Point slides, but always changing my approach to better answer their questions, and stimulate their curiosity and willingness to challenge themselves. I try to find examples that students can relate to, updating them regularly. In addition, I try to share the ways that some of the historical speeches shown in class, such as King’s “I Have a Dream,” have impacted me, pointing to the parts I find particularly inspiring and moving and meaningful and encouraging them to do the same. I try to contextualize these speeches and share my own experiences in relation to these moments of history, such as my participation in
the March for Jobs, Peace and Freedom in Washington, D.C. in 1983, twenty years after the march for Civil Rights featuring King's "I Have a Dream." My goal is to help students get a glimpse of their own power - to enable them to articulate effectively their own perspectives on reality.

**Making Space for Marginalized Voices and Perspectives**

Taking risks clearly also involves addressing issues that make people uncomfortable, both students and teachers. But addressing sexism and racism is vital because these conversations make it possible for marginalized voices to enter public space. In addressing sexism and racism I establish rules and guidelines. I always emphasize the notion of respect, both respecting me as a lecturer and relating that to respecting each other when they take turns in front of the classroom. Further, I encourage students to use gender neutral language and explain the importance of such use in terms of improving communication and clarity, and being inclusive. One of the themes I re-emphasize throughout the course is being audience-centered, inviting the audience in, not losing them during the speech. I point to the conundrum faced by women who wonder if the "he" being used as generic is inclusive or not. I also point out, referring to Spender (1985), that the generic "he" is not a natural phenomenon, but one determined by male grammarians in England during the 18th century, who decided that "he" should be generic because the male pronoun was "more comprehen-
sive” than the female (p. 148). I suggest the use of people or human beings rather than mankind and he or she instead of he.

In terms of thinking about how to further anti-racism work, and expanding thinking about audience, I recently introduced an optional informative speech assignment that asks students to “tell us something about your culture.” Part of my motivation comes from Peggy McIntosh’s (1995) writing on the invisibility of white privilege and the assumption by white students that “their lives (are) morally neutral, normative and average” (p. 264). When I introduced the assignment, I pointed out that it is usually international students who do the speeches about their culture or their country and traditions. I explained that white, European students and people tend to think they have no culture (i.e. they are just “average,” just American). However, I point out that we all have cultural traditions and it is important to get to know them so that people of color are not objectified as culturally unique and different. I think this assignment has the potential to generate some self-reflection, particularly for white students, who really need to be better in touch with their own cultural “uniqueness” as one small step in the larger project of eliminating racism.

As mentioned earlier, Foss and Foss’s (1994) Inviting Transformation, has had a profound impact on my thinking about addressing difficult and potentially divisive topics and issues. What I particularly find relevant and important to express to students is the concept of maintaining a space of “safety, value, freedom and openness,” in which different viewpoints are actively sought, appreciated and valued and where people who do not
Public Space

conform to the “norm” are not ridiculed. I think these concepts go beyond ethical concerns, to the significance of public space as fundamentally inclusive and transformative. In a world that increasingly creates objects or mere consumers out of people and pressures students to conform to survive economically and socially, creating a space to express difference and differences is truly a radical undertaking. It means making room for ideas, people and values that we may find difficult to acknowledge. It means being respectful to each other and expecting respect for myself as teacher. Foss and Foss explain that the emphasis on “presentational speaking as a means to create the conditions of safety, value, freedom and openness” is grounded in the privileging of “growth and change” (p. 6). This relates to Freire’s notion of liberatory teaching as a form of dialogue that is essentially aimed at helping individuals to grow as human beings and gain better understanding of their situation in the world and possibilities for change. As teachers, we need to cherish the opportunity to grow and change in the process of teaching and be willing to discover new perspectives through dialogue with our students. Even in the lecture hall, dialogue, to some degree, is possible.

BRINGING THE WORLD INTO THE CLASSROOM

Freire (1993), Foss and Foss (1994), Palmer (1990, 1998) and others all reference the importance of fostering a space where change and self-discovery is possible and those are clearly characteristics of a public space. In addition, this opportunity for change is linked to seeing...
oneself as a subject in relation to the world, with the power to effect change. This brings me to the final point about how to bring the outside world into the classroom and engage students in ways that enable them to see themselves as having some control over the world and understanding the power of speech as a method for exerting that control.

As I indicated earlier, one of the ways I bring the world into the classroom is to contextualize the historical speeches I show. In addition, I feel it is important to share some of my thinking and responses to the disturbing and world-changing events of the past years. These are the events that bind us to our students. As a professor and a lecturer, I feel it is my responsibility to address them, to break the silence, to acknowledge fear and uncertainty. I think it is important to show how I am responding emotionally and intellectually and to make space for student voices to be heard. Recently, I transformed a lecture on the fundamentals of persuasive speaking into an introduction to speech, rhetoric and policy making in the public world. I pointed to the fact that we cannot be fully cognizant of future outcomes, but must make decisions about actions based on the best reasoning and arguments we can find or the best reasoning and arguments that we can make. That day I gave students time during lecture to express some reasons for or against the war with Iraq.

Approaching the classroom or lecture hall as a public space clearly has had an impact on the decisions I make regarding the use of class time and the presentation of material. I increasingly feel the importance of explaining guidelines for public speaking in light of world events, making those connections more salient, in an
effort to get students motivated to use public speaking to make connections themselves. My goal is to get the students beyond thinking of public speaking as a course just to get through, but to help them see it as the foundation of something larger and more significant, as a skill for constructing meaning with others in public space and as a skill for effecting change.

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The ways that an individual professor, a department, or a campus talks about the basic communication course can be arrayed along a broad spectrum of attitudes. At one end of a continuum are those who look at the course with a blend of intellectual contempt and embarrassment (Burgoon, 1989) or who believe that an assignment to teach such a course counts as penance or banishment. For many or most of our colleagues the characterizations fall in a more positive central zone, construing the course as a rich source of student enrollment or a fertile recruiting ground for majors. The authors of these papers fall far at the other end of the continuum. In different but related ways, each essay celebrates our experience as basic course instructors as a special opportunity, laden with theoretical, social, political and ethical implications. In response to the editor’s call to address issues of philosophy of teaching these authors did not ascend to the highest levels of conceptual abstraction or delve into the painstaking splitting of verbal and conceptual hairs. Instead, and fortunately I think, each presented a passionate statement about an original and provocative way to approach the course. What qualifies these papers as “philosophical” is not so much that they talk about ends rather than means, since much of the fine work in this Annual
and at Basic Course conferences addresses course objectives as well as teaching strategies. Rather, they look a bit more deeply at the goals behind the objectives. Put differently, they draw our attention to the second and third levels of the question “why?” We engage in certain activities to achieve a particular objective such as developing a valid causal argument. But why do we want our students to master that objective? To become better critical thinkers, perhaps. But why do we want them to become better critical thinkers? Moving in this direction draws us into more explicit discussions of how the particular choices we make about textbooks, assignments, evaluation, classroom climate, and teacher student relationships bundle together into a larger stance toward what we are about. When our decision-making is imbued with a deep awareness of larger purpose and long-range goals, there is a coherence to our instruction. Students sense when a professor is on a mission, not just delivering instruction but, well, professing. They know that the class they are taking is called basic not because it is trivial but because it is profoundly important.

Because I have had the opportunity to read these essays many times, I hope to help the appreciative first time reader think about them collectively, comparatively and productively. Specifically, my response addresses these questions: What are they all saying? What differentiates each article’s approach? How can we use these insights to enhance the basic course? What don't they say? What sort of practical questions and research agendas do they illuminate?
WHAT ARE THEY ALL SAYING?

Starting from a position that the basic communication course is highly consequential to students and society, all the essays make problematic the notion of communicative competence as the acquisition of knowledge and skills. They speak of deeper transformative changes in students' attitudes, values, and even identities. They would agree with Hart's statement (1993) "teachers make people." Along with this they all write about educational practice in its broader sense, seeing the teacher as a model, not a dispenser of information, the learners as active co-creators of knowledge, not recipients, and the curriculum as layered and partially hidden, not a just a list of topics to be covered. Inherent in these positions is an attention to the existential dimensions of instruction. A key theme of each paper is the risk that both teachers and students must take for real educational change to occur. Moreover Modaff explicitly and all the authors implicitly note the other set of risks that come from allowing oneself to go on autopilot and teach in ways that are comfortable and familiar. In light of persistent pressures to dumb down our classes or to foreground students' short term sense of "feeling good" above all other outcomes, it is heartening to read four quite different accounts of how classes can be challenging, demanding, and rigorous while still engaging students. It is a risk in itself for teachers to push students to be courageous, to introduce material that may be unfamiliar or discomforting, to care enough about students to give honest critiques of their work.
**H**OW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

In exploring these common themes, the authors differed along several dimensions. I was interested in the general locus of concern in each essay. Modaff centers his attention in the individual. The four virtues he explains, though originating within a culture and confirmed in interpersonal encounters, are talked about primarily as they pertain to individuals. Speaking of virtues casts an interesting light on individual qualities. A virtue is more than a value, since it clearly implies a pattern of action not just a belief about goodness or evil. Yet virtues are not enduring and immutable traits. A virtue is a blend of valuing a way of being, choosing to adopt that way of being and then acting in ways that over time come to define the individual. There is a clear implication that virtues are acquired, presumably taught. I like the notion of educational experiences that call out to a student's higher self and name the qualities that can be developed by incremental choices and a series of actions. In a culture that too often valorizes self over community, the material over the spiritual, the quick and easy over the hard earned, students need to hear their professors speak unabashedly of virtues like bravery, generosity, fortitude, and wisdom. The community of learners is important in Modaff's analysis in that relatedness gives rise to all the Sioux virtues. Pedagogically, though, he emphasizes individual learning; fellow learners are addressed primarily as a sort of supportive cohort group who shares a quest trust.

Rawlins, too, shows courage in his exploration of the controversial terrain of friendship in education. His fo-
Focus seems less on the student as an individual and more on relationships. Implicitly, he constructs the classroom environment as a set of dyadic friendships between the instructor and each student. Many of his points about dialogue, praxis and political space reveal a connection between his ideas and the collectivity of the classroom, but the essence of his discussion relates to the teacher-student relationship. Like Modaff, he is to be commended for his willingness to talk seriously about the intangible and important factors that make education so powerful. I have a special affinity for scholarship that frames topics as tensions or dialectics because this way of talking captures the complex and contingent nature of communication as it unfolds from moment to moment.

LaWare chooses as her unit of analysis the entire classroom group, exposing the potential it has to prepare students for public life. The well documented "withering of the public sphere" is perhaps the greatest challenge to democratic institutions, made more daunting by all the emerging forms of pseudo public life that disguise the severity of this problem. I heartily endorse her ambitious project. When colleagues from professional programs want to make efficient use of student credit hours by turning the basic course into a series of "communication for engineers, communication for nurses, communication for managers," my apoplectic reaction is not because of the enrollment that could be lost to communication departments, but because I believe that the context specific communication demands of various professions can as well be studied later or even after college. Where, but in a basic course that is drawn from a cross section of a university will engineers have a chance to practice talking to nurses and violinists?
ists to accountants about the social and political issues we must all work through together in our civic life? What is intriguing, maybe troubling, about LaWare's analysis is that she seems to frame the issues almost exclusively in terms of individual student empowerment. She lays out nicely her position that a public space exists and that some voices have more access to it or more power in it than others. Her goal, then, is to help each individual student maximize his or her ability to move into that sphere. It is assumed that students, especially those from marginalized groups, will find entry into the public sphere intimidating, perhaps assaultive to their identities, and therefore the role of the educational system is to provide safe, free, open environments in which they can practice. One key way to help them experience their own potential for power in this public space is to de-emphasize the power differential between themselves and the dominant authority figures. A teacher who voluntarily gives up some power or gracefully shares power makes a space for students to explore their own power.

This makes perfect sense as far as it goes. Certainly feminist pedagogy has been making this point for decades, long enough to have unmasked the paradoxical messages teachers often send when they attempt to give up power (Lather, 1991). The deprivileging of assigned leaders, whether in the T group tradition or feminist consciousness raising groups has tremendous impact in getting learners to think differently. I am less convinced that it is the key to social and political transformation. Specifically, students could feel greatly empowered in a privatized learning environment such as a distance education class where they can work at their own pace, set
priorities for learning and even create a kind of public space in cyber space. Such an environment may help the individual student but it does not contribute to solving the broader political problem of a citizenry that is unprepared to communicate in public life. Darling (1991) has advanced a critique of the way many introductory texts and basic courses define public, unproblematically, as "not private." Students learn the norms of public communication so that they will be credible and effective. She argues that the Deweyan notion of education for the public sphere requires more than entering the public, and involves knowing how make a public where one did not exist. The latter necessitates a radical re-definition of the kinds of assignments, readings, and evaluation procedures one would find in a basic course (Darling & Scott, 1993).

In this same vein, Edwards and Shepherds direct their attention to the collective group as the site of learning. The pragmatic educational metaphysic they advocate is deeply congruent with contemporary communication theory. Perhaps in the current decade retrieving the philosophical use of word pragmatic is unfortunate, grating against the popular use of the term that is too often used to justify communicating for short-term utility. Dewey’s pragmatism is close to Habermas’ practical interest of discourse. In contrast to the technical interest that helps a group or individual sustain control over others, practical discourse is directed toward a level of understanding that can craft consensus within a community. Edwards and Shepherd are maintaining that our basic courses can serve such an interest “where individuals of diverse demographics and backgrounds have the too rare opportunity of coming together to form
conjoint experiences.” Individual students do not just learn private lessons in a shared time and place; the very nature of their learning depends on their practice of coordinated making of meaning.

LaWare’s and Edwards’ and Shepherds’ positions on public life are not necessarily inconsistent but differ in emphasis and may relate to students at different developmental levels. LaWare’s seems suited for students who feel excluded from public life or lack confidence to participate. Edwards and Shepard address those students who are squarely in the public arena, but who don’t know what it means to participate in associated living, how to refer one’s own action to that of others. I find the second task more difficult to address. I think we know more about how to make a class welcoming and safe than about how to get students steeped in individualized and psychologized worldviews to move into the difficult realm of genuine social being. As I will argue later, the Edwards and Shepherd essay pushes hardest against the grain of current practice.

**How can we use these?**

Acknowledging the important resonances among these four pieces and some intriguing differences, I wonder how they, taken together, can be incorporated into how we approach the basic course. I offer three possibilities, in ascending order of challenge to us as instructors. (Later I will propose a fourth way of reading these that goes beyond what is said into what they invite us to consider next.)
1. Thinking about these philosophical themes identifies additional educational values our course can provide. If the basic communication course is designed primarily to help students master certain basic knowledge and skills, and if there are several possible effective ways to achieve those ends, why not choose an approach (even if it is challenging to students and professor) that will also enhance students’ civic attitudes and personal virtues? This is the most modest reading of the pieces and a sufficient contribution in itself. Each author takes some pains to say that their recommendations can be used within existing course contexts. Given the bureaucratic enmeshment of our course on many campuses, radical change may be unrealistic. If some of the spirit of these articles invigorates a course to the extent that a reader tries out one new assignment or one different way of talking about its impact on personal growth and political life, then instruction has been enriched.

2. Thinking about these philosophical themes identifies educational practices that will make teaching and learning more effective. Though there are many ways to teach a basic course effectively, the approaches described here are more likely to engage students in deep ways and provide a meaningful context for use of the knowledge and skills they acquire. This reading also preserves the essential content of existing courses, but asks instructors to make their classes more dialogic, more socially relevant, more connected to personal growth. It also challenges instructors to bring more of themselves into the class by being willing to relinquish their role as the primary source of knowledge, becoming more vulnerable, entering into more authentic relationships with students, and sharing power with them. Still,
these changes are seen as means of enhancing instruction in current classes, not as radical revision of curriculum.

3. Thinking about philosophical themes forces us to confront inconsistencies we may be perpetuating. If an instructor of the basic communication course took seriously many of the ideas offered in these essays, it might lead to reconsidering both how and what we teach. This way of reading the essays is the most intellectually taxing and inconvenient but potentially quite exciting. First, the many discussions of modeling and risk taking require us to look closely at whether how we teach reinforces what we teach. If we really believe that communication is contingent, emergent, embodied, socially constructed, habitual and politically charged, it becomes hard to justify transmissive teaching, prescriptive formulations, or generic evaluation rubrics for example. Less obvious and more significantly, these authors are all challenging the relationship between theory and practice that we inadvertently perpetuate. In this journal, Spano (1996) argued that this false dichotomy is particularly insidious in our basic course and advances “practical communication theory” as a way to reunite abstract propositional forms of knowledge with a firm grounding in the concrete world of lived, contextualized, embodied experience. This move is not just important for teaching and for practice but for the integrity of theory. Our basic course becomes the crucible in which our idealized theories are tested, refined and elaborated (Leff, 1994). Particularly when our students are more culturally diverse, technologically savvy, and more in touch with many aspects of contemporary life than our theory builders, authentic classroom conversations can
push back against the scholarly inclination toward elegant, totalizing but incomplete representations.

Any and all of these ways of reading the articles hold great value for basic course instructors. I would go so far as to recommend that groups of colleagues who now meet to discuss problems and strategies try meeting in a sort of book club format to discuss a particular short reading with philosophical implications. They might start with these essays, revisit the exchange between Spano and Hickson (1996), and proceed to reading others from these reference lists, starting with Dewey.

**WHAT DON'T THEY SAY?**

When Scott Titsworth invited me to comment on these essays, he suggested that perhaps I would like to measure them against the criteria I set forth over a decade ago (Sprague, 1993) for a discipline specific pedagogy. I approached them with that notion in mind and was pleased that authors outside the usual pedagogical fold were represented, happy to note reference lists containing such favorites as Arendt, Bakhtin, Dewey, hooks, Freire, and Palmer, delighted to read such well written and thoughtful work embracing the complexity of our task. However, I concluded that though these articles are featured in a venue that is not only discipline specific but course specific, they strike me as more representative of communication education’s sister sub-discipline of instructional communication. About eighty percent of the recommendations could apply as well to classes in Women’s Studies, psychology, sociology, or political science. At least half of the advice can be easily
translated even to courses in science or math. Along with others, I have argued (most recently, Sprague 2002) that despite some obvious connections, the two main branches of pedagogical work in our field are distinct. Because they address different goals for different audiences, the credibility and utility of each is best served by being clear about the distinction. When I compare these essays to the bulk of the dominant literature in instructional communication I find them less simplistic, more consistent with the communication literature, more peer-oriented, and more ideologically palatable to me personally. Still, none moves much toward a discipline specific pedagogy. Maybe philosophical work, because it deals with “big issues” is intrinsically more generalizable. It is probably not fair to be critical of these authors for offering us ideas that are valuable across too many contexts. But, I cannot conclude without renewing a call to bring our best theorizing to bear on the very concrete contexts of each area of our curriculum exploring the particular questions about teaching and learning in communication that only we can frame and answer. Thus, I invite these authors and the strong community of basic course directors and teachers who read this journal to think about the implications of these essays in a fourth way.  

4. Thinking about these philosophical themes helps us set important goals for our course and apply our scholarship to discovering how best to meet those goals. That is, must we be limited to seeing civic participation, virtue, and friendship as supplemental to our courses or as enabling to our instruction? Despite the different philosophical trapping, is that really so much different than exhorting teachers to be immediate and use affin-
ity-seeking techniques? What would it mean if the key ideas of each manuscript were taken as important content in communication education? How can we actually teach students to engage in public life? What works? How do we help students master the dialogic techniques that are part of the pragmatic educational metaphysic? How are the virtues of the Sioux and the characteristics of friendship enacted communicatively? When we say a person is courageous or strikes a workable balance between affection and instrumentality presumably we base this on something the person has said or done, not on some impression or self reported trait. So, are these—arguably communicative—behaviors teachable? If so, how might we go about actively fostering them? And how will we know if we have succeeded? To maintain the momentum of the intriguing themes of these essays, I am advocating that we not settle for applying them in ways that are peripheral to the basic course. Instead, they suggest ideas for core instructional units and invite a host of concrete research projects, using a range of methodologies and approaches. The underlying message of this special forum is that by engaging philosophical issues in close concert with the practical issues of the basic course, we all benefit: faculty members who need intellectual recharging, Teaching Assistants who are forming habits of mind that they will carry forth into their professorial careers, and most important, our students who deserve our best collective thinking if they are function effectively in their civic and personal lives.
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Index Basic Communication Course
Annual Volumes 1-15

INDEX OF TITLES

Volume 1, 1989

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

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


Smither, 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.
Index

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.

Weaver, R.L., II & Cotrell, H.W. Teaching basic courses: Problems and solutions. 184-196.

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.
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.


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**


Hess, J.A. & Pearson, J.C. Basic public speaking principles: An examination of twelve popular texts. 16-34.

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.
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.
Rolls, J.A. Experiential learning as an adjunct to the basic course: Student responses to a pedagogical model. 182-199.


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. 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.


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.


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

Heaton, D.W. The empowter-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.
Index

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.


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 13, 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.
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

Goulden, Nancy Rost. Revising public speaking theory, content, and pedagogy: A review of the issues in the discipline in the 1990’s.

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


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

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

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

Johnson, Julia R., Susan M. Pliner & 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 16, 2004

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


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

Author Index

Basic Communication Course Annual
Volumes 1-15

Amaro, Charlotte A. 1994
Anderson, Karen, 2002
Applbaum, Ronald L. 1995
Arnett, Ronald C., 2001
Ayres, Debbie M. 1994
Ayres, Joe. 1994
Barton, Matthew H. 2003
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, Marilyn N. 1995
Callison, Marybeth G. 1998
Carson, Christy L. 2000
Cooper, Pamela. 1994
Cotrell, Howard W. 1989, 1992
Cox, Tephen A., 2001
Cronin, Michael W. 1994, 1994
Cutspec, Patricia A. 1999
Dalbey, Jennifer 2003
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
Fassett, Deanna L. 2003
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
Hickson, III, Mark. 1996, 1997
Hill, L. Brooks. 1994
Hinton, J. S. 1996
Honken, Connie. 1996
Huffman, Karla J. 2000
Hunt, Stephen K., 200, 20021
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKinney, Bruce C.</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPherson, Kevin</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>McQueeney, Pat.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller, John J.</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mino, Mary</td>
<td>1995, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morlan, Don B.</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morreale, Sherwyn P.</td>
<td>1995, 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murphy, John M.</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray, Martin G.</td>
<td>1993, 1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neal, Kay E.</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Paul</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newburger, Craig</td>
<td>1992, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oludaja, Bayo</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osborn, Michael</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owens, Alfred W., II.</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillips, Gerald M.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pliner, Susan M.</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Powell, Kimberly A.</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Pullum, Stephen J.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Quigley, Brooke L.</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Ragan, Sandra L.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Robinson, David J.</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Rolls, Judith A.</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Russell, Bruce W.</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Rust, Joseph H.,</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Santoro, Gerald M.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Schaller, Kristi A.</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Schliessmann, Michael R.</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>Schnell, Jim</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>Schwartzman, Roy</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Sellnow, Deanna D.</td>
<td>1996, 2000</td>
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<td>Sims, Judy Rene</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Simonds, Cheri</td>
<td>2000, 2002</td>
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<td>Smilowitz, Michael</td>
<td>1989, 1990</td>
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<td>Smitter, Roger, D.</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>Spano, Shawn</td>
<td>1996, 1997</td>
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<td>Spiro, Julie H.</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>Sprague, Jo</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Steinbrecher, Mild M.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Stewart, Robert A.</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Thomas, Richard W.</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>Titsworth, B. Scott</td>
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<td>Treadwell, D.</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>Treinen, Kristen P.,</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>Troup, Calvin L.,</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Troester, Rod.</td>
<td>1990, 1993</td>
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<td>Turman, Paul D.</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Verderber, Rudolph, F.</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Vicker, Lauren A.</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Wallace, Sam.</td>
<td>1989, 1995</td>
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<td>Wardrope, William J.</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Weaver, Richard L., II.</td>
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<td>Weber, Dawn R.</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>West, Richard</td>
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<td>Whaley, Bryan B.</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Whitecap, Valerie A.</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Willer, Lynda R.</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Williams, David E.</td>
<td>1994, 1998</td>
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<td>Willmington, S. Clay.</td>
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<td>Wood, Jennifer</td>
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<td>Wood, Julia T.</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>Worley, David W.</td>
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<td>Yook, Eunkyong Lee (Esther)</td>
<td>1990, 1997</td>
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Submission Guidelines

The Basic Course Commission of the National Communication Association invites submissions to be considered for publication in the Basic Communication Course Annual. The Annual publishes the best scholarship available on topics related to the basic course and is distributed nationally to scholars and educators interested in the basic communication course. Each article is also indexed in its entirety in the ERIC database.

Manuscripts published in the Annual are not restricted to any particular methodology or approach. They must, however, address issues that are significant to the basic course (defined broadly). Articles in the Annual may focus on the basic course in traditional or nontraditional settings. The Annual uses a blind reviewing process. Two or three members of the Editorial Board read and review each manuscript. The Editor will return a manuscript without review if it is clearly outside the scope of the basic course.

Manuscripts submitted to the Annual must conform to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition (2001). Submitted manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and in 12 point standard font. They should not exceed 30 pages, exclusive of tables and references, nor be under consideration by any other publishing outlet at the time of submission. By submitting to the Annual, authors maintain that they will not submit their manuscript to another
Submission Guidelines

outlet without first withdrawing it from consideration for the Annual. Each submission must be accompanied by an abstract of less than 200 words and a 50-75-word author identification paragraph on each author. A separate title page should include (1) the title and identification of the author(s), (2) the address, telephone number, and email address of the contact person, and (3) data pertinent to the manuscript's history. All references to the author(s) and institutional affiliation should be removed from the text of the manuscript. Send four (4) copies of your submission materials to:

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If you have any questions about the Annual or your submission, contact the Editor by telephone at (740) 593-9160 or by email at titswort@ohio.edu.

All complete submissions must be received by MARCH 1, 2003 to receive full consideration for the upcoming Basic Communication Course Annual.