Basic Communication Course Annual

Volume 24 Article 10

2012

I Need Help: Help Seeking Behaviors, Communication Anxiety and Communication Center Usage

C. Leigh Nelson
James Madison University

Toni S. Whitfield
James Madison University

Michelle Moreau
James Madison University

I Need Help: Help Seeking Behaviors, Communication Anxiety and Communication Center Usage

C. Leigh Nelson
Toni S. Whitfield
Michelle Moreau

Employers increasingly demand strong oral communication and interpersonal skills when making hiring decisions (Farmer & Brown, 2008). For recent graduates to compete with seasoned professionals, they need to leave college with the ability to put together a strong oral argument (Gardner, 2000; Holden & Hamblett, 2007), develop audience-centered messages (Holden & Hamblett, 2007; Phillips & Phillips, 2002), and deliver them clearly (Wood & Kacynski, 2007). In response to these needs, universities have traditionally offered basic communication courses that meet state requirements for communication competence (Ellis, 1995; Hancock, Stone, Brundage, & Zeigler, 2010; Morreale, 1998; Vevea, Pearson, Child, & Semlak, 2009) as well as address workplace readiness, and every day communication competence in students' civic and personal lives.

Some universities are also choosing to create communication centers to provide a place for students to practice their public speaking skills (Jones, 2001) and possibly to videotape their speeches and receive feedback (Teitelbaum, 2000). To justify additional resources to staff and maintain communication centers, communication center administrators/faculty need to be armed

with empirically supported justifications for these expenses. With the increasing emphasis on oral communication competence, a tough labor market, and only getting one if any instructional opportunity to develop and improve their communication skills, these centers can be a vital supplement to classroom instruction. These centers provide a source of help for students who are concerned about their performance in the basic course as well as other courses where oral communication skills are evaluated.

Karabenick (1987) notes that one important part of the learning process is seeking help and Greenberg (1998) found that receiving indirect forms of help enabled students to maintain feelings of intelligence and aptitude. Ironically, Alexitch (2002) discovered that those who needed the most help were the least likely to seek it. With regard to public speaking, it could be that the students who need the most help are stymied by their communication apprehension. Communication apprehension could result from anxiety over the impending act of public speaking or anxiety related to asking for help in either formal or informal settings. Although communication centers supplement basic communication class instruction, the diversion of resources into these centers may be wasted if students are too anxious or otherwise unmotivated to use their assistance. This study examines whether students who attend communication centers and students who do not differ in their help seeking behaviors and communication anxiety. The study also investigates the correlation between communication apprehension and help seeking behaviors and whether communication center usage and communica-

tion apprehension predict various help seeking behaviors.

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

Communication apprehension (CA) is defined as "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (Honeycutt, Choi, & DeBerry, 2009; McCroskey, 1992, p. 16). Because communication apprehension has been found to have negative effects on students' integration into the university community, both inside and outside the classroom, examining it from a communication centers' perspective is important. Various research perspectives exist in the literature regarding the origins and measurement of communication apprehension that range between the issues of CA's origins, whether it is an inherent personality trait, or product of environmental influence (Bodie, 2010; Hsu, 2009). Cultural variances and norms (Pederson, Tkachuk, & Allen, 2008; Pryor, Butler, & Boehringer, 2005), gender and temperament have also been identified as factors that related to CA (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998; Shimotsu & Mottet, 2009). For example, age, sex, and exceptional abilities were considered significant predictors of communication apprehension in the Butler, Pryor, and Marti (2004) study and biological sex had an impact in the Burleson, Holmstrom, and Gilstrap (2005) study on interpersonal anxiety. Vevea, Pearson, Child, and Semlak (2009) found that females have higher levels of CA and lower measures of self-esteem. Thus, sex and

age are important demographic variables to consider when examining communication apprehension.

Another facet of communication apprehension research involves the differences between self-report and observational measures of communication anxiety. Ayres and Sonandre (2002) examined the aspects of validity and reliability of a variety of tests. There are various self-report and observational measures. For example, the Stroop Test for Public Speaking Apprehension (Mandeville, Ries, Turk, McChargue, & McNeil, 1994) where observers record their impressions of apprehension is considered an indirect measure (Ayers & Sonandre, 2002). The most widely used self-report measure, the PRCA-24 (Richmond & McCroskey, 1985), is designed to measure trait and outcome variables in various communication contexts. CA is connected to people's level of apprehension about speaking in one on one relationships, in homogenous groups (Pederson, et al., 2008), in meetings, and in front of audiences (Bodie, 2010; Hsu, 2009; Levine & McCroskey, 1990; Wrench, Brogan, McCroskey, & Jowi, 2008). These four aspects of communication anxiety are important to study from a communication basic course perspective because students in these courses will encounter dyadic communication, communication in small groups, as well as experience a public speaking course element.

McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, and Payne (1989) found that high CA students avoid situations which include oral communication and that this avoidance can also impact in-class behaviors (e.g., such as meeting with fellow students or teachers) and learning. McCroskey et al. (1989) further found that:

> The high CA student is less likely to become involved with campus activities, less likely to communicate with peers, advisors, counselors, or professors who could offer social comfort and academic assistance. Even under circumstances of superior academic achievement, a student who feels disconnected from and unrelated to the people and traditions of the university is likely to abandon the university for a safer place. (p. 101)

Witt and Behnke (2006) studied 171 undergraduate beginning speech communication students' and their anticipatory speech trait anxiety and found that students were more anxious depending on the type of assignment (i.e., manuscript, extemporaneous, impromptu). Witt and Behnke suggest building up assignments from least threatening to most threatening to assist students in an "instructional therapy" that would reduce uncertainty and provide more confidence. Results of this study could mean that if students utilized communication centers for preparation of speech assignments, the centers could assist in reducing uncertainty and easing communication apprehension.

Increasing student participation, interaction and engagement is a goal of communication centers (Morreale, 1998). Jones, Hunt, Simonds, Comadena, and Baldwin (2004) interviewed students regarding speech uncertainty before, during, and after their experience with communication centers and found that after giving speeches to lab attendants the students agreed that visiting the lab reduced some of their anxiety. Communication centers present an opportunity for anxious students to build confidence and excel during graded classroom performances. Hence, it is important to see if there

is a difference between those basic communication course students who visit a communication center and those who do not and their reported levels of communication apprehension.

COMMUNICATION CENTER USAGE

Communication centers provide practice space and consultation services for students and faculty who want assistance with oral communication projects (Wilde, Cuny, & Vizzier, 2006; Yook, 2006). Although writing centers have been a staple in institutions of higher education for decades, communication centers are young, few, and inadequately researched. Helsel and Hogg (2006) surveyed 890 universities and colleges in 2001 and 58 schools responded that they had a communication center. Of those, 20% indicated that their communication center was two years old or less (Helsel & Hogg, 2006). Not surprisingly, communication center professionals have been calling for more research to help inform center pedagogy and instruction (Preston, 2006). Due to the minimal amount of published research in this area, communication centers still are exploring what motivates students to come to communication centers and the basic characteristics of such students. Because these centers have the potential to enhance oral communication competencies necessary for the workforce, investigating basic demographic information that differentiates students who voluntarily seek such assistance from those who do not and the different levels of communication apprehension each experience is vital

for these centers to build, promote, and expand their services.

Services and structure vary from center to center, but clients' purposes for seeking help from a communication center can include assistance on speech delivery, outlines, PowerPoint, anxiety, as well as the use of practice rooms and other presentation needs. Centers utilize faculty, undergraduate tutors, graduate assistants, or a combination of all three to help mentor student clients. They also provide physical space, recording, and projection equipment. Because communication centers require use of multiple technologies, space, and personnel resources, establishing and maintaining such centers can be cost prohibitive. Knowing that these centers can be used for multiple purposes (McCraken, 2006), rather than just one cause, could justify the overall funding and faculty support to administration.

At universities with active communication across the curriculum programs, communication centers can support basic communication course learning in entry-level freshmen orientation courses, senior capstone courses, and communication intensive courses throughout the university (Morreale, Schockley-Zalaback, & Whitney, 1993). However, the rationale for communication centers in higher education is to support students taking the communication basic course and to supplement the sometimes arduous task leveled on the basic course to meet departmental, school, and state requirements for communication competency (Morreale, 1998).

Two models of communication center structure exist in relationship to a university's basic communication course: an integrated or "labs" approach and a voluntary-use design. The primary distinction between the

two models is that when a communication center takes a labs approach, the communication center is an outgrowth of the basic course. Morreale, Schockley and Whitney (1993) detail how the Center for Excellence in Oral Communication at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs tie the communication center to the basic communication course in that "all students are required to self-evaluate each presentation in the communication lab … (and) all students enrolled in the course are required to participate in an individual entrance and exit interview in the laboratory" (p. 17). Hence, visits to centers are required for satisfactory completion of the course. In 2000, Linda Hobgood, director of University of Richmond's communication center, suggested a voluntary approach to communication center pedagogy. Centers which employ a voluntary design are open to all university or college students enrolled in any course. Although many of the student clients of voluntary communication centers may be enrolled in the basic course, visits are not mandatory (See Hobgood, 2000 and Morreale, et al., 1993 for detailed descriptions of design, tutor training, funding, etc.).

Because of communication centers' novelty on most college campuses, students will not necessarily know that such assistance exists. The more promotional avenues used to entice students (e.g., instructors, flyers, class presentations, other students, websites, etc.), the more likely students may seek assistance at these centers and understand these services. Therefore, centers will see clients coming in for various reasons, ranging from students who genuinely want to improve their speaking abilities or their understanding of basic course material to those who were enticed by extra credit or

wanting to impress their instructor. Hobgood (2000) says that the voluntary approach requires exceptional communication with faculty and among the student body. Thus, it can be more difficult to attract clients to come to the center when it is not required. Knowing what motivates students to utilize a communication center and which help seeking behaviors may facilitate voluntary communication center use is of interest. The more reasons and/or purposes students have to go to a center the more likely they are to seek help at these facilities. Additionally, the students who do use the center are more likely to return and/or recommend the center to fellow students if they were satisfied with the experience. Thus, total satisfaction with center usage is an important variable to consider as a predictor of help seeking behavior.

Whitfield and Nelson (2008) found that there was a relationship between various help seeking behaviors and motives for basic communication course students communicating with their instructors. This study furthers that work by examining whether knowledge of communication centers, reasons and purposes for utilizing communication centers and satisfaction with communication center usage predicts help seeking behaviors.

HELP SEEKING BEHAVIORS

Students who encounter difficulties in academic settings may or may not seek help. Identifying who, when, and why basic communication course students seek or do not seek help is useful to examining communication

center pedagogy. According to Karabenick (1987), "seeking help when needed is an integral part of the learning process" (p. 69). Although students who seek help through office hour sessions with instructors, participate in study groups, and/or ask other students for assistance are more likely to attain scholarly aspirations, seeking help can create "feelings of inferiority or inadequacy." This appears to be a threat to a student's self-esteem and could prohibit some students from seeking out formal sources of help from instructors and university assistance programs (Karabenick, 1987, p. 71). Knapp and Karabenick (1988) found that "the more formal, institutionalized help services were rarely employed (even when highly publicized) as the sole means for obtaining assistance," and students more frequently sought help from informal sources such as classmates, friends, and family before formal ones were employed (p. 225). In addition, students in this study admitted needing help but not using the resources provided and saw help seeking as a more private, one-on-one experience. Greenberg (1998) found that students may be able to maintain feelings of aptitude and intelligence when they receive valuable and indirect forms of help. Getting good grades assists the student in ego-oriented goals that underscore their performance and varied help seeking strategies (Greenberg, 1998).

Alexitch (2002) found that students reported they were not likely to seek out others for academic help. Those who were in the greatest necessity for help were least likely to seek help and felt threatened by help seeking. In addition, students who had the highest achievement were those with a positive help seeking view. These students saw help seeking as acquiring new

skills. Those who felt capable in their academic efforts were more likely to view help seeking as part of achieving their goals (Greenberg, 1998). In the Alexitch study (2002), students who implemented multiple organizational strategies more often asked for assistance and had no fear of the social costs (i.e., need to use face-saving behaviors) if they participated in help seeking.

Karabenick (2001) examined help seeking orientation in a large class and found that most students who had high help seeking preferences were more likely to seek help from formal (teacher) sources. In addition, Karabenick (1994) supported this finding with his prior study's observation of threat being directly related to executive help seeking. Executive help seeking is designed to minimize the costs associated with carrying out a task by getting help from others in the form of asking for the answer to a question (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991).

Taplin, Yum, Olugbermiro, Fan, and Chan (2001) found no difference in high and low achievers in relation to their help seeking behavior. Overall, they found that students believed that they should try to find the information or solve the problem themselves before asking for help. In addition, Taplin et al. identified high-achieving males as scoring lowest on help seeking behaviors. In addition, scholars have found these gender differences in the area of counseling and help seeking (Good & Wood, 1995; Morgan, Ness, & Robinson, 2003; Wisch, Mahalik, Hayes, & Nutt, 1995). Morgan, Ness, and Robinson (2003) also examined differences between class status and help seeking variables and found that older students of higher student status were less likely to seek help for personal, career, and academic issues.

Thus, demographics such as sex, age, and class status are important demographic predictors to consider when investigating help seeking behaviors.

Help seeking has many different categories (Butler, 2006). Several components of help seeking have been individualized and defined (Wolters, Pintrich, & Karabenick, 2003). *Effort regulation* is the amount of effort students do or do not put into course work, preparation for class and whether they lose interest if the information is dull or uninteresting. *Regulation of time and study environment* examines study habits including location, time allocated for study, and overall course preparation. A *general intention for seeking help* is focused on asking for assistance for general information, with the lectures and readings in class. Why people *avoid help* examines three areas that relate to a student's intent on asking for assistance in the areas of reading, lectures, and general course help. *Costs of asking* for help might include causing them to lose face and reveal that they are not as smart as other students and generally lead them to feel inferior. Likewise, if a student perceives a benefit from seeking help they may be acting based on the assumption that getting help makes them a better or smarter student and thus could increase his or her comprehension of information. The reasons for seeking help are identified in two ways, *expedient* (also called executive) reasons relate to a student's concept of help seeking including seeking help to avoid more work or to work less. *Instrumental* reasons examine the autonomy level of the students. These motives are focused on having more information to understand the course concepts, learn basic principles and other information that might lead to problem solving

and more self-regulating behavior. In identifying where students seek help, two categories arise: *formal avenues*, seeking help from the teacher and *informal* avenues—from another student or some other indirect method. In addition to communication apprehension, these types of help seeking behaviors can aid in our understanding of the usage of communication centers.

HYPOTHESES

People who are academically motivated are more likely to seek help (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Knapp & Karabenick, 1988). However, those who are the most likely to seek help are those that need it the least (Alexitch, 2002). Communication centers provide a resource where students can seek the assistance that may reduce their communication anxiety (Jones, 2001). Understanding the relationship between help seeking and communication anxiety adds to the help seeking literature and how it relates to communication. This study investigates communication center usage, communication, anxiety, and help seeking behaviors among basic communication course students. The following hypotheses are then proposed:

H1: There is a difference between basic communication course students who attend a communication center and those who do not in their help seeking behaviors.

H2: There is a difference between basic communication course students who attend a communication center and those who do not in their communication anxiety.

H3: There is a relationship between communication anxiety and help seeking behaviors.

H4: Demographics, communication anxiety, and communication center usage will predict various help seeking behaviors among basic communication course students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

The sample was composed of 357 students (116 men, 236 women, and 5 unknown) enrolled in basic communication courses at a large southeastern state university. Basic communication course participants were sent emails to participate in a web survey, after reading an Institutional Review Board approved consent form, in seven different instructor's classes. A few instructors offered extra credit incentive to participate in the study others merely offered the opportunity. The majority of the participants were Freshmen (n=343). Sophomores (n=6), Juniors (n=1), Seniors (n=4) and unknown (n=3) composed the rest of the sample. The students had an average age of 18.60. There were 78 (21.8%) basic communication course students who attended the communication center in the sample and 279 (78.2%) who did not.

Measures

Wolters, Pintrich, and Karabenick's (2005) scale of help seeking strategies for the regulation of academic

behaviors was used to measure help seeking. This scale is composed of 35 items with 10 subscales. A 7-point semantic differential scale from not at all true of me (coded as a 1) to very true of me (coded as a 7) was used to measure responses. The four item effort-regulation subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .70. The eight item regulation of time and space subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .75. General intention to seek help three item subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .95. The general intention to avoid help subscale, composed of three items had a Cronbach's alpha of .80. The perceived costs of seeking help subscale, composed of four items, had a Cronbach's alpha of .90. The three item perceived benefits of seeking help subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .90. The instrumental (autonomous) help seeking three item subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .88. Expedient (executive) help seeking, which was composed of three items, had a Cronbach's alpha of .76. Cronbach's alpha for the two-item formal subscale was .97 and for the informal subscale of help seeking the two-item Cronbach's alpha was .96.

McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension scale was used to measure communication anxiety. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (coded as a 1) to strongly agree (coded as a 5). One item was inadvertently left off of the meeting anxiety subscale "I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting." The following Cronbach alpha's were observed. The group apprehension subscale alpha was .90, the meeting apprehension alpha was .90, the interpersonal conversation alpha was .88, and the speech anxiety alpha was .85.

Reasons for visiting the communication center were measured by responses to the question: "Please give your reason for visiting the communication center today (check all that apply)." Responses provided were: required to visit, bonus points for visiting, improve grade in class, improve communication with teacher, improve or enhance relationship with teacher, improve understanding of course material, not comfortable talking with my professor, don't understand the assignment, improve presentational skills and other (explain). These items were then summed to get the total number of reasons for visiting the communication center.

How students found out about the communication center was measured with the following question: "How did you find out about the communication center?" Responses were: instructor, flyer, class presentation, another student, website, and other. These items were then summed to get the total number of ways students found out about the communication center.

There are multiple types of help that students may seek at a communication center. To determine the number of skills or specific needs being addressed, responses were summed to gain an understanding of the breadth of purposes for coming to the center. To determine the skill or need for why students came to the communication center the following question was asked. "For what purpose did you visit the communication center?" The options were: speech, outline, PowerPoint, anxiety help, practice room and other. These items were then summed to get the total number of purposes for why students came to the communication center.

Satisfaction with the communication center was measured with eight items on a five point Likert scale

from strongly disagree (coded as a 1) to strongly agree (coded as a 5). The statements were: the staff was knowledgeable, the staff was friendly, the staff was helpful, the facilities were adequate, the hours of operation were good for me, the communication center provided me with what I needed, it was easy to make an appointment to use the communication center, and I feel that the feedback I received at the communication center improved my presentation. These items were added to get a total satisfaction with the communication center measure. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .92.

RESULTS

To test hypothesis one to determine whether there is a difference between those who attend a communication center and those who do not and their help seeking behaviors, a MANOVA was conducted which included each of the 10 subscales of Wolters et al.'s (2005) help seeking behavior scale. The test was not significant. There were no significant differences between the basic communication course students who visited the communication center and those who did not for help seeking behaviors.

Hypothesis two, which examined whether there was a difference between those who attend a communication center and those who do not attend a communication center and their reported communication anxiety, a MANOVA was utilized which included each of the four subscales of McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Scale. The test was not significant. There were no significant differences be-

Table 1
Correlations between Communication Anxiety and Help Seeking Behaviors

Measures	Speech Anxiety	Group Anxiety	Meeting Anxiety	Conversation Anxiety	*M*	*SD*
Effort Regulation	-0.09	-.20****	-.13*	-.18***	4.95	1.09
Regulation of Time	-0.08	-.18***	-.16**	-.12*	4.73	0.92
General Intention for Seeking Help	-0.13*	-.38****	-.27****	-.35****	5.00	1.51
Avoiding Help	0.05	.32****	.29****	.31****	2.38	1.20
Perceived Costs of Help	.12*	.30****	.30****	.31****	2.01	1.20
Perceived Benefits of Help	-0.01	-0.07	0.01	-0.06	5.06	1.36
Instrumental Reasons for Help	-0.06	-.16**	-0.08	-0.10	5.02	1.26
Expedience Reasons	0.03	.17**	.20****	.25****	2.67	1.27
Formal Avenues	-.12*	-.26****	-.17***	-.18***	5.02	1.48
Informal Avenues	0.03	-0.02	-0.06	-.11*	4.62	1.44
M	3.16	2.54	2.45	2.47		
SD	0.82	0.84	0.86	0.72		

Note: For all scales, higher scores are indicative of more extreme responding in the direction of the construct assessed (n=338).
*p<.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001, **** p <.0005

tween the two groups on any of the four subscales of communication apprehension.

Hypothesis three examined whether there was a correlation between communication apprehension and help seeking behavior. Using Pearson's correlation coefficients, there were multiple significant correlations that emerged between the four subscales of communication anxiety and the ten subscales of help seeking behavior (See Table 1). Speech anxiety was negatively related to general intention for seeking help and using formal avenues of seeking help. However, it was positively related to perceived costs of seeking help. Group anxiety, meeting anxiety, and conversation anxiety were all negatively related to effort regulation, regulation of time, general intention for seeking help, and formal avenues for seeking help. Group anxiety, meeting anxiety, and conversation anxiety were positively related to avoiding help, perceived costs of help and expedience reasons for seeking help. In addition, group anxiety was negatively related to instrumental reasons for seeking help, and conversation anxiety was negatively related to informal avenues of seeking help.

To test hypothesis four, which examined whether sex, age, year in school (Step 1), speech anxiety, group anxiety, conversation anxiety, meeting anxiety (Step 2), and communication center usage including: total ways people found out about the communication center, total purposes for going to the center, total reasons for going to the center and total satisfaction with the center (Step 3) predicted various help seeking behaviors hierarchical linear regression analyses were used. For the 10 subscales used for measuring help seeking behaviors, the model predicted six of the 10 subscales. Demographics

predicted effort regulation R^2=.18, F(3,68)=4.93, p=.004. The four communication anxiety subscales added to this prediction, R^2=.43, ΔR^2=.26, F(7,64)=7.02, p<.0005, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant R^2=.50, ΔR^2 =.06, F(11,60)=5.44, p<.0005. In the final model for predicting effort, sex t=2.33, β=.25, p=.023 and age t=2.03, β=.24, p=.046 were positive significant predictors and year in school t=-2.76, β=-.32, p=.008 was a negative predictor. Group anxiety was also a negative predictor t=-4.79, β=-.90, p<.0005. Speech anxiety β=.010, conversation anxiety β=.24, meeting anxiety β=.25, and purposes β=.20, reasons β=.03, sources β=.13, and satisfaction with the communication center β=-.14 were not significant predictors. See Table 2.

The model, which examined whether sex, age, year in school (Step 1), speech anxiety, group anxiety, conversation anxiety, meeting anxiety (Step 2), and communication center usage including: total ways people found out about the communication center, total purposes for going to the center, total reasons for going to the center and total satisfaction with the center (Step 3) predicted regulation of time and space was also significant. Demographics predicted regulation of time and space R^2=.15, F(3,66)=3.80, p=.014 and the four communication anxiety subscales added to this prediction, R^2=.27, ΔR^2=.12, F(7,62)=3.23, p=.006, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant R^2=.31, ΔR^2 =.04, F(11,58)=2.35, p=.018. In the final model, sex was not a significant predictor β=.20, however, age was a positive predictor t=2.53, β=.36, p=.014 and year in school t=-2.18, β=-.31, p=.033 and group anxiety t=-2.798, β=-.62,

Table 2
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analys2s Predicting Help Seeking Behaviors

	Type of Help Seeking Behavior					
	Effort		Regulation Time		Intention	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	0.18**		0.15*		0.12*	
Sex		0.25*		0.20		0.33*
Age		0.24*		0.36*		0.25
Class		-0.32**		-0.31*		-0.22
Step 2	0.26****		0.12*		0.21**	
Speech Anxiety		0.01		0.12		0.24
Group Anxiety		-.90****		-0.62**		-0.44*
Conversation Anxiety		0.24		0.20		-0.12
Meeting Anxiety		0.25		0.12		0.09
Step 3	0.06		0.04		0.04	
Total Purposes for Attending		0.20		0.13		-0.02
Total Reasons for Attending		0.03		0.09		0.08
Total Sources of Knowledge		0.13		0.07		-0.12
Total Satisfaction with the Center		-0.14		0.10		0.15
Total R^2	0.50****		0.31*		0.36**	
n	72		70		71	

*p<.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001, **** p <.0005.

p=.007 were negative significant predictors. Speech anxiety β=.12, conversation anxiety β=.20 meeting anxiety β=.12, and purposes β=.13, reasons β=.09, sources of knowledge about the communication center β=.07, and satisfaction with the communication center β=.10 were not significant predictors. See Table 2.

The model significantly predicted general intention to seek help. Demographics predicted general intention to seek help R^2=.12, F(3,67)=2.89, p=.042 and the four communication anxiety subscales added to this prediction, R^2=.32, ΔR^2=.21, F(7,63)=4.23, p<.001, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant R^2=.36, ΔR^2 =.04, F(11,59)=3.05, p=.003. Sex was a positive significant predictor t=2.68, β=.33, p=.010 and group anxiety was a negative significant predictor t=-2.07, β=-.44, p=.043. Age β=.25, year in school β=-.22, speech anxiety β=.24, conversation anxiety β=-.12, meeting anxiety β=.09, and purposes β=-.02, reasons β=.08, sources of knowledge about the communication center β=-.12, and satisfaction with the communication center β=.15 were not significant predictors for general intentions to seek help. See Table 2.

Demographics, communication anxiety, and the communication center variables also predicted perceived costs of seeking help. Demographics predicted perceived costs to seek help R^2=.23, F(3,67)=6.67, p<.001 and the four communication anxiety subscales added to this prediction R^2=.34, ΔR^2=.12, F(7,63)=4.73, p<.0005. When communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant R^2=.36, ΔR^2 =.02, F(11,59)=3.07, p=.003. Sex was the only significant negative predictor t=-3.16, β=-.40, p=.003. Age β=.00, year

Table 3
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Help Seeking Behaviors

	Type of Help Seeking Behavior					
	Perceived Costs		Instrumental		Expedience	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	0.23***		0.17**		0.14*	
Sex		-0.40**		0.25*		-0.33**
Age		0.00		0.13		0.12
Class		0.05		-0.24		0.06
Step 2	0.12*		0.14*		0.08	
Speech Anxiety		-0.13		0.13		-0.10
Group Anxiety		0.09		-0.75**		0.18
Conversation Anxiety		-0.16		0.29		-0.12
Meeting Anxiety		0.23		0.20		0.09
Step 3	0.02		0.09		0.13*	
Total Purposes for Attending		-0.15		0.27*		0.34**
Total Reasons for Attending		0.01		0.09		-0.05
Total Sources of Knowledge		-0.01		0.14		0.07
Total Satisfaction with the Center		0.05		0.09		-0.18
Total R^2	0.36**		0.40***		0.35**	
n	71		69		69	

*$p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$.

in school β=.05, speech anxiety β=-.13, group anxiety β=.09, conversation anxiety β=.16, meeting anxiety β=.23, purposes β=-.15, reasons β=.01, sources of knowledge about the communication center β=-.01, and satisfaction with the communication center β=.05 were not significant predictors for perceived costs of seeking help. See Table 3.

The model was also successful in predicting instrumental reasons for seeking help. Demographics significantly predicted instrumental reasons R^2=.17, $F(3,65)$=4.32, p=.008. The communication anxiety variables added to this prediction R^2=.30, ΔR^2=.14, $F(7,61)$=3.76, p=.002. The four communication center variables added to this prediction R^2=.40, ΔR^2=.09, $F(11,57)$=3.38, p<.001. Sex t=2.10, β=.25, p=.04 and total purposes for going to the center t=2.25, β=.27, p=.028 were positive significant predictors and group anxiety was a negative significant predictor t=-3.58, β=-.75, p<.001 to predict instrumental reasons to seek help. Age β=.13, class β=-.24, speech anxiety β=.13, conversation anxiety β=.29, meeting anxiety β=.20, total reasons for going to the center β=.09, total ways to find out about the center β=.14, and total satisfaction with the center β=.09 were not significant predictors of instrumental reasons for seeking help. See Table 3.

The model was also used to predict expedience reasons for seeking help. Demographics significantly predicted R^2=.14, $F(3,65)$=3.39, p=.023 expedience reasons. The communication anxiety variables added to this prediction R^2=.22, ΔR^2=.08, $F(7,61)$=2.40, p=.031. The four communication center variables also added to this prediction R^2=.35, ΔR^2=.13, $F(11,57)$=2.76, p<.006. Sex t=-2.70, β=-.33, p=.009 was a negative significant pre-

dictor and total purposes for going to the center t=2.69, β=.34, p=.009 was a positive significant predictor for expedience reasons for seeking help. Age β=.12, year in school β=.06, speech anxiety β=-.10, group anxiety β=.18, conversation anxiety β=-.12, meeting anxiety β=.09, reasons for going to the center β=-.05, sources of knowledge for the center β=.07, and satisfaction with the center β=-.18 were not significant predictors of expedience reasons for seeking help. See Table 3.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine a relatively unexplored area of help seeking behaviors, communication apprehension and the use of a university communication center for the basic communication course. Because there is a growing movement in the United States to improve communication skills, communication courses are required more than ever before (Morreale, 1998) and more communication centers are emerging to supplement classroom instruction (Helsel & Hogg, 2006). Both the basic course and communication centers have the potential to assist this growing population which presumably includes students who are apprehensive communicators.

In this study, there was no difference in help seeking behaviors between those who attended a communication center and those who did not. This could be because: 1) students are in general not familiar with communication centers and their services thus, more promotion of their services are needed; 2) students primarily hear about communication centers through institutional

sources which are considered formal resources for help; 3) students do not consider public speaking something that requires assistance if they do not consider that they may fail and/or; 4) students who voluntarily visit communication centers do not perceive that experience as help-seeking per se, but rather utilizing a physical resource like a library or study lounge. Future research should examine how students perceive communication centers beyond just knowledge and satisfaction. Communication centers nationally could benefit from expanded promotion to enhance a greater understanding of their services in higher education and more research into student perception of academic assistance.

Those who did not attend a communication center and those who did attend a center did not differ in their communication anxiety. These results could be related to: 1) the fact that the communication center at this mid-size southeastern university does not advertise assistance for communication anxiety; 2) because this center is a voluntary rather than a lab-style communication center; 3) this communication center uses only peer tutors and/or; 4) the various reasons and purposes why people considered visiting the speech center in the first place. Future studies should examine the relationship between the type, services, and perceived tutor status (e.g., peer or expert) of the communication center in relationship to communication anxiety.

There were a number of significant correlations between communication anxiety and help seeking behaviors. Throughout this data set, as communication anxiety increased, help seeking behaviors decreased. This parallel's McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, and Payne's (1989) work on communication apprehension affecting

in-class behaviors. Students who were uncomfortable were less likely to seek help from *formal avenues,* as well as *avoiding help* because of the *perceived costs* in seeking it. Women are more likely to experience higher levels of communication apprehension (Butler et al., 2004; Burleson et al., 2005; Vevea et al., 2009) and the high percentage of females in this sample may have contributed to this study's outcome. These findings are important for communication center administrators deciding between voluntary and mandated visits for students. It may be that those with the highest anxiety will not voluntarily seek help regardless of how the center functions or promotes itself. When considering communication center staffing decisions, administrators may wish to consider the help seeking literature on formal and informal avenues of help. The communication center in this study is staffed primarily by undergraduate tutors, so perhaps the formality of the physical space of the center may have turned apprehensive students away from the center. Center directors may investigate peer tutoring performed in less formal settings (i.e., such as residence hall study areas).

Interestingly, demographics, communication anxiety, and communication center usage did predict *effort regulation help seeking behaviors, regulation of time and study environment, general intention to seek help, perceived costs of seeking help, instrumental help seeking behaviors,* and *expedience help seeking behaviors*. These variables predicted between 30-50 percent of the variance in multiple help seeking behaviors. Butler (2006) notes that there are different types of help seeking and it is understandable that people may prefer one type of help seeking to another and/or have multiple needs that

could be met by various help seeking behaviors. Wolters, Pintrich, and Karabenick (2003) note that effort, time and study environment, intention to seek help, and instrumental reasons for seeking help are positive and beneficial to a student focused on academics. Seeking help is indicative of the proactive student (Lee, 1997). For example, if a student has multiple purposes to go to a communication center one could conclude they were using the center as an *instrumental* and *expedient* reason for seeking help which explains why purposes for attending the communication center was a positive predictor of those help seeking behaviors.

Surprisingly, the model did not predict *formal* and *informal* help seeking behaviors. These results could be because those subscales were only composed of two items (albeit reliable) or it could be this sample does not clearly differentiate between formal and informal avenues of help. The model also did not predict *perceived benefits* for seeking help or *avoiding help*. The participants in this study may not have seen benefits in seeking help because they may not have perceived it as having a significant impact on their grade. Further, they did not feel they needed to *avoid help* when "talking" to their class when some help may have been useful.

Sex was the main significant predictor in five of the six significant hierarchical regression models with the exception of *regulation of time and study environment*. Women were more likely to seek help with regards to *effort regulation*, *intention to seek help,* and *instrumental reasons for seeking help* but less likely to seek help for *perceived costs* associated with help seeking. In addition, women were less likely to seek help for *expedience*

reasons. Taplin et al. (2001) reported similar findings in regard to women and help seeking behaviors. Lee (1997) notes that asking for help acknowledges dependence which could lead to a public perception of diminished power. Therefore, men may identify more risk when asking for help. In the future, communication centers could study whether their tutoring methods are more appealing to women rather than men and address that issue within their centers' promotion accordingly.

Limitations for this study included that the survey was quite lengthy thus there may have been respondent fatigue. Secondly, many students received extra credit for their participation in the study and that may have impacted those who decided to participate and affected their responses. Third, only 78 participants of those surveyed had attended the communication center which may have impacted the results. Lastly, participants may have viewed asking for help from a communication center (even peer to peer) as a *formal avenue* for seeking help which could have lead to apprehension about even considering attending the communication center.

Future studies should examine whether building public speaking assignments up, as Witt and Behnke (2006) suggest, from least threatening to the most threatening along with communication center attendance reduces communication apprehension. Reducing uncertainty in student expectations along with help seeking behaviors should also be examined more thoroughly. Studies should also be conducted among different universities to determine whether there is a difference between mandatory attendance and voluntary attendance at communication centers to determine if there is a difference in students' communication appre-

hension. In addition, identifying whether communication center's use undergraduate students i.e., peers or graduate students or faculty as tutors makes a difference for communication apprehension and help seeking. Enhancing communication center functions could help basic communication course students' desire to learn and manage communication anxiety so that they can become better spoken employees and citizens.

REFERENCES

Alexitch, L.R. (2002). The role of help seeking attitudes and tendencies in students' preferences for academic advising. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(1), 5-19.

Ayers, J., & Sonandre, D.A. (2002). The Stroop Test for public speaking apprehension: Validity and reliability. *Communication Research Reports, 19*(2), 167-174.

Beatty, M.J., McCroskey, J.C., & Heisel, A.D. (1998). Communication apprehension as temperamental expression: A communibiological paradigm. *Communication Monographs, 65*(3), 197-219.

Bodie, G.D. (2010). A racing heart, rattling knees, and ruminative thoughts: Defining, explaining, and treating public speaking anxiety. *Communication Education, 59*(1) 70-105. doi: 10.1080/0363452 0903443849

Burleson, B.R., Holmstrom, A.J., & Gilstrap, C.M. (2005). "Guys can't say *that* to guys": Four experi-

ments assessing the normative motivation account for deficiencies in the emotional support provided by men. *Communication Monographs, 72*(4), 468-501. doi:10.1080/03637750500322636

Butler, R. (2006). An achievement goal perspective on student help seeking and teacher help guiding the classroom: Theory, research, and education implications. In S.A. Karabenick & R.S. Newman (Eds.), *Help seeking in academic settings: Goals, groups and contexts* (pp. 15-44). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Butler, J., Pryor, B., & Marti, S. (2004). Communication apprehension and honors students. *North American Journal of Psychology, 6*(2), 293-296.

Ellis, K. (1995). Apprehension, self-perceived competency, and teacher immediacy in the laboratory-supported public speaking course: Trends and relationships. *Communication Education*, *44*(1), 64-78.

Farmer, S., & Brown, E. (2008). College students and the work world. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 45*(3), 108-114.

Gardner, P.D. (2000). *Are college students prepared to work? They may not be as ready as we think*! Retrieved from the Michigan State University Collegiate Employment Research Institute website: http://www.csp.msu.edu/ceri/pubs/publica1.htm

Good, G.E., & Wood, P.K. (1995). Male gender role conflict, depression and help seeking: Do college men face double jeopardy? *Journal of Counseling and Development, 74,* 70-75.

Greenberg, R.C. (1998). *Students' perceptions of self and classroom environment and their reported help seeking behaviors*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association Conference, San Diego, CA.

Hancock, A.B., Stone, M.D., Brundage, S.B., & Zeigler, M.T. (2010). Public speaking attitudes: Does curriculum make a difference? *Journal of Voice, 24*(3), 302-307. doi: 10.1016/j.jvoice.2008.09.007

Helsel, C.R., & Hogg, M.C. (2006). Assessing communication proficiency in higher education: Speaking labs offer possibilities. *International Journal of Listening, 20,* 29-54.

Hobgood, L.B. (2000). The pursuit of speaking proficiency: A voluntary approach. *Communication Education*, *49*(4), 339-351.

Holden, R., & Hamblett, J. (2007). The transition from higher education into work: Tales of cohesion and fragmentation. *Education + Training*, *49*(7), 516-585. doi: 10.1108/00400910710832014

Honeycutt, J.M., Choi, C.W., & DeBerry, J.R. (2009). Communication apprehension and imagined interactions. *Communication Research Reports, 26*(3), 228-236. doi: 10.1080/08824090903074423

Hsu, C.S. (2009). The relationships of trait anxiety, audience nonverbal feedback, and attributions to public speaking state anxiety. *Communication Research Reports* 26(3), 237-246. doi:__10.1080/08824090903074407

Jones, A. (2001, November). *Speech laboratories: An exploratory examination of potential pedagogical effects on students.* Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Atlanta, GA.

Jones, A.C., Hunt, S.K., Simonds, C.J., Comadena, M.D., & Baldwin, J.R. (2004). Speech laboratories: An exploratory examination of potential pedagogical effects on students. *Basic Communication Course Annual, 16*, 105-138.

Karabenick, S.A. (1987). *Computer-Conferencing: Its impact on academic help seeking*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Symposium on Computer Conferencing and Allied Technologies, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

Karabenick, S.A. (1994). Perceived teacher support of student questioning in the college classroom: Its relationship to student characteristics and role in the classroom questioning process. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 86*(1), 90-103.

Karabenick, S.A. (2001). *Seeking help in large college classes: Who, why, and from whom*? Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA.

Karabenick, S.A., & Knapp, J.R. (1991). Relationship of academic help seeking to the use of learning strategies and other instrumental achievement behavior in college students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83*(2), 221-230.

Knapp, J.R., & Karabenick, S.A. (1988). Incidence of formal and informal academic help seeking in higher

education. *Journal of College Student Development, 29*(3), 223-227.

Lee, F. (1997). When the going gets tough, do the tough ask for help? Help seeking and power motivation in organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 72*(3), 336-363.

Levine, T.R., & McCroskey, J.C. (1990). Measuring trait communication apprehension: A test of rival measure models of the PRCA-24. *Communication Monographs, 57*(1), 62-72.

Mandeville, M.Y., Ries, B.J., Turk, C.L., McChargue, D.E., & McNeil, D.W. (1994, November). *Using a unique cognitive approach—a variation of the Stoop Test - in the identification and the measurement of public speaking anxiety.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, New Orleans, LA.

McCraken, S.R. (2006). Listening and new approaches to the creation of communication centers *International Journal of Listening*, *20*, 60-61.

McCroskey, J.C. (1982). *An introduction to rhetorical communication* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

McCroskey, J.C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly, 40(1),* 16-25.

McCroskey, J.C., Booth-Butterfield, S., & Payne, S. K. (1989). The impact of communication apprehension on college student retention and success. *Communication Quarterly*, *37(2),* 100-107.

Morgan, T., Ness, D., & Robinson, M. (2003). Students' help-seeking behaviours by gender, racial background, and student status. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 37*(2), 151-166.

Morreale, S. (1998). Communication labs enhance student learning and increase awareness of the discipline. *Spectra, 34*(10), 7-8.

Morreale, S., Shockley-Zalabak, P., & Whitney, P. (1993). The center for excellence in oral communication: Integrating communication across the curriculum. *Communication Education*, *42*(1), 10-21.

Pederson, J., Tkachuk, H. & Allen, M. (2008). How perceived situational frequency and situational importance affect communication apprehension: A cross cultural analysis. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 37(3),* 189-198. doi: 10.1080/17475750903135374

Phillips, C., & Phillips, A. (2002). Helping business students bridge the gap with the real world. *Proceedings of the Educational Leadership Conference, 7,* 65-68.

Preston, M.M. (2006). Communication centers and scholarship possibilities. *International Journal of Listening, 20,* 56-59.

Pryor, B., Butler, J., & Boehringer, K. (2005). Communication apprehension and cultural context: A comparison of communication apprehension in Japanese and American Students. *North American Journal of Psychology,* 7(2), 247-252.

Richmond, V.P., & McCroskey, J.C. (1985). *Communication: Apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness.* Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Shimotsu, S., & Mottet, T.P. (2009). The relationships among perfectionism, communication, apprehension, and temperament. *Communication Research Reports, 26*(3), 188-197. doi: 10.1080/08824090903074381

Taplin, M., Yum, J, Olugbemiro, J, Fan, R.Y., & Chan, M.S. (2001). Help seeking strategies used by high-achieving and low achieving distance education students. *Journal of Distance Education, 16*(1), 56-69.

Teitelbaum, J. (2000, November). *Use of communication lab to enhance teaching communication courses*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Seattle, WA.

Vevea, N.N., Pearson, J.C., Child, J.T., & Semlak, J.L. (2009). The only thing to fear is…public speaking?: Exploring predictors of communication in the public speaking classroom. *Journal of the Communication, Speech & Theatre Association of North Dakota, 22,* 1-8.

Whitfield, T.S. & Nelson, C.L. (2008, May). *Help Me? Communication Resource Center Usage, Help Seeking Behaviors and Student Motives for Communicating with Instructors.* Paper presented at the meeting of the International Communication Association Annual Convention, Montreal, Quebec.

Wilde, S.M., Cuny, K.M., Vizzier, A.L. (2006). Peer-to-peer tutoring: A model for utilizing empathetic lis-

tening to build client relationships in the communication center. *International Journal of Listening, 20,* 70-75.

Wisch, A.F., Mahalik, J.R., Hayes, J.A., & Nutt, E.A. (1995). The impact of gender role conflict and counseling technique on psychological help seeking in men. *Sex Roles, 33*, 77-89.

Witt, P.L., & Behnke, R.R. (2006). Anticipatory speech anxiety as a function of public speaking assignment type. *Communication Education, 55*(2), 167-177. doi: 10.1080/03634520600566074

Wolters, C.A., Pintrich, P.R., & Karabenick, S.A. (2003). *Assessing academic self-regulated learning.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Conference on Indicators of Positive Development: Definitions, Measures, and Prospective Validity, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI.

Wolters, C.A., Pintrich, P.R., & Karabenick, S.A. (2005). Assessing academic self-regulated learning. In K.A. Moore, & L.H. Lippman (Eds.), *What do children need to flourish?: Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development (The Search Institute Series on Developmentally Attentive Community and Society)* (pp. 251-270). New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media.

Wood, L., & Kacynski, D. (2007). University students in USA and Australia: Anticipation and reflection on the transition to work. *International Journal of Employment Studies, 15*(2), 91-106.

Wrench, J.S., Brogan, S.M., McCroskey, J.C., & Jowi, D. (2008). Social communication apprehension: The intersection of communication apprehension and social phobia. *Human Communication, 11*(4), 409-430.

Yook, E.Y. (2006). Assessment as meta-listening at the communication center. *International Journal of Listening, 20,* 66-68.