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## Self-Confrontation and Public Speaking Apprehension: To Videotape or Not to Videotape Student Speakers?

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# Self-Confrontation and Public Speaking Apprehension: To Videotape or Not to Videotape Student Speakers?

## **Cover Page Footnote**

This essay is part of the proceedings of a Speech Communication Association seminar held at the New Orleans convention: "Instructional Resource Innovations for the Introductory Communication Course."

# **Self-confrontation and Public Speaking Apprehension: To Videotape or Not To Videotape Student Speakers?**

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The public speaking orientation for introductory communication course (ICC) instruction is maintaining a position of dominance among U.S. universities and colleges (Gibson, Hanna & Lechty, 1990). Gibson et al. indicated that 56% of 423 universities surveyed chose the public speaking option. The "hybrid" orientation to basic course instruction (a combination of orientations [e.g., public speaking, interpersonal, communication theory, etc.]) was the choice of only 25% of the schools surveyed (a 9% decrease over the last five years that data were collected) (p. 240). The emphasis on public speaking instruction "challenges the classroom instructor to discover and implement strategies that minimize anxiety associated with in-class public speaking performances" (Beatty, 1988, p. 208; see also, Newburger & Hemphill, 1992).

This study examines whether the use of self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches) as an instructional intervention in introductory public speaking classes will result in a reduction of subjects' public speaking apprehension levels. Gibson et al. (1990) indicated that 41% of the schools they surveyed used videotape in some capacity in ICC classrooms. Considering the tangible presence of videotape in ICC class-

rooms, it seems useful to examine the potential impact that self-confrontation (self-viewing of videotaped speeches as post-performance feedback) might have as an instructional intervention intended to reduce student public speaking apprehension.

"For most people, giving a speech is a novel experience, not something they do every day" (McCroskey, 1984, p. 25). The experience of presenting a speech *to be graded* would seemingly intensify the exceptional nature of the already novel public speaking communication event (Newburger & Hemphill, 1992). Similarly, people probably regard being videotaped as a novel experience. Introducing this variable into the "speaking for grades" environment certainly provides speakers with immediate and compelling feedback concerning their performances, but what impact might self-confrontation have on their public speaking apprehension levels?

Previous research has produced mixed results with self-confrontation having been found to be both *positively* and *negatively* reinforcing (Lake & Adams, 1984; Gelso, 1974; Roberts, 1972; Dieker, Crane, & Brown, 1971; and McCroskey & Lashbrook, 1970). Lake & Adams (1984) found, for example, that public speaking students involved with having their speech presentations videotaped "experienced highly similar levels of anxiety, exhibitionism, and reticence as they did when they spoke without the presence of the VTR in the classroom [with differences always involving increased anxiety after the students were videotaped]" (p. 335). Data acquired from students who completed an undergraduate public speaking course [employing self-confrontation] currently being offered at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs ["Speech and Thought Curriculum"] indicated, however, a significant reduction in communication apprehension in all contexts measured by the PRCA (public speaking, conversation, meeting, group) (Morreale, 1992). The course employs multiple instruments and methods to assess student progress in lecture, recitation, and in an Individualized Assis-

tance Laboratory (IAL) (Shockley-Zalaback & Hulbert-Johnson, 1994, p.30). Students give five in-class presentations and view a videotape of each performance with a graduate assistant in the IAL within two weeks after each presentation (Shockley-Zalaback & Hulbert-Johnson, 1994).

Certainly, among the 41% of the schools surveyed that reported using videotape in some capacity in ICC classrooms (Gibson et al., 1990) a number of idiosyncratic applications must exist. A relevant question emerges: "what impact does each distinct manipulation of VTR (e.g., private out-of-class viewings of speaking performances [with a faculty member, graduate assistant, peer, or viewed alone] or in-class viewings [with feedback given by a faculty member or graduate assistant]) have on speaker apprehension levels?" Many campuses may not have graduate assistants or resources for individualized assistance labs, etc. Such campuses may be limited to in-class viewings of speech presentations with instructors providing feedback. This methodology requires no additional facilities, additional personnel, or out-of-class demands on instructors' time. This study examines the impact of employing self-confrontation via the instructor guided in-class viewing option.

**Hypothesis:** Subjects' public speaking apprehension levels will be reduced as a result of experiencing self-confrontation [having their speech presentations videotaped and then played back and discussed in class by the course instructor] as a part of the public speaking instructional process.

## METHOD

Data were collected from two samples using a repeated measures design. In one sample 112 undergraduates enrolled in introductory public speaking classes completed the Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA)

(McCroskey, 1970; McCroskey and Richmond, 1982) at two different intervals. The PRPSA is a Likert-type self-report instrument which measures public speaking anxiety exclusively. The first completion of the instrument preceded any in-class public speaking activities, while the second completion of the instrument came after each subject delivered four in-class speeches.

The other sample involved 56 undergraduates also enrolled in introductory public speaking classes. The first completion of the PRPSA preceded any in-class public speaking activities, while the second completion of the instrument came after each subject delivered four in-class public speeches that were videotaped. Each subject viewed the video playback of each of her/his four speech performances following each speech presentation with the videotape being viewed and discussed in-class by the course instructor. The discussion encompassed basic content and delivery issues and did not involve the discussion of grades earned. The public speaking classes participating in this study were taught by several different full-time (tenure track) faculty members. The average reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the PRPSA was .910.

## RESULTS

### *Data Analyses*

A 2x2 ANOVA was computed and revealed that the main effect of all subjects as differentiated by pre and posttests was significant ( $F = 12.84$ ,  $df = 1,167$ ,  $p < .000$ ). No other significant differences were found. [A 2x2 ANCOVA was additionally computed, measuring the difference between subjects involved with self-confrontation and subjects not involved with self-confrontation on posttest PRPSA scores,

arithmetically adjusting for the pretest scores. No significant difference was found.] A layered post hoc analysis using the Newman-Keuls procedure indicated a significant difference for pre to posttest scores for only the subjects not involved with self-confrontation (4.3 w/critical value = 4.17,  $p < .01$ ). The difference involved a reduction in these subjects' public speaking apprehension levels. No other significant differences were found using the Newman-Keuls procedure.

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was computed to determine the relationship between demographic variables (sex, age, educational classification [freshman, sophomore, etc.], grade expectation [reported by subjects on both pre and posttests and later coded as constant, increased or decreased expectation], teacher evaluation [each subject responded to the same posttest teacher evaluation item— "Overall, this teacher is among the best teachers I have known" — by selecting one of five response choices ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"], and section) and "PRPSA change" [difference between subjects' pre and posttest scores]. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the proportion of the criterion variance that was accounted for by the demographics (predictor variables) was small ( $R = .0987$  or 10% — when all variables were entered).

## DISCUSSION

The results indicated that subjects' public speaking apprehension levels were susceptible to change in the introductory public speaking instructional context. The use of self-confrontation as a public speaking apprehension reduction strategy did not prove useful, however. The significant F value, and, even more importantly, the Newman-Keuls critical value reported in this study indicated that the repeated experience of presenting public speeches may have served as an intervening variable that invoked the change, while self-

confrontation appeared to inhibit the reduction of communication apprehension. Recent related research regarding the use of video-modeling as an instructional intervention for reducing student *pre-performance* public speaking anxiety produced similar results (Newburger & Hemphill, 1992). Newburger and Hemphill concluded that "the narrower range of acceptable behavior produced by the provision of both audio and visual sensory input may have heightened subjects' concerns about evaluation, performance, and self-related issues" (p. 77; see also — Daly, Vangelisti, Neel, & Cavanaugh, 1989). Certainly, the provision of both audio and visual sensory input associated with subjects' own speech presentations can potentially significantly heighten the subjects' self-related concerns.

Future research might consider the methodology employed for integrating self-confrontation in the public speaking instructional environment. In this study, after a group of speakers presented their assigned speeches both the speakers and their classmates viewed the video replays of their speech performances and a discussion concerning the presentations (lead by the class instructor) followed. In the control group the only difference in the use of class time was the absence of the self-confrontation dimension. Alternative approaches for employing the self-confrontation strategy (e.g., allowing speech presenters to privately view their performances outside of class; or having speech presenters coached during the viewing process by an informed tutor [who may or may not be an instructor, graduate assistant, or peer]) may produce different results (e.g., see Morreale, 1992).

An issue raised by Newburger & Hemphill (1992) is relevant for this investigation. They stressed that "future research should consider whether student speech performances qualitatively improve as an outcome of being confronted to the *video-modeling instructional strategy* (the same issue applies to the use of self-confrontation), despite the possibility that their anxiety levels may not be cor-

respondingly reduced. The belief that nervousness can actually be used to the advantage of speech presenters is widely held" (p. 78). The assessment of public speaking apprehension levels is concerned with affective learning (feelings, attitudes, motivation). The "Speech and Thought Curriculum" course described earlier has multiple objectives associated with the cognitive, behavioral, affective, and ethical learning domains — and corresponding assessment methodologies are employed to facilitate individual student gains across the learning dimensions.

Previous support exists that the use of self-confrontation as an instructional intervention can result in improvement in performance *skills* (behavioral learning domain). Mulac (1974) found, for example, that students experienced gains in speaking skill when the self-confrontation instructional intervention was employed. Additionally, Sorenson & Pickett (1986) found that significant skills-based gains "are made when videotaped feedback is combined with other strategies such as practice interviews, discussions, models, lectures, and behavior modification" (p.13).

The alternative view held by some instructors of the introductory public speaking course, that a major objective of the course should be to instill a greater measure of confidence in students concerning their future public speaking activities, is also worthy of consideration. Many students enrolled in an introductory public speaking course are fulfilling an undergraduate academic requirement and it may be the only such course they will ever take. Should they leave the course as more competent communicators who are relieved to "never again have to give a speech?" One could argue the case that public speaking anxiety reduction could be as important as corresponding skill development. At this point, basic course instructors wishing to employ self-confrontation as an instructional intervention specifically intended to reduce their students' speech anxiety should consider that research to date paints a muddy picture regarding whether this objective will

be met. Careful consideration of the specific methodology for employing this instructional intervention should be a prominent concern.

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