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Without question, the popularity of the basic course in communication continues to grow, further entrenching it as a staple of the communication discipline. As several basic course scholars have persuasively noted, in the last 20 years, more and more colleges and universities in the United States have been charged with the daunting task of establishing an introductory course in communication as a central feature of general education curriculum. Given the popularity of the course and increasing pressures on basic course instructors/directors to document the effectiveness of the course, basic communication course scholarship is more important now than ever. For more than 20 years the Basic Communication Course Annual has been the preeminent outlet for such scholarship.

The articles presented in this volume of the Annual cover a wide range of topics that advance our understanding of basic course practice and pedagogy. Initially, Jones and Schrodt examine the influence of out-of-class support (OCS) and sex differences on student’s perceptions of instructor credibility. Their study has clear implications for training basic communication instructors in the use of appropriate OCS communication strategies. The article by Hodis and Hodis provides readers with a better understanding of the roles communicative self-efficacy beliefs play in the context of the basic
course. Additionally, the article authored by Sidelinger, Frisby, McMullen, and Heisler presents a novel examination of the importance of student-to-student connectedness in public speaking courses.

The next two manuscripts examine the use of communication/speech centers in the basic course. Dwyer and Davidson extend our understanding of such centers by exploring the ways speech center usage influences students’ public speaking anxiety, confidence, and skills. Similarly, the article by Nelson, Witfield, and Moreau provides an important examination of the relationships between students' help seeking behaviors, communication anxiety, and communication center usage.

The final two articles in this volume examine pedagogical strategies familiar to all readers of the Annual. Kinnick and Holler use content analysis to examine guidelines for oral citations in some of the most widely used public speaking textbooks. Their findings are sure to stimulate debate amongst basic course faculty about best practices for teaching oral citation skills. Finally, Mojacha’s manuscript offers a Burkean analysis basic course syllabi. She provides a number of suggestions for how basic course instructors can construct syllabi with form in mind.

In conclusion, this volume contains essays that address some of the most pressing issues facing those concerned with the basic course. Taken as a whole, this scholarship allows the reader to reflect on what the research tells us about what works in the basic course, what does not work, and what still needs to be investigated. The introductory communication course provides a context for fruitful investigations that assess how we
can effectively develop, deliver, and assess our discipline’s “bread and butter” course.

We extend our sincere thanks to all those who assisted in our efforts to bring this volume to print. Our editorial board deserves special acknowledgement for their tireless commitment to the Annual. In the coming months, we look forward to receiving your scholarly submissions for future volumes of the *Annual*. Together, we can offer readers a journal with abundant scholarship that best informs basic course administrators, teachers, and scholars—all in an effort to improve the basic communication course experience for our students.

*Sincerely,*

*Steve Hunt (Editor)*

*Joe Mazer (Associate Editor)*
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Driveway Moments: Developing Syllabi

According to Kenneth Burke

Kristen Lynn Majocha

Have you ever remained parked in your car in order to hear the end of a song or a news story? This is called a driveway moment (Pine, 2007). Kenneth Burke refers to this fulfilling of our desires, the desire for the conclusion, as an “appetite” that humans have for form (Burke, 1931). Songs have form, movies have form, literature has form. As teachers of the Basic Communication Course, we should recognize this appetite for form and incorporate form into our syllabi. Form in the way Kenneth Burke describes—form that has one part leading to the anticipation of another part—is applied via Burke’s pentad to the Basic Communication Course syllabus in this essay. The idea is that students ought to be gratified by the sequence of the syllabus as well as informed by the matter of the syllabus, thus inducing driveway moments for students of the Basic Communication Course.

Author Biographies

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Students’ Attributions of Instructor Credibility as a Function of Instructors’ Out-of-Class Support

Adam C. Jones
Paul Schrodt

Instructional communication scholars have examined interactions between teachers and students in order to discover the best educational methods and practices for helping students learn (e.g., Ellis, 2000; Schrodt et al., 2009; Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004). Despite the value of this research, however, scholars have focused primarily on how instructors’ in-class messages and behaviors influence student learning. Much less is known regarding the interactions that occur between teachers and students outside of the classroom setting, and in many ways, out-of-class interactions have the potential to influence in-class activities and student learning outcomes. In fact, students frequently experience non-educational pressures outside of the classroom that can impact the learning process in a meaningful way (Jones, 2008).

In response to these pressures, scholars have recently increased their efforts to more closely examine teacher-student interactions occurring outside of the classroom (Aylor & Oppliger, 2003). For instance, researchers have demonstrated that competent out-of-class communication (OCC) can enhance student retention (Milem & Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997), academic per-
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Formance (Pascarella, 1980; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996), positive affect toward learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), positive multicultural attitudes (Armstrong, 1999), and personal development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995). Additionally, Jaasma and Koper (1999) determined that when students use OCC to interact with teachers, particularly when those interactions go beyond the course material, students not only develop interpersonal relationships with their teachers, but such interactions encourage students to discuss their personal problems. However, while much of the existing OCC research literature focuses on the positive effects of OCC on students' overall academic experience, Myers et al. (2007) recently determined that teacher verbal aggressiveness can actually have a negative impact on students' willingness to communicate with their teachers outside the formal classroom setting. Collectively, this body of research has demonstrated the meaningful role that OCC plays in the instructional communication process, yet questions remain concerning how instructors might best support students who are struggling academically due to stressful, personal situations.

In order to address these questions, Jones (2008) recently advanced the concept of out-of-class support (OCS). According to Jones (2008), OCS can be conceptualized as any form of instructor communication occurring outside of the classroom setting that (a) responds to students’ needs, (b) communicates a sense of care, (c) validates students’ self-worth, feelings, or actions, and (d) helps students cope with stressful situations through the provision of additional resources. Jones (2008) discovered that students reported being most satisfied and
motivated to learn with highly supportive instructors, and less satisfied and motivated with moderately or non-supportive instructors. Thus, the decision to provide out-of-class support to students should enhance not only classroom satisfaction and motivation for students, but students’ perceptions of their instructors as well.

In the present study, we tested this line of reasoning by examining students’ attributions of instructor credibility as a function of instructors’ OCS. As Finn et al. (2009) argued, instructor credibility “maintains a key position in our current theorizing and understanding of instructor effectiveness” (p. 517), so much so that Myers (2001) identified credibility as one of the most important variables affecting the teacher-student relationship. Given that instructors’ supportive communication includes helping students cope with, and manage, stressful situations by providing informational and/or tangible resources (Jones, 2008), it stands to reason that OCS should enhance students’ perceptions of their instructors as being caring, trustworthy, and competent individuals. More specifically, when students receive highly supportive messages from their instructors outside of the classroom, they may be more likely to attribute internal characteristics of “caring,” “trustworthiness,” and “competence” to their instructors (i.e., “My instructor was highly supportive of me because he or she is caring, competent, and trustworthy”). Conversely, students who receive less supportive messages from their instructors, in turn, may be less likely to attribute their instructors’ behaviors to the fact that he or she is caring, competent, and trustworthy. Therefore, in the present study, we examined the degree to which instructor OCS predicts students’ perceptions of instructor credibility, as well as

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the extent to which the association between OCS and perceptions of credibility depends on instructor and student biological sex.

**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

One theoretical perspective useful for examining students’ perceptions of instructor behavior is attribution theory (Jasper, Hewstone, & Fincham, 1983; Weiner, 1986). As Jasper et al. (1983) noted, attribution theory focuses on the common sense way in which individuals attempt to answer “why” questions behind human behavior. In (and outside of) the classroom, this theory helps reveal the extent to which students look for causal reasons that could be used to explain observed instructor behaviors. An important distinction made in attribution theory is between internal attributions, which position the cause of a particular behavior within the person, and external attributions, which position the cause of the behavior within the situation (Weiner, 1986). Nisbett and Ross (1980) observed that such distinctions often lead to a fundamental attribution error, in which observers trying to explain someone else’s behavior will have a tendency to underestimate the importance of external factors and overestimate the importance of internal factors.

When it comes to the college classroom, one of the most important goals an instructor can achieve is establishing credibility and rapport with his or her students (Schrodt & Witt, 2006). As Myers (2004) suggested, it is essential for instructors to establish credibility early in a new semester because students often
begin the first day of class with expectations that their instructors will be knowledgeable, professional, helpful, organized, and competent. Although establishing initial perceptions of credibility is vital to effective instruction, researchers have identified a litany of in-class and out-of-class behaviors that can be used throughout the duration of an entire course to enhance and maintain instructor credibility (Finn et al., 2009; Myers, 2001; 2004; Schrodt, 2003; Schrodt et al., 2009; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). In essence, students’ perceptions of instructor credibility are not only influenced at the beginning of a new semester, but also throughout the entire semester by their instructors’ in-class and out-of-class messages. In light of attribution theory, then, it stands to reason that students’ attributions of their instructors are a function, in part, of their perceptions of their instructor’s communication behaviors both in and out of the classroom. Thus, students’ attributions of instructor credibility should vary as a function of instructors’ OCS, particularly during interactions with their instructors in which students are seeking help with difficult or stressful circumstances.

Out-of-Class Support and Instructor Credibility

While the majority of students who attend college have a positive experience, other students may develop chronic stress due to more rigorous academic expectations, schedules, and requirements (Murphy & Archer, 1996). This type of academic stress can negatively impact students’ psychological and physical well-being (Tennant, 2002), as well as increase students’ symptoms of depression (Arthur, 1998) and physical illness (Tor-
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shem & Wold, 2001). In fact, when students experience these types of mental and physical health problems, it can lead to negative academic outcomes, such as lower grade point averages and retention rates (Haines, Norris, & Kashy, 1996). Consequently, further research is needed to identify ways of reducing the negative health effects of academic stress (MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan, 2005).

Jones (2008) suggested that OCS can be a means for improving the academic outcomes of stressed students. Students who are experiencing a stressful situation, particularly one of a personal nature, will perhaps be more likely to seek support from their instructors in a private setting (e.g., during the instructor’s office hours) rather than in a classroom while surrounded by their classmates. As Jones (2008) argued, by communicating OCS messages, teachers can help students cope with and manage the stress and pressure they are experiencing. Providing informational and/or tangible support useful for coping with external demands and stressors, in turn, is likely to communicate to students that their instructors care about them and are invested in their personal and academic success. Thus, the more supportive instructors are outside of the classroom environment, the more credible they may become to their students inside the classroom.

Credibility can be defined as “the attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a communicator” (McCroskey & Young, 1981, p. 24), with instructor credibility, in turn, reflecting students’ attitudes toward an instructor as a source of communication (Schrodt et al., 2009). McCroskey, Teven, and their colleagues appropriated the ethos/credibility construct
from empirical research on persuasive discourse (e.g., Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) to the teacher-student relationship, and subsequently developed a measure of instructor credibility that included three dimensions: competence, trustworthiness, and “goodwill” or perceived caring (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Relying on this three-dimensional conceptualization of credibility, instructional scholars have investigated teacher behaviors thought to enhance credibility, as well as student outcomes that improve once an instructor has established his or her credibility in the classroom (Finn et al., 2009). For example, researchers have demonstrated that instructors who communicate in ways that generate understanding in the minds of their students (Schrodt, Turman, & Soliz, 2006), who are argumentative without being verbally aggressive (Edwards & Myers, 2007; Schrodt, 2003), who use moderate amounts of technology (Schrodt & Turman, 2005; Schrodt & Witt, 2006), and are immediate (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998), confirming, and clear (Schrodt et al., 2009) are generally perceived as being more competent, trustworthy, and caring in the classroom. As Finn et al. (2009) noted, collectively, the instructor credibility literature supports Thweatt and McCroskey’s (1998) claim that “the higher the credibility, the higher the learning” (p. 349).

Although the importance of instructor credibility is well-documented, with one notable exception (i.e., Myers, 2004), researchers have yet to fully examine the degree to which out-of-class interactions between instructors and students influence perceptions of instructor credibility. Specifically, instructor OCS has been conceptualized as messages given to students outside of
class that respond to students’ needs, communicate care, validate students’ experiences, and help students manage and cope with stressful situations. By definition, then, the successful provision of OCS should enhance students’ attributions that their instructors are caring and trustworthy individuals. The degree to which OCS leads to attributions of instructor competence, however, remains less clear. On one hand, the ability to provide appropriate and effective forms of emotional support is one hallmark of what it means to be a skilled and competent communicator (Burleson, 2003). On the other hand, students may derive their primary attributions of instructor competence from teaching behaviors enacted within the classroom, in effect, separating their instructor as “teacher” from their instructor as “friend” or “mentor.” Nevertheless, perceptions of instructor goodwill and trustworthiness are positively associated with perceptions of instructor competence (Finn et al., 2009), and thus, the provision of OCS should lead to positive attributions of competence as well.

**OCS, Instructor Credibility, and Teacher and Student Biological Sex**

Although the proposed link between OCS and attributions of credibility merits investigation, there remains one final factor that could potentially alter how instructors’ supportive messages are interpreted and processed by students, namely, biological sex. In general, social support researchers have suggested that women are more supportive than men (Kunkel & Burleson, 1999). For instance, researchers have found that women are often more willing to provide support
(Trobst, Collins, & Embree, 1994), produce more emotionally supportive and comforting messages (Barbee, Gulley, & Cunningham, 1990), view support as important for maintaining interpersonal relationships (Burleson, Kunkel, Samter, & Werking, 1996), and seek more social support from others (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993). In addition, men are more likely to offer instrumental support or to try to minimize the importance of problems, whereas women tend to provide more emotional support and empathy (Goldsmith & Dun, 1997).

Despite these trends, however, other scholars have argued that sex differences are too small and inconsistent to be the continued focus of communication research (Canary & Hause, 1993). Nevertheless, there is indirect evidence to suggest that sex differences may moderate the impact of instructors’ behaviors (e.g., OCS) on students’ attributions of instructor credibility. Specifically, Schrodt and Turman (2005) found that in the college classroom, student sex moderated the curvilinear effect of instructors’ technology use on students’ perceptions of instructor caring and competence. When coupled with Kunkel and Burleson’s (1999) finding that women, in general, are more socially supportive than men, it stands to reason that biological sex may moderate the potential impact that instructors’ OCS messages have on students’ attributions of instructor credibility.

In sum, researchers have demonstrated that instructor credibility is positively associated with satisfying out-of-class communication between instructors and students (Myers, 2004). OCS represents a form of out-of-class communication that recognizes and validates students’ experiences, and provides informational and/or tangible support useful for coping with external de-
mands and stressors. Thus, it stands to reason that the competent provision of OCS should enhance students’ perceptions of instructor credibility. At the same time, social support researchers have found that women are more supportive than men (Kunkel & Burleson, 1999) and that women view social support as an important means for maintaining interpersonal relationships (Burleson et al., 1996). Consequently, students’ interpretations of OCS and their subsequent attributions of instructor credibility may vary as a function of biological sex, though the precise direction and magnitude of such interaction effects remain in question. Given our inability to predict the precise direction and magnitude of any potential interaction effects, we advanced a research question rather than a hypothesis to explore this line of reasoning:

RQ: How do instructors’ out-of-class support messages and biological sex (i.e., instructor and student sex) interact to influence students’ attributions of instructor credibility (i.e., competence, trustworthiness, and caring)?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants were 634 undergraduate students enrolled in basic communication courses at two Midwestern universities. Participants included 372 females and 262 males, with a mean age of 20.22 years ($SD = 3.79$). The majority of students classified themselves as “white or Caucasian” (89.10%), and most students were classi-
fied as either first-year students (47.30%) or sophomores (30.60%). Since the basic courses were part of general university requirements, students from a variety of majors participated. In exchange for minimal course credit, student volunteers completed a questionnaire which took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

**Procedures**

Given potential sensitivities associated with examining student stress, and consistent with the methodological approach used in previous social support research (e.g., Jones, 2008; Jones & Burleson, 1997; MacGeorge, 2001; Xu & Burleson, 2001), participants were randomly assigned to one of six hypothetical scenarios. After completing a series of brief demographic questions, the participants were asked to read a hypothetical scenario containing three separate sections (see Appendix). Specifically, the first section of the scenario was designed to control for any potential confounding variables related to the type of course (i.e., participants were asked to imagine that they are enrolled in a small, introductory communication course at a large, Midwestern university). Additionally, the first section of the scenario was designed to allow the biological sex of the teacher to be manipulated (i.e., participants were told that the instructor for the course is named either “Mr. Smith” or “Ms. Smith,” depending on which teacher biological sex condition they were assigned). The second section was designed to control for the level and type of stress to which the participants were exposed. Finally, the third section described the type of OCS the students received from their hypothetical teacher.
the survey, participants were told that they received one of three messages from their instructor in response to the participant’s problem: highly supportive, moderately supportive, or a non-supportive message. After reading all three sections of their assigned scenario, participants completed measures that assessed their perceptions of instructor credibility. The hypothetical scenarios used in this report have been validated in previous research on instructor OCS (i.e., Jones, 2008).

**Quasi-Experimental Design**

Out-of-class support. OCS was manipulated by randomly assigning participants to scenarios that included either a highly supportive, moderately supportive, or non-supportive instructor. The messages of OCS reflected in each of the scenarios were developed from Xu and Burleson’s (2001) social support scale. Using the supportive characteristics and behaviors outlined by Xu and Burleson to systematically differentiate between OCS conditions, both informationally and emotionally supportive messages were included in the highly supportive condition (e.g., “This type of situation can be very upsetting and you have every right to feel the way you do” and “Let’s take a closer look at your situation and see if we can come up with a couple of solutions to help you manage this problem and get you through this semester”), while only informationally supportive messages were included in the moderately supportive condition (e.g., “I only have a few minutes before my next class starts, but let’s make an appointment for you to come back during my office hours when we can spend more time discussing this”), and no supportive messages
were included in the non-supportive condition (e.g., “I wish I had more time to help you out with this problem, but I am really busy right now with a couple of deadlines that must be finished by the end of the day. Maybe we can talk more about your situation next week”).

**Manipulation check.** A manipulation check was used to assess the effectiveness of the six scenarios in differentiating among the three levels of OCS. A separate sample of 64 students who were unaffiliated with the current study were randomly assigned to one of the six scenarios and asked to recall how supportive the instructor was in each scenario. Using four questions derived from a modified version of Xu and Burleson’s (2001) social support scale (e.g., “How supportive is the instructor?”, “How helpful is the instructor?”), students were asked to rate the level of OCS described in the scenario by responding to five, semantic differential items (e.g., unsupportive/supportive, very unhelpful/very helpful), with higher ratings reflecting higher levels of OCS. ANOVA results supported the validity of the scenarios, \( F(2, 62) = 29.24, p < .001 \), as students perceived the most OCS in the highly supportive condition \( (M = 4.50, SD = .46) \), followed by the moderately supportive condition \( (M = 3.67, SD = .84) \) and the non-supportive condition \( (M = 2.54, SD = 1.00) \) in successive order.

**Instructor credibility.** Students’ attributions of instructor credibility were measured using McCroskey and Young’s (1981) Teacher Credibility Scale (TCS), and Teven and McCroskey’s (1997) 10-item perceived caring scale. The TCS is a 12-item, semantic differential scale asking students to evaluate their instructor in terms of specific bipolar adjectives listed on a five-point scale. Six of the items measure instructor competence (e.g., “Un-
trained/Trained”), and six items measure instructor trustworthiness (e.g., “Honest/Dishonest”). These twelve items were combined with the 10-item, semantic differential scale developed by Teven and McCroskey (1997) for assessing students’ perceptions of instructor caring (e.g., “Cares about me/Doesn’t care about me”). The validity and reliability of the instructor credibility measure are well documented (Finn et al., 2009), with previous alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .96 for all three dimensions (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Schrodt, 2003; Schrodt & Turman, 2005). In this study, the three dimensions produced strong reliability with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .93 for perceived caring ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.05$), .93 for competence ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .87$), and .93 for trustworthiness ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .97$).

Data Analyses

To address the research question, a $3 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was computed to examine the combined and unique influences of instructor OCS (highly supportive, moderately supportive, and non-supportive), instructor sex, and student sex on students’ perceptions of instructor credibility (i.e., caring, competence, and trustworthiness). To aid in the interpretation of all significant interaction effects, univariate factorial ANOVAs were examined for each of the three dimensions of instructor credibility, followed by post-hoc cell comparisons where justified by significant interaction effects. Due to concerns over Type I and Type II error rates when using Multiple Comparison Procedures (MCP) to assess higher-order factorial designs (Smith, Levine, Lachlan, & Fediuk,
planned cell comparisons using a Bonferroni adjustment of the alpha level were obtained for significant effects.

RESULTS

The research question guiding this study explored how instructor OCS and biological sex (i.e., instructor and student sex) interact to influence students’ perceptions of instructor credibility. The results of the factorial MANOVA revealed no significant three-way interaction effect of instructor OCS by instructor sex by student sex, Wilks’ $\lambda = .997$, $F(6, 1240) = .287$, $p > .05$, and no significant two-way interaction effects of instructor OCS by instructor sex, Wilks’ $\lambda = .994$, $F(6, 1240) = .588$, $p > .05$, or instructor sex by student sex, Wilks’ $\lambda = .992$, $F(3, 620) = 1.59$, $p > .05$. There was, however, a significant two-way interaction effect of instructor OCS by student sex, Wilks’ $\lambda = .978$, $F(6, 1240) = 2.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$, as well as a significant, multivariate main effect for instructor OCS, Wilks’ $\lambda = .482$, $F(6, 1240) = 90.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .52$. To aid in the interpretation of these effects, tests of between-subjects effects (i.e., factorial ANOVAs) were then examined for each dimension of instructor credibility and reported below.

Instructor Competence

For instructor competence, the results revealed a small, but statistically significant two-way interaction effect of instructor OCS by student sex, $F(2, 622) = 4.14$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, as well as a moderate and significant
main effect for instructor OCS, $F(2, 622) = 106.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$. Cell comparisons revealed that although both male and female students reported a decrease in perceptions of instructor competence as OCS became less and less supportive, the decline in perceptions of instructor competence was somewhat greater for female students than for male students (see Table 1 and Figure 1). For the main effect of instructor OCS, students attributed higher levels of competence to instructors who were described as being highly supportive ($M = 4.45, SD = .55$) than to instructors who were described as being moderately supportive ($M = 3.77, SD = .72$), though instructors described as being moderately supportive were perceived to be more competent than those described as being non-supportive ($M = 3.37, SD = .91$).
### Table 1
Cell Means for the Two-Way Interaction Effect of Out-of-Class Support (OCS) and Student Sex on Instructor Credibility (N = 634)

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<td></td>
<td>Highly Supportive</td>
<td>Moderately Supportive</td>
<td>Non-Supportive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>Female Students</td>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>Female Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Competence</td>
<td>4.39s (.61)</td>
<td>4.51s (.50)</td>
<td>3.80b (.74)</td>
<td>3.74b (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trustworthiness</td>
<td>4.43s (.59)</td>
<td>4.58s (.53)</td>
<td>3.77a (.71)</td>
<td>3.74a (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Caring</td>
<td>4.31s (.56)</td>
<td>4.45s (.53)</td>
<td>3.57f (.80)</td>
<td>3.48f (.78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means in rows with the same subscript are not significantly different at $p < .05$. 

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Credibility and Out-of-Class Support

et al.: Basic Communication Course Annual Vol. 24

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Instructor Trustworthiness

For instructor trustworthiness, again, the results revealed a small, but statistically significant two-way interaction effect of instructor OCS by student sex, $F(2, 622) = 4.43, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$, as well as a moderate and significant main effect for instructor OCS, $F(2, 622) = 252.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$. Consistent with the trends for instructor competence, cell comparisons revealed a decrease in perceptions of trustworthiness as OCS became less and less supportive, though the decline in perceptions of instructor trustworthiness was somewhat greater for female students than for male students (see Table 1 and Figure 2). For the main effect of instructor OCS, instructors who were described as being highly...
supportive \( (M = 4.52, SD = .56) \) were perceived as being more trustworthy than were instructors who were described as being moderately supportive \( (M = 3.75, SD = .75) \), though instructors described as being moderately supportive were perceived to be more trustworthy than those described as being non-supportive \( (M = 2.91, SD = .81) \).

### Instructor Caring

For instructor caring, the results revealed a small, but statistically significant two-way interaction effect of instructor OCS by student sex, \( F(2, 622) = 6.43, p < .01, \eta^2 = .01 \), as well as a moderate and significant main effect for instructor OCS, \( F(2, 622) = 252.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = \)
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.29. Consistent with the trends for instructor competence and trustworthiness, cell comparisons revealed a decrease in perceptions of instructor caring as OCS became less and less supportive, though the decline in perceived caring was somewhat greater for female students than for male students (see Table 1 and Figure 3). For the main effect of OCS, instructors who were described as being highly supportive ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .54$) were perceived as being more caring than instructors who were described as being moderately supportive ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .79$), though instructors described as being moderately supportive were perceived to be more caring than those described as being non-supportive ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .89$).

Post Hoc Analyses

An inspection of the effect sizes generated for each dimension of instructor credibility suggests that the effects of instructor OCS on students’ attributions of instructor trustworthiness ($\eta = .54$) and caring ($\eta = .55$) may be greater in magnitude than the effect OCS has on instructor competence ($\eta = .45$). To test these differences statistically, a series of Hotelling’s t-tests were conducted to compare the magnitude of effect sizes for each dimension of instructor credibility. These tests revealed that the effect of instructor OCS on perceptions of instructor trustworthiness, $t(631) = 4.52$, $p < .01$, and instructor caring, $t(631) = 2.93$, $p < .01$, were greater in magnitude than the effect of OCS on perceptions of instructor competence, though the difference in the effect for trustworthiness and caring was not statistically significant, $t(631) = 0.53$, $p > .05$. 

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DISCUSSION

The principal goal of this study was to examine the degree to which instructor OCS influences students’ attributions of instructor credibility. In general, the findings indicate that students attribute more credibility to instructors who provide high levels of OCS than to instructors who provide only moderately supportive or non-supportive messages. In fact, instructor OCS has a positive effect on students’ perceptions of all three dimensions of instructor credibility, though the magnitude of the effect is slightly greater for two of the three dimensions (i.e., caring and trustworthiness). Although the positive effect of instructor OCS on credibility is consistent for both male and female instructors, the trend varies somewhat for male and female students in that the decline in perceptions of credibility is slightly larger for female students than for male students, particularly when comparing non-supportive messages. Consequently, these findings provide different implications for the potential use of OCS messages to enhance students’ perceptions of instructor credibility, further extending the tenets of attribution theory to the instructor-student relationship.

When instructors interact with their students outside of the classroom in ways that validate students’ self-worth and experiences, and when they help students cope with external demands and stressors by providing informational or tangible support, students are perhaps more likely to believe that their instructors are communicating with them in this manner because they are caring, trustworthy, and competent individuals. An
important implication of this research, then, is the notion that college instructors can increase their credibility by communicating OCS messages in response to students seeking help for personal stress situations. Given that higher instructor credibility often leads to increased student learning (e.g., Finn et al., 2009; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998), these results are meaningful because they highlight the fact that instructors can not only increase their credibility via their in-class behavior, but they may also enhance their credibility through their out-of-class interactions with students (i.e., by communicating OCS). Thus, an indirect, causal relationship may exist between instructor OCS and student learning through enhanced instructor credibility, though of course, empirical research is needed to further investigate this line of reasoning given the correlational nature of our data.

When coupled with Jones’ (2008) research on OCS, the results of the present study suggest that the competent provision of OCS could potentially enhance a variety of educational outcome variables (e.g., student learning, satisfaction, and motivation to learn). Nevertheless, some college instructors may be reluctant to provide OCS to students, in part, because they do not consider the provision of emotional support to students outside of class to be part of their professional responsibilities. Other instructors may be concerned that they will be perceived by students as giving preferential treatment to those students seeking help outside of class. Then, there are the difficulties associated with trying to determine the authenticity of students’ accounts, particularly when students are requesting additional time to finish incomplete course requirements.
Personally, instructors may simply be concerned that providing OCS will exhaust their time and energy, or they may simply lack the communication skills necessary for providing competent OCS to students in need. Consequently, continued research is needed to investigate the potential risks that instructors face as they decide whether or not to provide out-of-class support to students experiencing stressful situations. Clearly, instructors can enhance their own credibility by communicating sensitivity to students’ extenuating circumstances and a willingness to provide emotional support when needed, though the decision to do so may carry a number of drawbacks that should be considered as well.

A second noteworthy finding from this research is that the effect of instructor OCS is somewhat larger for students’ attributions of instructor care and trustworthiness than for attributions of instructor competence. This finding may simply reflect the conceptual similarities between OCS and the trustworthiness and caring dimensions of instructor credibility, as students who seek help from their instructors outside of class may already perceive that their instructor is a caring and trustworthy individual to begin with. Less clear from the present study is whether perceptions of instructor (as opposed to personal) competence are truly enhanced by the provision of competent emotional support, or whether competence is enhanced because it is positively associated with perceptions of care and trustworthiness. Theoretically, the difference may depend on the distinctions that students make (or do not make) between the instructor as “teacher” and the instructor as “mentor” or “friend.” In other words, students may derive their perceptions of instructor competence primarily from teach-
ing behaviors enacted *within* the classroom, whereas perceptions of instructor care and trustworthiness may emanate equally from behaviors enacted both within and outside of the classroom. As some scholars have argued (e.g., Frymier & Houser, 2000; Schrodt et al., 2006), the instructor-student relationship often constitutes an interpersonal relationship, one where the competent provision of OCS becomes an expectation that students have of their instructors rather than an added benefit of competent teaching. At a minimum, then, future research is needed to tease out the distinctions that students may make among the different roles that college instructors enact, as well as the degree to which students may come to expect the competent provision of OCS.

In terms of sex differences, both male and female students perceived instructors providing non-supportive messages to be the least credible, though female students were more likely to rate instructors who used non-supportive messages to be less competent, trustworthy, and caring than male students. One possible explanation for this small trend is that women are generally viewed as being more supportive than men (Kunkel & Burleson, 1999), and thus, women may have certain expectations about the proper way in which supportive interactions should occur. That being said, the effect size for student sex was relatively small, and consistent with previous research on sex differences in the provision and evaluation of supportive messages (e.g., MacGeorge, Graves, Feng, Gillihan, & Burleson, 2004), there were more similarities than differences between female and male students’ attributions of credibility based on instructor OCS.
Overall, then, the results of this study offer at least two implications for college instructors seeking to enhance their credibility. First, instructors should carefully consider how they respond to students who come to them seeking support. The results of this study suggest that college instructors need to be aware that when students come to them for help with a stressful situation, this is not only an opportunity to help students manage their problems, but also to increase their own credibility as an instructor. Specifically, when encountering a student seeking help for a personally stressful situation, instructors can enhance their credibility by communicating high OCS messages (i.e., both informationally and emotionally supportive) in order to effectively support the student. Instructor and Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) training programs may build upon this research by incorporating useful examples of emotionally and/or informationally supportive messages based on the hypothetical scenarios used in this study, as well as more general guidelines of how to assist students who may be experiencing stressful situations outside of the classroom. Because these types of stressful situations can often be challenging to manage for even the most capable of faculty members, basic course directors should provide training sessions that include "realistic" OCS examples in order to better educate and prepare instructors and GTAs on the most effective methods for responding to students who come to them seeking support. This may be achieved by having instructors and GTAs participate in role-playing scenarios or case study activities based on the hypothetical scenarios from this study. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the results of this study extend the tenets of attribution the-
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ory by providing evidence that students’ attributions of instructors may vary as a function of their perceptions of an instructor’s communication behaviors outside of the classroom setting. To the extent that instructors communicate emotional support in an appropriate and effective manner, students are more likely to grant them increased credibility as valid and legitimate sources of information. This, in turn, is likely to increase both the student’s motivation to learn and, hopefully, their academic performance in the classroom (cf. Finn et al., 2009; Jones, 2008).

Despite the contributions of this study, however, the results should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design. Although hypothetical scenarios have been used successfully in other lines of research (e.g., Schrodt & Witt, 2006; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998), the limitations of this approach and other categorical, experimental designs are well documented (Jackson & Jacobs, 1983). An important limitation of this approach is that it cannot reveal the ways in which actual instructor OCS messages influence students’ perceptions of instructor credibility over the course of a semester. Nevertheless, given the theoretical focus on students’ attributions of credibility, as well as the practical and methodological challenges associated with conducting a study with potential sensitivities in actual communication courses, the use of hypothetical scenarios was deemed appropriate.

Future researchers might extend these efforts by examining the ways in which students’ perceptions of instructor credibility vary as a function of the content of specific instructor OCS messages over time. Clearly, no two stressful situations or external demands are exactly
alike, and the emotional support literature (including constructivism theory) points to the importance of using person-centered messages that account for the subjective, emotional, and relational aspects of communicative contexts (Burleson & Rack, 2008). Researchers might also consider how students provide emotional support to their instructors, as the relational perspective to instructional communication (see Mottet & Beebe, 2006) positions teachers and students as co-owners of shared meaning within the context of an interpersonal relationship. Through these types of investigations, scholars and educators may develop a more complete understanding of the various ways in which OCS enhances the instructor-student relationship, and ultimately, classroom learning.

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**APPENDIX**

**Experimental Manipulations**

*Highly Supportive Instructor*

Section 1: Please imagine the following scenario. You are currently taking a small, introductory communication course at a large, Midwestern university from an instructor named Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith has been consistently rated as one of the best instructors, in terms of teaching ability, at the university. Over the semester you have gotten to know Mr. Smith and you have started building a connection with him. In addition, you’ve come to respect and trust this instructor.

Section 2: Approximately five weeks into the semester, you are diagnosed with a long-term illness. While it is not life-threatening, you are extremely concerned about how the illness will affect you physically and mentally. In addition, because your doctors indicate that...
you will be receiving regular treatment for your illness throughout the upcoming semester, which may interfere with some of your classes, you are extremely nervous that your performance in this class will be negatively affected. If stress was rated on a scale between 1 and 5 (1 = no stress; 5 = severe stress), you are currently experiencing a 4 in reaction to this situation.

**Section 3:** Think back to the stressful situation described in Section 2 of the scenario. Because you are not sure what to do about your problem, out of necessity, you decide to go to Mr. Smith for help. After explaining your problem, Mr. Smith says:

“I understand what you’re going through. This type of situation can be very upsetting and you have every right to feel the way that you do. I am so sorry to hear that you’ve been forced to deal with this situation this semester. Actually, one of my best friends in college dealt with a very similar situation during our sophomore year so I can really relate to what you’re experiencing. Let’s take a closer look at your situation and see if we can come up with a couple of solutions to help you manage this problem and get you through this semester. We will go over all of your options and figure out what’s best for you. Oh, and one more thing, I promise that I won’t discuss your situation with anyone else...I’ll keep our conversation confidential.”

*Moderately Supportive Instructor*

**Section 1: Please imagine the following scenario.** You are currently taking a small, introductory communication course at a large, Midwestern university from an instructor named Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith has
been consistently rated as one of the best instructors, in terms of teaching ability, at the university. Over the semester, you have gotten to know Mr. Smith and you have started building a connection with him. In addition, you’ve come to respect and trust this instructor.

Section 2: Approximately five weeks into the semester, you are diagnosed with a long-term illness. While it is not life-threatening, you are extremely concerned about how the illness will affect you physically and mentally. In addition, because your doctors indicate that you will be receiving regular treatment for your illness throughout the upcoming semester, which may interfere with some of your classes, you are extremely nervous that your performance in this class will be negatively affected. If stress was rated on a scale between 1 and 5 (1 = no stress; 5 = severe stress), you are currently experiencing a 4 in reaction to this situation.

Section 3: Think back to the stressful situation described in Section 2 of the scenario. Because you are not sure what to do about your problem, out of necessity, you decide to go to Mr. Smith for help. After explaining your problem, Mr. Smith says:

“That’s a tough one...you must be pretty upset. Believe it or not, I’ve never really experienced a situation like this before, so I don’t know how much help I can actually give you. I only have a few minutes before my next class starts, but let’s make an appointment for you to come back during my office hours when we can spend more time discussing this.”
Non-Supportive Instructor*

Section 1: Please imagine the following scenario. You are currently taking a small, introductory communication course at a large, Midwestern university from an instructor named Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith has been consistently rated as one of the best instructors, in terms of teaching ability, at the university. Over the semester, you have gotten to know Mr. Smith and you have started building a connection with him. In addition, you've come to respect and trust this instructor.

Section 2: Approximately five weeks into the semester, you are diagnosed with a long-term illness. While it is not life-threatening, you are extremely concerned about how the illness will affect you physically and mentally. In addition, because your doctors indicate that you will be receiving regular treatment for your illness throughout the upcoming semester, which may interfere with some of your classes, you are extremely nervous that your performance in this class will be negatively affected. If stress was rated on a scale between 1 and 5 (1 = no stress; 5 = severe stress), you are currently experiencing a 4 in reaction to this situation.

Section 3: Think back to the stressful situation described in Section 2 of the scenario. Because you are not sure what to do about your problem, out of necessity, you decide to go to Mr. Smith for help. After explaining your problem, Mr. Smith says:

“That’s too bad. Unfortunately, your situation happens to a lot of people and everyone has to figure out how to deal with it in their own way. I wish I had more time to help you out with this problem, but I am really busy right now with a couple of deadlines that
must be finished by the end of the day. Maybe we can talk more about your situation next week.”

*Conditions were rewritten describing a female teacher to manipulate teacher biological sex.*
Trends in Communicative Self-Efficacy: A Comparative Analysis

Georgeta M. Hodis
Flaviu A. Hodis

Social science research increasingly emphasizes the investigation of the self (Schunk & Pajares, 2005; see also Graham & Weiner, 1996); a wide and consistent body of findings indicate that, across domains, people’s efficacy beliefs (rather than actual capabilities) are important predictors of behaviors (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Case in point, McCroskey and associates argued that own perceptions of communicative competence (rather than actual competence) underlie numerous salient decisions people make with respect to communication (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; McCroskey, 1997). Additionally, own perceptions of competence influence the choice of goals people set up in achievement settings (Friedman et al., 2009). More precisely, the way a student who is enrolled in a communication course selects between mastery and performance goals and chooses between approach and avoidance valences is grounded on her/his perception of own communicative skills (see Friedman et al., 2009 for more details regarding the interplay between competence and achievement goals choice). Moreover, own perceptions of (domain-specific) capabilities are key determinants of people’s success or failure in given academic settings (see Schunk & Pajares, 2005 and references therein). In particular, higher levels of perceived communication competence are asso-
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Associated with higher GPA scores and elevated persistence to remain in college (Hawken, Duran, & Kelly, 1991), whereas lack of confidence in one’s own abilities to talk to strangers and acquaintances has been linked to inadequate communication with teachers (Rosenfeld, Grant, & McCroskey, 1995), unproductive learning experiences, and suboptimal academic achievement (Myers & Bryant, 2002; Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002). In this light, it is not surprising that communication courses that are effective in raising students’ SPCC levels also facilitate a host of other desirable educational outcomes (e.g., a drop in attrition rates; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997).

The structure of this article is as follows: First, it is argued that self-perceptions of communication competence, as gauged by the SPCC instrument (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988), provide valid measures of communicative self-efficacy in specific settings (e.g., school-, work-, social-related contexts, etc.). Drawing from motivation-achievement and communication research literature, the pivotal role that self-efficacy beliefs play in student learning is then discussed. Following, the malleability of self-efficacy beliefs is overviewed, the research questions of the study are introduced, and the method used to draw inferences from data is presented. Subsequently, the results of the study are discussed and empirical evidence for answering the research questions is offered. Finally, the implications of the findings are analyzed in the discussion section.
**Major Contributions of the Study**

This study extends prior research in important ways. At the conceptual level, it makes a compelling case that SPCC provides valid estimates of communicative self-efficacy beliefs. Studying perceived communicative competence through the self-efficacy lens reveals that self-perceptions of communication competence are very salient and should not be regarded as merely imperfect ways to assess actual communication competence. More to the point, this research underlines the pivotal role that (communicative) self-efficacy beliefs play in school settings. Additionally, this paper demonstrates that self-efficacy beliefs pertaining to communication change over time. Further, the research shows that the magnitude of these changes is directly related to the context of communication and attuned to the scope of classroom instruction. Finally, integrating relevant findings from the self-efficacy literature, this study proposes several practical strategies to enhance the communicative self-efficacy beliefs of students enrolled in core communication classes.

**Theoretical Perspective**

**SPCC: A Measure of Communicative Self-efficacy**

Bandura (1997) posits that “perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). Grounded on Bandura’s perspective, this research defines communicative self-efficacy as
one’s beliefs in her/his own capability to communicate effectively in given encounters. Consistent with Bandura (1997), the conceptualization of communicative self-efficacy beliefs include not only “the exercise of control over action” (p. 36) (e.g., Can I bring myself to give a public speech?) but also “the self-regulation of thought processes, motivation, and physiological states” (p. 36) that are needed for effective communication in a specific situation. From the onset, it is important to note that when assessing communicative self-efficacy one does not attempt to gauge people’s actual communication skills. On the contrary, one measures the confidence individuals have that they can successfully employ whatever skills they possess to communicate effectively across different communication settings. Therefore, the concept of communicative self-efficacy is relevant for all levels of communication skills.

An important feature of valid self-efficacy scales is that they target exclusively respondents’ beliefs in their ability (Bandura, 1997). The SPCC instrument meets this requirement for it asks participants to indicate how competent they believe they are (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) to communicate in various situations. Additionally, because items of the SPCC scale require respondents to make judgments of own communicative capability (as opposed to judgments of self-worth, evaluations of the expected outcome of a communication encounter, or statements of future communicative intentions), the instrument meets the content validity criteria specified by Bandura (2006).

Because people’s beliefs in their own capabilities differ across various domains of functioning (Bandura, 2006), general (i.e., decontextualized) measures of self-
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efficacy cannot provide meaningful information about a particular behavior (see Bandura, 1997 for a detailed discussion). Thus, to make valid inferences regarding self-efficacy one needs to employ specific measures (Bandura, 1997; 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2005). This argument is further supported by findings indicating that people’s self-efficacy beliefs are not only multidimensional but also different in their level, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1997; 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2005). In other words, some individuals believe they can be only somewhat effective in their communication and only in specific settings, whereas others are confident they can communicate effectively across communication encounters, including the most demanding ones. To capture this variability, valid measures of self-efficacy need to be specific and present respondents with a wide range of (communication) tasks that illustrate various levels of challenge (Bandura, 1997, 2006). SPCC meets this requirement, as it prompts respondents to record how competent they believe they are to communicate effectively in 12 different situations. These situations (i.e., communication encounters) are the byproduct of crossing four communication contexts (namely public speaking (PS), large meeting, (LM), small group (SG), and dyadic (DY)) with three types of interlocutors (friend, acquaintance, and stranger). Taking into account that people are more comfortable to communicate in some contexts than in others (e.g., dyadic vs. public speaking) and with a particular type of interlocutor (e.g., friend) (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Rosenfeld et al., 1995), it is clear that the 12 communication encounters gauge competence beliefs in communication situations having various degrees of difficulty. Therefore, SPCC satisfies
another stringent requirement of valid self-efficacy scales, namely to offer different levels of task demand (Bandura, 2006).

People’s self-efficacy beliefs differ across domains of functioning (Bandura, 2006). As a consequence, self-efficacy can be appropriately assessed only at two levels of generality, namely specific or intermediate. Communicative self-efficacy, as gauged by SPCC, is measured at an intermediate level of generality, for the items span several (related) classes of communication encounters (e.g., dyadic, public speaking, etc.) under several common classes of conditions (i.e., type of interlocutor). This is a very desirable feature of the instrument for employing self-efficacy items that operate at the intermediate level of generality enhances their predictive power (Bandura, 1997).

Valid self-efficacy scales need to be sensitive, reliable, and to differentiate among people who hold similar but not identical beliefs (Bandura, 2006). The SPCC measure meets these requirements for its items record answers on a 0-100 scale that is sufficiently sensitive and broad to accommodate variations in self-efficacy levels. In addition, the measure has demonstrated good reliability in numerous studies (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre, Babin, & Clement, 1999; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 1989).

Additional information about communicative self-efficacy beliefs is revealed when the “horizontal connections” (Wilson & Sabee, 2003, p. 6) linking SPCC to its antecedents and consequences are overviewed (see also Bandura, 2006, for a similar point of view). Findings from a diverse body of studies analyzing relationships
between SPCC and a host of covariates (i.e., Bakx, Van der Sanden, Sijtsma, Croon, & Vermetten, 2006; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1999; Miller, 1987; Richmond et al., 1989), indicate that people who are sociable, regard themselves highly, and are argumentative, have higher levels of communicative self-efficacy beliefs than people lower in sociability, self-esteem, and argumentativeness. On the contrary, people who do not internalize societal values or norms and distrust the communicative process (i.e., anomics), feel estranged from other people and the society (i.e., are alienated), are highly introverted or neurotic, exhibit low levels of SPCC. In addition, perceptions of own communicative competence have positive relationships with willingness to communicate, constructivist learning conceptions, and engagement in expert-driven or training-related learning opportunities.

**Importance of Students’ Self-efficacy Beliefs for Learning and Teaching**

Research conducted across different academic domains reveals that self-efficacy beliefs are important predictors of students’ academic performance and learning (Bandura, 1997; 2006; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Schunk & Pajares, 2005) for self-efficacy mediates the effect of past performance on subsequent achievement and involvement in academic tasks (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008; Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Thus, it is not surprising that competence beliefs and expectancies of future success predict achievement in different subject areas even after previous performance has been taken into account (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2005).
Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs are salient for they mediate relationships between “affective components” (Pintrich, 2003, p. 670) such as people’s needs and emotions and their behavior. In particular, higher self-perceptions of competence are associated with positive patterns of thought that help create optimal opportunities for skill acquisition (Hullman, Planisek, McNally, & Rubin, 2010; see also Snyder, 1981).

Domain-specific self-efficacy beliefs influence the way students choose an activity (Rubin, Martin, Bruning & Powers, 1993), value its outcome(s) (Bong, 2001; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), the effort they expend in various academic tasks, and the extent to which they persist in learning when facing difficulties (Bandura, 1997; 2006; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Pintrich, 2003; Schunk et al., 2008). Moreover, self-efficacy beliefs mediate the influence that external events (e.g., feedback from teachers and peers) exert on students’ intrinsic motivation (see Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2009 and references therein). In particular, students’ intrinsic motivation to engage in meaningful learning in a given academic field can be enhanced by increasing their self-efficacy beliefs related to the given area (Reeve et al., 2004; Schunk et al., 2008).

**Dynamic Nature of Self-efficacy Beliefs and Problematic Limitations of Current Research**

Perceived self-efficacy is not a fixed ability (Bandura, 1997). On the contrary, self-efficacy beliefs are malleable (Klassen, 2004; Pintrich, 2003) and can be affected by contextual information (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Klassen, 2004) and the nature of educational
practices (e.g., the extent to which evaluation of students' performance emphasizes grades and social comparisons vs. learning and personal development) (Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992). A comprehensive review of the self-efficacy literature (see Bong & Skaalvik, 2003 and references therein) provides "strong evidence of the dynamic nature of self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 26). Case in point, Spinath and Steinmayr (2008) found significant changes in students’ self-perceptions of competence (during a school year) as well as significant inter-individual differences in these patterns of development. Along the same lines, Schunk and Pajares (2005) suggested that vicarious experiences, academic achievement, and persuasive communications contribute to increasing self-efficacy in instructional settings. Changes in self-perceptions of competence are pivotal, for they relate “to general positive affect about school performance” (Harter et al., 1992, p. 802). These findings unequivocally underline the meaningfulness of changes in self-efficacy beliefs and indicate that there are important advantages associated with enhancing students’ perceived self-efficacy.

Participation in communication courses and exposure to instruction are expected to enhance students’ desire to engage in communication and their ability to do so successfully (Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990; see also Pearson & Daniels, 1988). Thus, to evaluate students’ progress accurate assessments of change are needed (Willett, 1994). However, with respect to studying change in students’ SPCC, important shortcomings exist in the communication literature. These problems are overviewed next.
First, existing studies fail to recognize that, if measured appropriately, self-perceptions of communication competence are adequate representations of communicative self-efficacy beliefs. As a result, the current communication literature targeting SPCC is disjoined from the rich self-efficacy research and does not integrate important findings from this field. Thus, research on SPCC provides no systematic investigation of how interactions among self-efficacy beliefs, motivation to enhance communication skills, and expectancy of success in a communication course contribute to divergent patterns of engagement in class activities and/or learning even for students having similar levels of communication skills. This limitation is especially problematic considering that newly developed instructional communication theoretical frameworks have self-efficacy at their heart (e.g., Instructional beliefs model; Weber, Martin, & Myers, 2011).

Second, assessments of change in own perceptions of communication competence are few and far between in the communication literature. Moreover, even the few existing accounts do not assess change appropriately and fail to account for measurement errors. More specifically, they use unstandardized instruments (e.g., Ellis, 1995; Ford & Wolvin, 1992, 1993; Kramer & Hinton, 1996), lack enough information to gauge change accurately for they employ only two data points (e.g., Ford & Wolvin, 1992, 1993; Kramer & Hinton, 1996; Rubin et al., 1997), and utilize statistical techniques that fail to take into account that people’s change trajectories are heterogeneous (e.g., Bakx et al., 2006; Dwyer & Fus, 2002; Ellis, 1995; Ford & Wolvin, 1992, 1993; Kramer & Hinton, 1996; Rubin et al., 1997). Findings from these
studies have limited generalization for they employ suboptimal procedures to account for missing data (e.g., data purging, Ford & Wolvin, 1992, 1993; Kramer & Hinton, 1996; Rubin et al., 1997), fail to describe the extent and treatment of data missingness (e.g., Dwyer & Fus, 2002; Ellis, 1995), or use information from samples that are significantly different from the general population (e.g., 91% of the participants in the Bakx et al., 2006 study were females).

To assess average trends and reveal interindividual differences in change of communicative self-efficacy beliefs, this study employs a longitudinal nonexperimental design (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). This type of design is appropriate for studying change over time (Heck & Hallinger, 2009), and can be successfully used in settings in which random assignment of participants is unfeasible and/or unethical. Considering that deleterious effects of measurement errors are most prevalent in designs using only two waves of measurement (Anstey & Hofer, 2004; see also Bryk & Raudenbush, 1987; Nesselroade, Stigler, & Baltes, 1980), this work uses a true longitudinal design consisting of three waves of data.

**Research Questions**

To achieve the goals of this study, the following research questions (RQs) are proposed.

- **RQ 1**: Do communicative self-efficacy beliefs change across time during a semester in which students are enrolled in a basic communication course?
-RQ 2: Do patterns of change in communicative self-efficacy beliefs differ across communication contexts? If so, what are the implications for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning in a basic communication course?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Data for this study were collected from a sample of students enrolled in a basic communication course (focusing on public speaking) at a university in the continental U. S. A number of 705 students participated in the study (59.48% response rate). All participants were undergraduate students, 319 (45.18%) were females, and 523 (74.08%) were first-year students. The characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

**Procedure**

After the research was reviewed and approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board, all students who were enrolled in the course were invited to participate. The questionnaire was administered in the first, eight, and 15th week of the semester. The timing for data collection was chosen so that students performed no public speeches prior to the first administration, delivered at least one before the second measurement, and had an additional public speech prior to the last measurement wave. All instructors who taught the course in that semester were contacted, informed, and asked for voluntary cooperation to administer the questionnaires.
during class time. Researchers did not interact at all with participants.

**Measure**

The instrument used to collect data for this study (i.e., SPCC; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) consists of 12 items gauging students’ perceptions of own ability to communicate effectively in different situations. Individual items, subscale (i.e., context) scores, and total score were recorded/calculated on a scale ranging from 0 (i.e., ‘completely incompetent’) to 100 (i.e., ‘completely competent’). This instrument has been repeatedly found to exhibit good reliability (e.g., Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1999; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Richmond et al., 1989).

**Data Analytic Technique**

To answer the two research questions, latent growth modeling (LGM) was employed. LGM is a flexible data analytic system for longitudinal designs (Ram & Grimm, 2007; Willett, 2004), which subsumes traditional repeated measures techniques (e.g., ANOVA, MANOVA, paired t-tests) as particular cases (Voelkle, 2007). LGM has important advantages that recommend it over these traditional techniques. In particular, LGM is more powerful, removes “measurement error from theory-testing procedures” (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 385), and is able to accommodate any covariance structure of the error terms (Ployhart & Hakel, 1998; Willett, 2004). Unlike the afore-mentioned classical techniques, LGM does not need to impose a restrictive structure on
the error terms (i.e., LGM does not assume independent and homoscedastic errors; Willett, 2004). On the contrary, by employing LGM, a researcher can “compare the effects of many reasonable error structures and determine the best analytically” (Willett, 2004, p. 55). This feature of the procedure was particularly instrumental in the current research (see the Results section). More details about LGM and about the advantages associated with using it in communication research can be found in Henry and Slater (2008) and Hodis, Bardhan, and Hodis (2010).

Several fit indices are employed in this study to assess the appropriateness of various growth models: comparative fit index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) (Tucker & Lewis, 1973), and root-mean-square-error-of approximation (RMSEA) (Steiger, 1990). Following Hu and Bentler (1999), values of .95 and higher for CFI and TLI were used as benchmarks for good fit. For RMSEA, values below .05 were taken to indicate a very good fit, values between .05 and .10 to denote a moderate one, and values exceeding .10 to indicate a poor fit (Bollen & Curran, 2006).

**RESULTS**

An examination of Table 1 reveals that all context subscales as well as the overall SPCC scale have excellent reliabilities (i.e., exceeding 0.80) and have small absolute values of skewness and kurtosis. Because violations of multivariate normality (MVN) are suspected only when absolute values of univariate skewness and/or kurtosis are greater than 2.00 and, respectively,
### Table 1
Estimates of Observed Sample Statistics for Focal Variables
Using Full Information Maximum Likelihood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<th>12</th>
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<td>.52</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<td>.47</td>
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<td>.46</td>
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<td>.33</td>
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<td>.47</td>
<td>.51</td>
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<td>.59</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.47</td>
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<tr>
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<td>225.10</td>
<td>144.67</td>
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<td>224.45</td>
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<td>236.33</td>
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<td>278.50</td>
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<td>82.81</td>
<td>112.27</td>
<td>217.09</td>
<td>85.46</td>
<td>99.64</td>
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<td>196.65</td>
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<td>.37</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.47</td>
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<td>114.11</td>
<td>118.97</td>
<td>190.65</td>
<td>101.11</td>
<td>115.32</td>
<td>193.77</td>
<td>99.10</td>
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<td>145.65</td>
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<td>114.98</td>
<td>142.17</td>
<td>250.36</td>
<td>110.73</td>
<td>130.64</td>
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<td>235.00</td>
<td>155.56</td>
<td>102.61</td>
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<td>15.TO3</td>
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<td>245.47</td>
<td>150.55</td>
<td>155.88</td>
<td>252.10</td>
<td>122.26</td>
<td>134.43</td>
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<td>197.25</td>
<td>132.10</td>
<td>140.51</td>
<td>233.51</td>
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<td>Mean</td>
<td>69.37</td>
<td>72.74</td>
<td>75.83</td>
<td>71.41</td>
<td>74.88</td>
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<td>Skew</td>
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<td>-0.87</td>
<td>-0.85</td>
<td>-1.07</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>-1.80</td>
<td>-2.06</td>
<td>-1.66</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
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<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Variances are denoted in bold, covariances are included in the lower triangular part, and correlations are in the upper triangular part of the table. LM1-3 = average scores for the LM context at times 1-3; PS1-3 = average scores for the PS context at times 1-3; SG1-3 = average scores for the SG context at times 1-3; DY1-3 = average scores for the DY context at times 1-3; TO1-3 = average scores for the entire scale at times 1-3. Reliabilities reported in this table are the $\alpha$ coefficient of internal consistency (adjusted using Spearman-Brown formula for the length of scale).
It appears that no problematic violations of MVN occurred in this data. As an additional precaution, this study used maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation, a procedure that is robust to small and medium violations of MVN (Fan & Wang, 1998). To avoid losing any information, full information maximum likelihood (FIML, Arbuckle, 1996) was employed to estimate the model parameters. This estimation technique uses all available data and “is one of the preferred methods to allow generalizations of results to the population” (Benner & Graham, 2009, p. 363). This feature of FIML is very important, as it allows one to include in the analysis all the information provided by all respondents. Therefore, with the exception of one participant who did not respond to any item and could not be included in the analyses, the study used data from all students (bringing the sample size to $N = 705$).

All analyses in this research were conducted with Mplus version 5.2 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2007).

Examination of RQ1: Do Communicative Self-efficacy Beliefs Change across Time?

To examine RQ1 composite (i.e., subscale) scores were created for each context, by averaging each student’s answers to the three questions related to communicating in LM, PS, SG, and respectively, DY contexts. Separate linear LGM models were fit for each of these composite scores, as well as for the overall (i.e., total) (TO) score. The versatility of the technique in modelling the structure of the error terms was essential for appropriately capturing different configurations characterizing these contexts. Specifically, the LGM model
Communicative Self-efficacy

that fit best LM scores had heteroscedastic and uncorrelated errors (thus one degree of freedom for the $\chi^2$ test), whereas for the other contexts and TO score the models of best fit had homoscedastic error structure and correlated errors for the first two waves of measurement (thus two degrees of freedom for the $\chi^2$ test). All five models had an excellent fit to the data, thus confirming that change in self-efficacy beliefs was linear in each context (and also in the TO score). Specifically, for the LM context $\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 0.03; p = .87; \text{CFI} = 1.00; \text{TLI} = 1.00; \text{RMSEA} = .00$.

For the PS context $\chi^2(2, N = 705) = 0.91; p = .63; \text{CFI} = 1.00; \text{TLI} = 1.00; \text{RMSEA} = .00$.

For the SG context $\chi^2(2, N = 705) = 0.49; p = .78; \text{CFI} = 1.00; \text{TLI} = 1.00; \text{RMSEA} = .00$.

For the DY context $\chi^2(2, N = 705) = 6.40; p = .04; \text{CFI} = 0.98; \text{TLI} = 0.97; \text{RMSEA} = .06$.

For the TO score $\chi^2(2, N = 705) = 1.29; p = .53; \text{CFI} = 1.00; \text{TLI} = 1.00; \text{RMSEA} = .00$.

These results offer a clear affirmative answer to RQ1: Regardless of the communication context, communicative self-efficacy beliefs increased linearly for students enrolled in a core communication class.

Before tackling RQ2, a brief presentation of the meaning of the parameter estimates that were obtained when fitting a LGM is provided to facilitate the interpretation of the results (see Table 2). This discussion pertains to the LM context but generalizes easily to the other subscales. Results in Table 2 indicate that the average true LM SPCC score at the beginning of the semester was 69.44 points and that a systematic (i.e.,
Table 2
Unstandardized Parameter Estimates for the Unconditional Growth Models of Communication Context Facets and Entire Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \mu_{ci} )</td>
<td>Average of true initial status</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>69.44**</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>71.72**</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>77.64**</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>82.16**</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>75.25**</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \mu_{cs} )</td>
<td>Average of true rate of change</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>6.43**</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>5.46**</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>2.72**</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>1.61*</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>4.02**</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma^2_{ci} )</td>
<td>Variance in true initial status</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>187.27**</td>
<td>25.58</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>268.73**</td>
<td>23.70</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>171.54**</td>
<td>20.27</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DY</td>
<td>169.35**</td>
<td>17.48</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>180.60**</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma^2_{cr} )</td>
<td>Variance in rate of change</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>82.40</td>
<td>46.57</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>138.00**</td>
<td>32.90</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>30.64</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>DY</td>
<td>110.45**</td>
<td>26.95</td>
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<td>TO</td>
<td>77.75**</td>
<td>21.90</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma_{ci-cs} )</td>
<td>Covariance (Corr) of true initial status and rate of change</td>
<td>LM</td>
<td>–19.20 (–.16)</td>
<td>26.96</td>
<td>.48</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>PS</td>
<td>–96.92** (–.50)</td>
<td>22.42</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>SG</td>
<td>–47.11* (–.40)</td>
<td>19.79</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
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<td>DY</td>
<td>–76.73** (–.56)</td>
<td>17.68</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>–51.06** (–.43)</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SE = standard error; Corr = correlation; LM = large meetings; PS = public speaking; SG = small groups; DY = dyadic; TO = overall SPCC; All \( p \) values are two-tailed. *\( p < .05 \). **\( p < .01 \).
non-random) increase of 6.43 points, on average, was recorded in the given semester. Analyzing the variance estimates (i.e., the third and fourth blocks in Table 2) it becomes apparent that although students were quite heterogeneous with respect to their initial LM SPCC levels (i.e., \( \sigma^2_{ei,LM} \) was significant), their scores increased at relatively similar rates across the given semester (i.e., \( \sigma^2_{ei,LM} \) was not significant). In addition, no significant relationship was detected between LM SPCC levels at which participants began the semester and the subsequent increase in their scores (i.e., \( \sigma_{ei,e-LM} \) was not significant).

**Examination of RQ2: Comparison of Patterns of Change across Communication Contexts**

An analysis of the results of the LGM models in Table 2 indicates that at the beginning of the semester students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs were highest for the DY context, followed by SG, PS, and LM. The rank order of initial mean SPCC levels recorded in this study matches that in the normative sample of the instrument (see McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Rosenfeld et al., 1995), with the only exception being that in the latter equal averages were found for PS and LM contexts. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that values reported in this study are corrected for measurement error (i.e., **true values**) whereas normative means incorporate both true SPCC levels and measurement errors. Students’ average increases in SPCC were highest for LM and PS contexts (see second block in Table 2). Although statistically significant improve-
ments were reported for SG and DY contexts, the magnitude of these increases was, on average, only 25%-50% of that for PS and LM. These results suggest an affirmative answer for RQ2.

A two-step procedure was employed to evaluate RQ2. First, an overall test was performed by constraining the true average rates of change in the four contexts to be equal. The test of these constraints was significant $\chi^2(3, N = 705) = 52.83; p < .01$, thus indicating that average increases in SPCC related to LM, PS, SG, and DY contexts were not all equal. To identify precisely the nature of these differences, comparisons involving pairs of contexts were conducted in the second step. In order to illustrate the magnitude of the differences between rates of change, results of statistical tests (whenever significant) were supplemented by the calculation of a latent standardized effect size (i.e., $\Delta$). Based on the procedure described in Hancock, Kuo, and Lawrence (2001), $\Delta$ was defined as the ratio of the absolute value of the difference between estimated average rates of change in the given contexts and the standard deviation of their difference scores.

Statistical tests of significance indicated that average rates of change in SPCC for LM and PS contexts were significantly higher than mean changes for DY and SG contexts. On one hand, the average improvement in SPCC related to LM was higher than that in DY: $\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 43.77; p < .01; \Delta = 0.48$. The value of $\Delta$ indicates that the average increase in LM SPCC levels was approximately half of a standard deviation steeper than the corresponding increase in DY SPCC. Additionally, mean increase in SPCC related to LM was
higher than that in SG ($\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 28.96; p < .01; \Delta = 0.32$). On the other hand, the average change in SPCC related to the PS context was higher than that pertaining to the DY context ($\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 31.80; p < .01; \Delta = 0.33$) and, respectively, SG ($\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 20.66; p < .01; \Delta = 0.20$). However, no significant differences in average increase were detected between LM and PS contexts ($\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 2.47; p = .12$) and, respectively, between DY and SG ones ($\chi^2(1, N = 705) = 3.55; p = .06$).

Taken together, these statistical tests indicate that RQ2 can be answered affirmatively.

Analyzing the results corresponding to TO SPCC (see Table 2), it can be concluded that average values for true initial levels (respectively rates of change) are very close (respectively identical) to the middle of the range formed by the SPCC context means (i.e., 69.44 to 82.16 for initial levels, respectively 1.61 to 6.43 for rates of change). This result indicates that for TO SPCC average initial level and, respectively, rate of change are higher than the corresponding values characterizing some contexts but lower than those of others.

The last three blocks in Table 2 offer valuable information that cannot be unearthed with traditional data analytic methods (e.g., ANOVA, MANOVA). Specifically, findings point that although students begun the semester with a broad range of context-related true SPCC scores, differences were most notable for the PS and LM contexts (values of $\sigma^2_{ei}$ were highest for these particular contexts). A somewhat different situation was encountered with respect to the homogeneity/
heterogeneity of students’ rates of change. Specifically, apart from the LM context (in which relatively homogeneous increases in SPCC were found across participants), statistically significant variances in rates of change were detected. These results indicate that for SPCC related to PS, SG, and, respectively, DY, the magnitude of improvement differed significantly across students.

**DISCUSSION**

This study makes a compelling case that self-efficacy beliefs, in general, and communicative self-efficacy beliefs, in particular, are important factors that affect students’ class achievement and performance. This research also demonstrates that students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs increased during a semester in which they were enrolled in a basic communication course focusing on public speaking. Additionally, findings indicate that the extent to which self-efficacy beliefs changed was context specific. Moreover, results point that heterogeneous patterns of change characterized PS, SG, and DY contexts (i.e., some students’ scores increased more than others’), whereas for the LM context the pattern of evolution was more homogeneous. The implications of findings for the communication research and instruction are discussed next.

**Practical Implications**

Findings of this work are based on a large and representative sample of undergraduate students. Thus,
they can be used as benchmark of expected change for similar courses. In addition, students’ initial (average) scores for all communication contexts were close in magnitude to the corresponding published normative values for SPCC (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). This fact further enhances confidence that results can be generalized to other university settings.

This study found that mean increases in students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs had similar magnitude in some communication contexts but not in others (see Figure 1). A plausible explanation for the observed

![Figure 1: Average values of latent growth modeling (LGM) initial level (i.e., intercept factor) and rate of change (i.e., slope factor) for the four communication contexts defining SPCC and the overall construct. LM = large meetings; PS = public speaking; SG = small groups; DY = dyadic; TO = overall SPCC; RHE = the specific contexts emphasize a rhetorical orientation toward communication and are likely to have been affected by instruction; REL = the specific contexts emphasize a relational orientation toward communication and are unlikely to have been affected by instruction.](image-url)
pattern of findings emerges if these trends are analyzed through the lens of rhetorical-relational communication framework (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996; Shepherd, 1992). This framework posits that when engaging in communication (outside family and/or romantic relationships), people focus primarily (although by no means exclusively) either on exerting influence and disseminating knowledge/opinions (i.e., have a rhetorical orientation) or on building and maintaining relationships (i.e., exhibit a relational orientation). (For recent findings supporting these stances see Hullman et al., 2010. For an application of this framework to student-teacher communication see Mottet, Frymier, & Beebe, 2006). From this perspective, items from LM (e.g., “Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances”) and PS (e.g., “Present a talk to a group of strangers”) contexts can be taken as emphasizing persuasion and, thus, reflecting primarily a rhetorical orientation toward communication. On the contrary, items from SG (e.g., “Talk in a small group of acquaintances”) and DY (e.g., “Talk with a friend”) contexts can be thought of as illustrating mainly a relational perspective.

Interpreting the results of this study through the rhetorical-relational lens reveals that increases in students’ self-efficacy beliefs were higher in magnitude for the communication contexts reflecting mainly a rhetorical perspective than for those emphasizing primarily a relational perspective (see Figure 1). Corroborating these findings with the focus of the course on public speaking, it appears that instruction had desired effects (for comparable findings in a population of high school students see Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel, 1995) and that spill-over effects of the instruction (i.e., increases in
SPCC in contexts emphasizing the relational dimension of communication) were quite small.

These results cannot (and should not) be taken to imply that a causal relationship exists between instruction and improvements in SPCC. However, in conjunction with other information, these different patterns of change in SPCC (see Figure 1) suggest that students’ participation in the given course could be an important factor behind the observed improvement in students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs. In particular, noting that in the given semester the university offered only one other class (with a typical enrollment of about 15-20 students) targeting public speaking, it appears quite unlikely that concurrent enrollment in this other course offers a plausible alternative explanation for the pattern of results in Figure 1. In addition, although the design of the current study cannot account for extraneous effects of students’ out-of-class experiences on SPCC, it is not very likely that students’ out-of-class experiences were heavily tilted toward effecting positive changes in the rhetorical rather than the relational aspect of communication. Moreover, if extraneous factors rather than instruction in the given course were to be very influential, it would be more likely that increases in SPCC would be random or proportionate to initial levels. An examination of Figure 1 reveals that this is clearly not the case.

An analysis of Figure 1 also shows that the strength of the putative relationship between instruction and increase in communicative self-efficacy beliefs is a function of the variable chosen to assess the targeted outcome (see Le, Lockwood, Stecher, Hamilton, & Martinez, 2009 for similar findings in the mathematics and sci-
ence achievement domains). Specifically, if one were to use DY SPCC scores to gauge how effective class participation was in enhancing students’ self-perceived communicative competence, one would reach different conclusion than if she/he used LM, PS, or TO SPCC scores as the target outcome. Along these lines, findings from this study offer a convincing support for two arguments: First, effective interventions (i.e., instruction in this case) are specific (i.e., target particular dimensions of interest) rather than global (O’Mara, Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 2006). Second, assessments of the effectiveness of intervention (i.e., instruction) strategies need to focus on target variables that can reliably detect meaningful differences in the effectiveness of intervention(s).

Strategies to Enhance Communicative Self-efficacy and Communication Skills

Results from the motivation and learning literature suggest that several approaches can be effectively used in communication courses to enhance students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs. First, it is important to note that ontological and epistemic beliefs about an academic field influence whether students’ have confidence in their capability to succeed in the given domain (Buehl & Alexander, 2009). This is why, learners in communication courses need to be encouraged to move away from thinking that competent communicators are ‘born’ (i.e., that communication competence is an innate ability) and take a more proactive approach toward enhancing their communication skills. To this end, students have to be provided with clear, accurate, and realistic indicators of how success at a given task is defined and evalu-
ated (e.g., focal aspects of a ‘good’ public speech need to be clearly outlined). Moreover, helping students unpack the tasks they need to perform and understand their specific demands also influence positively the development of their self-efficacy beliefs (for more details see Buehl & Alexander, 2009).

Second, research findings (see Eccles & Wigfield, 2002 and references therein) indicate that students who are focused on evaluating and enhancing their own progress (i.e., have mastery-oriented goals; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy than their peers who are preoccupied to outperform their colleagues (i.e., have performance-oriented goals; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Thus, it is important that in communication courses mastery-oriented learning is promoted by means of delivering feedback and evaluation that target mastery rather than social norms (see Schiefele, 2009 for more details). Besides reinforcing “competence skills with appropriate feedback” (Hullman et al., 2010, p. 47), promoting a constructivist view of learning (e.g., communication competence can be enhanced by effort) is also a potentially effective strategy, for constructivists attitudes toward the teaching and learning process are “related to higher levels of self-efficacy and competency beliefs” (Buehl & Alexander, 2009, p. 485; see also Bakx et al., 2006).

Third, designing class activities and assignments around immediate and specific goals that are aligned with students’ competence levels, can enhance feelings of efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Harter, 1981; Spinath & Steinmayr, 2008) as well as improve performance (Bandura, 1997; 2006; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). These kinds of activities help students
experience success and feel energized to practice beyond classroom activities and, thus, increase the chances of more rapid acquisition of communication skills (Hullman et al., 2010).

Limitations of the Study

This work unearthed important findings but is not itself without limitations. Recording participants’ SPCC levels at three points in time facilitated the examination of linear patterns of change in context-related self-efficacy beliefs. Although linear models provide reasonable approximations of complex evolutions (Willett, 1989) and the linear growth patterns detected in this study received strong empirical support, a wider array of possible trajectories could be investigated if data collected at four or more time points were available. Second, this research employed only quantitative information to examine change in SPCC. If available, inclusion of a qualitative component could have helped in shedding more light on how various factors interact to produce changes in people’s own perceptions of competence (see Yauch & Steudel, 2003 for other advantages of qualitative approaches). Third, no measures of student motivation (or of motivation-related constructs) were available for this study. As a result, it was not possible to evaluate the extent to which these motivational constructs can predict changes in communicative self-efficacy beliefs.

Future Research and Conclusion

Findings indicate that students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs increased linearly during the semester in
which they were enrolled in a basic communication course. However, no data were available to assess whether this increasing trend continued after the end of the semester. By focusing on a wider time frame (e.g., a year), future studies could overcome this limitation and assess whether students’ SPCC scores level off at some point in time and then decrease. Additionally, future research could evaluate whether self-efficacy trajectories corresponding to different communication contexts have similar or different shapes over a longer period of time.

Future studies might also employ relevant motivation constructs (e.g., a student’s expectation of success in the given course, goal orientation, etc.) to account for the observed variability in communicative self-efficacy trajectories. By evaluating the influence of these covariates on both initial levels and rates of change, it would become possible to find out whether “differences between static and dynamic influences of predictors” (Hodis et al., 2010) are apparent. To triangulate quantitative findings, future research could also use qualitative data. Access to qualitative information would be especially valuable in situations in which specific predictors exert divergent influences on the self-efficacy beliefs trajectories.

In sum, this study integrates findings from the motivation-achievement and communication literature to underline the salient role that domain-specific self-perceptions of competence (i.e., communicative self-efficacy beliefs) play in academic settings. Additionally, the research shows that communicative self-efficacy beliefs can be accurately gauged using a measure of self-perceived communication competence (i.e., SPCC). Findings
from this work indicate that students’ communicative self-efficacy beliefs increase linearly during the semester in which they were enrolled in a basic communication course. Finally, this research shows that (even in the absence of a true experimental design) an examination of the context-specific patterns of change in self-efficacy beliefs provides important information about the effectiveness of class instruction.

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Developing Student-to-Student Connectedness: An Examination of Instructors’ Humor, Nonverbal Immediacy, and Self-Disclosure in Public Speaking Courses

Robert J. Sidelinger
Brandi N. Frisby
Audra L. McMullen
Jennifer Heisler

Students may enter public speaking courses with mental and physical manifestations of anxiety and negative arousal (McCullough, Russell, Behnke, Sawyer, & Witt, 2006; Winters, Horvath, Moss, Yarhouse, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2006). Yet, public speaking is a common and important experience for college students (Bodie, 2010). Public speaking courses are either mandatory or recommended at most colleges or universities in the United States (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006; Pearson, DeWitt, Child, Kahl, & Dandamudi, 2007). Research indicates many students report feeling anxious before giving speeches (Ablamowicz, 2005) because they fear being negatively evaluated by their instructor and peers (Bodie). Therefore, it is warranted to consider factors that promote supportive communication in public speaking courses. Student-to-student connectedness represents a supportive, connected climate (e.g., students smile at one another, students praise one another) among peers in a classroom (Dwyer, Bingham, Carlson,
Prisbell, Cruz, & Fus, 2004), and is linked to positive learning outcomes (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010).

Fassinger (2000) stated students are responsible for the way they treat one another in the classroom. In earlier studies, Fassinger (1995: 1997) examined participation as a group experience and found college students’ perceptions of peer friendliness and support influenced how often they were willing to speak in class, whereas perceptions of the instructor had less impact on student participation. Although the instructor’s role is less influential, instructors should consider how they can facilitate supportive communication (i.e. student-to-student connectedness) and use it as a teaching tool to promote various types of positive student outcomes in the public speaking classroom. Using a variety of effective instructional communication teaching strategies, instructors can build connectedness as another method of reducing public speaking anxiety and enhancing positive student learning outcomes. It is likely instructors affect the level of student-to-student connectedness in the classroom, either maximizing or minimizing such connections. Sidelinger, Myers, and McMullen (2011b) found student-to-student connectedness tempered students’ public speaking apprehension and anxiety in public speaking courses. This study extends Sidelinger et al.’s study by examining specific relational instructor communication behaviors that may build student-to-student connectedness in public speaking courses.

Prior instructional research has linked teacher humor (e.g., Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), teacher self-disclosure (e.g., Cayanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009), and nonverbal immediacy (e.g., Andersen, 1979) to positive
learning outcomes in the college classroom. Similarly, student-to-student connectedness in the college classroom offers positive implications for educational processes and outcomes. To date, instructional researchers have linked student-to-student connectedness with affective learning (Johnson, 2009), cognitive learning (Prisbell, Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009), and self-regulated learning (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Further, Frisby and Martin (2010) linked student-to-student connectedness to oral participation in the classroom, suggesting that the supportive classroom environment may allow for students to overcome fears about speaking up in the classroom.

The aim of the present study is to determine whether initial perceptions of connectedness (first day of class) and relational instructor communication behaviors (i.e. teacher humor, teacher self-disclosure, and nonverbal immediacy) enhance student-to-student connectedness over the course of a semester in public speaking courses. For example, Johnson (2009) suggested students may mirror instructors' positive communication in the classroom not only with their instructors but also with their peers. This study determined whether perceptions of students' and instructors' positive communication lead to increases in perceptions of student-to-student connectedness over time in public speaking courses, and the associations they both may have with affective learning.
CONNECTED CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Dwyer et al., (2004) defined a connected classroom environment as “student-to-student perceptions of a supportive and cooperative communication environment” (p. 267). Student-to-student connectedness focuses on the interactions that take place among students in the classroom. In a connected classroom, strong social bonds exist, allowing students to positively express themselves openly and freely. Social bonds allow students to maintain ties and a degree of closeness with others in the classroom context (Scheff, 1990). Overall, students must have knowledge of one another and the aspects that form the social bonds are recognized and reciprocated by their peers (Bochner, 1978).

The classroom context can be viewed as a community setting. Teaching and learning not only occurs between the instructor and student but also among peers (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002). For example, Kendrick and Darling (1990) found students will turn to one another in the classroom to ask clarifying questions to better understand course material. Indeed, supportive peer interactions positively affect the classroom climate (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Therefore, this conceptualization suggests the responsibility for positive perceptions of feeling connected is placed with the students (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2004; Prisbell, Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009). Hirschy and Wilson stated that as teachers and students spend several months together in one setting, they develop relationships over time through interactions and common goals. Thus, students are likely to report increases in student-to-student con-
Student Connectedness

connectedness over the course of a semester. This connectedness, or social resource, eventually emerges and may facilitate learning. Students are integral to the classroom community and take part in the responsibility for class interactions throughout the semester (Fassinger, 2000). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Students’ perceptions of student-to-student connectedness will increase over the course of a 15-week semester.

Existing connectedness research has also shown positive relationships between perceptions of student-to-student connectedness and perceptions of instructors’ communication behaviors. Student-to-student connectedness positively correlates to instructors’ nonverbal immediacy (Johnson, 2009) and rapport (Frisby & Martin, 2010) in the classroom. However, both studies only looked at student perceptions at one point in the semester. Thus, as an extension of existing research, this study determined whether changes in student-to-student connectedness is related to instructors’ humor, nonverbal immediacy, and self-disclosure from the start of the semester, mid-semester, and the end-semester.

**Teacher Humor**

Appropriate humor in the college classroom offers instructors the opportunity to stimulate and maintain students’ attention and interest. Teacher humor may be a useful tool for creating a classroom climate that is conducive to student learning and performance. Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) defined humor
as, “intentional verbal and nonverbal messages, which elicit laughter, chuckling, and other forms of spontaneous behavior taken to meant pleasure, delight, and/or surprise in the targeted receiver” (p. 91). Humor in the classroom includes jokes, riddles, puns, humorous comments, and funny stories (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1979). More specifically, Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006) developed an extensive list for appropriate teacher humor and included: humor related to material without a specific target, jokes related to the course material, college life stereotypes, and role playing/activities. Overall, effective and appropriate teacher humor benefits instructors and students. For example, prior research found instructors’ use of appropriate humor is positively associated with students’ evaluations of instructors (Bryant, Crane, Comisky, & Zillman, 1980), students’ affective learning (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), and learning comprehension (Gorham & Christophel, 1990). Moreover, instructors’ use of humor can create an enjoyable classroom climate, and alleviate students’ anxiety (Wanzer & Frymier).

**TEACHER NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY**

Nonverbal immediacy is also included in instructors’ arsenal of relational classroom behaviors (McCroskey, Richmond, & Bennett, 2006). It includes smiling, relaxed body posture, and vocal variety (Mehrabian, 1971), and helps to reduce distance by reducing real and/or perceived distance (Witt, Wheless, & Allen, 2004). Andersen (1979) conceptualized immediacy as communication behaviors that predict teaching effec-
Students' perceptions of an instructor's use of immediate or nonimmediate nonverbal behaviors in the classroom influence students' evaluations of the instructor and the overall classroom (Titsworth, 2004). Witt et al., stated, in their meta-analysis of immediacy in the classroom, that there is "a low to moderate association between teacher nonverbal immediacy and greater liking for the teacher and course, greater likelihood of engaging in behaviors learned, and greater likelihood of enrolling in another course of the same type" (p. 185). When students perceive their teachers as nonverbally immediate in the classroom, they also perceive them to be more caring, competent, and trustworthy (Teven & Hanson, 2004; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998), and they are also more likely to attend class (Rocca, 2004) and are more willing to talk in class (Sidelinger, 2010). Overall, prior research has shown teacher nonverbal immediacy is essential to effective classroom instruction, builds a positive classroom climate, and positively affects student learning outcomes.

TEACHER SELF-DISCLOSURE

Teacher self-disclosure is when instructors reveal information about themselves which students would not otherwise know (Sorensen, 1989). For example, Javidi and Long (1989) reported that instructors generally disclose about their educational background, previous experience, family, friends, colleagues, beliefs, opinions, leisure activities, and personal problems. Nunziata (2007) examined similar categories of disclosure and found that most were considered appropriate by stu-
Students. Whether appropriate or inappropriate, instructors are motivated to disclose information to their students to build an interpersonal relationship (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Sorensen), provide examples (McBride & Wahl, 2005), and clarify course material (Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988). Appropriate disclosure elicits a host of positive classroom outcomes including perceived similarity between teachers and student, increased classroom participation, enhanced approachability of the instructor, a positive classroom environment, higher motivation, increased affective learning, and more positive instructor evaluations (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007; Nunziata; Sorensen). Given the potential to attain these positive outcomes, self-disclosure is viewed as a relational communicative behavior for instructors to exhibit. Previous instructional research has not examined how instructor self-disclosure may impact the relationships between students. Thus, instructors’ use of self-disclosure in the classroom may be just one more strategy employed to encourage student-to-student supportiveness, collaboration, and connectedness, as well as their affect for the instructor and the course.

**AFFECTIVE LEARNING**

Affective learning, a positive outcome in the classroom, involves students’ positive attitudes, motivations, and values toward courses and instructors (McCroskey, 1994). Frymier (2007) argued that effective interpersonal relationships lead to increased affective learning in the classroom. To that end, affective learning has
been linked to multiple facets of interpersonal relationship in the classroom including a supportive peer climate (Frisby & Martin, 2010), teacher humor (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), nonverbal immediacy (Witt & Wheeless, 2001), and self-disclosure (Mazer et al., 2007; Sorenson, 1989). Likewise, affective learning has been associated with student-to-student relationships in the classroom. Students who have the opportunity to interact and engage with one another report higher affect for the course (Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Affective learning is an important outcome variable given the evidence that affective learning leads to cognitive learning in students (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996). To date, research has not examined instructor communication behaviors and student-to-student connectedness simultaneously to determine which has a greater association with affective learning in the classroom.

**RATIONALE**

Overall, communication is a vital component of the classroom experience (Kendrick & Darling, 1990). “Communication enables teachers and students to engage in instructional tasks, facilitates social activity, and helps individuals to coordinate actions” (Kendrick & Darling, p. 15). Thus, it is important to examine instructor and student communication behaviors that enhance the classroom experience. Extensive instructional research has established that instructors’ use of nonverbal immediacy, self-disclosure, and humor in the classroom lead to positive instructional outcomes. To date, teacher
Student Connectedness

humor, nonverbal immediacy, and self-disclosure research has typically focused attention on the teacher-student relationship, and Johnson (2009) noted little, if any, instructional research has focused on student-to-student relationships in the classroom. Prior research shows that student-to-student connectedness enhances students’ classroom experience (e.g., Frisby & Martin, 2010; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Specifically, in the public speaking courses, positive perceptions of student-to-student connectedness are linked to reductions in public speaking anxiety and apprehension, and increases in communication competence (Sidelinger et al., 2011b).

Like their instructors, students are part of the classroom community and should also take responsibility for classroom interactions. Therefore, this study examined the associations between instructors’ relational communication and student-to-student connectedness in public speaking classrooms. Overall, prior research revealed connected, supportive bonds among students play an important role in the public speaking classroom (Sidelinger et al., 2011b). Public speaking courses can be overwhelming for students as they attempt to overcome their public speaking anxiety and apprehension (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). Establishing social bonds help students to adjust to overall college life (Paul & Kelleher, 1995), and may assist students to develop positive attitudes and manage their anxieties in their public speaking classes. Therefore, students, rather than the instructor, may have a greater influence on one another in the classroom. For example, student-to-student connectedness mediates the negative associations between teacher misbehaviors and students’ willingness
to talk in class and self-regulated learning (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2011a). Moreover, Fassinger (1995) reported that levels (high vs. low) of student supportiveness were greater predictors of classroom participation than instructor behaviors. Likewise, Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield (2010) found student-to-student connectedness was a stronger predictor of student involvement than teacher confirmation behaviors. Therefore, we proposed:

H2: Beginning of the semester reports of student-to-student connectedness (Time 1) will account for more variance than perceived instructor communication behaviors in students’ subsequent reports of student-to-student connectedness at Times 2 and 3.

H3: Student-to-student connectedness will account for more variance than perceived instructor communication behaviors in students’ affective learning.

**METHOD**

**Participants and Procedures**

A total of 335 undergraduate students ($n = 185$ females, $n = 150$ males) enrolled in 23 sections of small-size, introductory public speaking courses at a mid-size, public university voluntarily participated in this IRB approved study. Three data collections occurred during a 15-week semester. At the start of the semester (first day, Time 1), students completed the Connected Classroom Climate Inventory along with limited demographic
information including instructors’ sex and students’ age, sex, and academic rank. Students were from across academic ranks ($n = 128$ first-year students, $n = 114$ sophomores, $n = 57$ juniors, $n = 31$ seniors), their mean age was $19.41$ ($SD = 3.54$, range = 18-61), and 170 students reported on courses with female instructors and 165 students reported on courses with male instructors.

The second data collection (Time 2) took place at mid-semester (7th week). Students completed the Connected Classroom Climate Inventory, Teacher Nonverbal Immediacy, Teacher Humor Orientation, and Teacher Self Disclosure Scale. The third data collection (Time 3) occurred at the end of the semester (15th week). The same measures in the second data wave were used in the third data wave with the addition of the Affective Learning Instrument. Given the number of speech assignments may vary across basic public speaking courses at the university, students also reported the number of speeches ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.37$) that they presented. In order to ensure Time 1 ($T_1$), Time 2 ($T_2$), and Time 3 ($T_3$) surveys were matched together, students were assigned code numbers for each public speaking course and asked to seal completed surveys in envelopes. Data collections were conducted during normal class times and students received minimal course credit for their participation. Initially, 468 students completed surveys during the first data collection, however, only participants who completed all surveys across the three data collections were included in this study.
Measures

Classroom connectedness. The 18-item, Likert-type, Connected Classroom Climate Inventory (CCCI) represents student-to-student behaviors that contribute to perceptions of a supportive climate in an instructional setting (Dwyer et al., 2004). Based on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) students assessed their perceptions of student-to-student connectedness in their public speaking courses. For the original study, the measure yielded a coefficient alpha of .94. For the present study, reliabilities were .94 for T1 ($M = 71.00, SD = 10.42, range = 22-90$), .96 for T2 ($M = 75.16, SD = 10.97, range = 22-90$) and .97 for T3 ($M = 78.83, SD = 11.26, range = 18-90$).

Humor. Following Zhang’s (2005) study, a modified version of Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield’s (1991) 17-item, 5-point Likert-type, humor orientation scale was used to assess students’ perceptions of instructor humor orientation. Items were reworded to change from the self-report measure of humor to reflect student perceptions of instructor humor. Zhang reported reliability for the modified measure was .87, and for the present study, reliabilities were .88 for T2 ($M = 60.13, SD = 10.25, range = 33-83$) and .91 for T3 ($M = 61.79, SD = 11.96, range = 21-85$).

Nonverbal immediacy. The 10-item, Likert-type, Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors (NIB) instrument reflects specific, low inference immediacy behaviors (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987). NIB refers to actual nonverbal behaviors (e.g., Smiles at the class while talking) teachers might use in the classroom, and participants were instructed to respond to the items based on a 5-point scale (0 = never to 4 = very often) at
T<sub>2</sub>. For the present study, reliabilities were .70 for T<sub>2</sub> (M = 32.94, SD = 4.75, range = 12-40) and .70 for T<sub>3</sub> (M = 33.03, SD = 4.61, range = 18-40).

**Teacher self-disclosure.** Cayanus and Martin's (2004, 2008) Teacher Self Disclosure Scale includes 14, 7-point Likert type scale items. The three dimensional scale assesses amount (e.g., This instructor often gives his/her opinions about current events), relevance (e.g., This instructor used a personal example to show the importance of the concept), and negativity (e.g., This instructor’s disclosures, on the whole, are more negative than positive) measured on a scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (7). Cayanus and Martin reported high reliabilities ranging from .80-.88. For this study, T<sub>2</sub> reliabilities were .84 for amount (M = 17.06, SD = 5.25, range = 4-28), .91 for relevance (M = 25.95, SD = 6.28, range = 5-35), and .92 for negativity (M = 9.98, SD = 6.83, range = 5-35). For T<sub>3</sub>, reliabilities were .90 for amount (M = 16.56, SD = 5.78, range = 4-28), .94 for relevance (M = 24.90, SD = 7.17, range = 5-35), and .93 for negativity (M = 9.48, SD = 6.65, range = 5-35).

**Affective learning.** Affective learning was measured using 7-point bipolar instrument reflecting affect toward the course content, affect toward enrolling in another course with similar content, affect toward the course instructor, and affect for take future courses with same instructor. Reliability coefficients for the affective learning measures have ranged from .91 to .98 (Andersen, 1979; Gorham, 1988; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). For this study, alpha reliabilities were .72 for affect toward course content (M = 24.01, SD = 4.41, range = 9-28), .92 for likelihood of enrolling in another similar
course ($M = 19.47$, $SD = 7.20$, range = 4-28), .80 for affect toward the instructor ($M = 25.22$, $SD = 4.04$, range = 4-28), and .92 for likelihood of enrolling in another course with the same instructor ($M = 23.72$, $SD = 5.52$, range = 4-28).

**RESULTS**

Hypothesis one predicted that classroom connectedness would increase over the course of the semester. Using paired samples t-test, three comparisons were made (i.e., $T_1$ to $T_2$, $T_2$ to $T_3$, and $T_1$ to $T_3$). The paired samples t-test comparing $T_1$ and $T_2$ revealed a significant difference, $t(324) = -7.72$, $p < .001$, with connectedness being significantly higher at $T_2$ ($M = 75.25$) than at $T_1$ ($M = 70.98$). The paired samples t-test comparing $T_2$ and $T_3$ revealed a significant difference, $t(326) = -6.26$, $p < .001$, with connectedness being significantly higher at $T_3$ ($M = 78.65$) than at $T_2$ ($M = 75.25$). Finally, a paired samples t-test comparing $T_1$ and $T_3$ revealed a significant difference, $t(319) = 10.95$, $p < .001$, with connectedness at $T_3$ ($M = 78.65$) being higher than at $T_1$($M = 70.98$). Over time, students feel more connected to one another in public speaking courses.

Hypothesis two explored $T_1$ student-to-student connectedness and $T_2$ and $T_3$ instructor behaviors (nonverbal immediacy, self-disclosure, and humor) as predictors of student-to-student connectedness at mid- and end-semester. The current literature does not suggest a specific order in which the instructor communicative variables or student-to-student connectedness would occur in the classroom, as most of the existing research
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is cross-sectional and does not establish causality. Thus, a series of multiple regressions with the instructor communicative variables and student-to-student connectedness entered as independent variables in the same step were used to examine the research question. The dependent variable was student-to-student connectedness at T2 and T3.

The first multiple regression indicated that the model including T1 student-to-student connectedness, T2 teacher nonverbal immediacy and T2 teacher humor, \( F(6, 286) = 34.95, p < .0001 \), accounted for 41\% \( (R^2 = .41) \) of the variance in perceptions of students’ perceptions of student-to-student connectedness at T2. Specifically, the strongest significant predictor of perceptions of T2 connectedness was T1 connectedness, \( \beta = .484, p < .0001 \), followed by teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( \beta = .261, p < .0001 \), and teacher humor, \( \beta = .110, p < .05 \). Results supported hypothesis two, students’ initial reports of connectedness during the first week of the semester are a stronger predictor of their perceptions of instructors’ relational communication behaviors.

The second multiple regression indicated that the model including T1 student-to-student connectedness, T3 teacher nonverbal immediacy and T3 teacher humor, \( F(6, 286) = 16.51, p < .0001 \), accounted for 24\% \( (R^2 = .24) \) of the variance in perceptions of students’ perceptions of student-to-student connectedness at T3. Specifically, the strongest significant predictor of perceptions of T3 connectedness was T1 connectedness, \( \beta = .301, p < .0001 \), followed by teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( \beta = .250, p < .0001 \), and teacher humor, \( \beta = .163, p < .01 \). Again, results revealed students’ initial reports of connectedness
during the first week of the semester are a stronger predictor of their perceptions of connectedness at the end-semester than their perceptions of instructors’ relational communication behaviors.

Hypothesis three explored \( T_3 \) student-to-student connectedness and \( T_3 \) perceived instructor behaviors as predictors of students’ \( T_3 \) affective learning. Again, a series of multiple regressions with the instructor communication variables and student-to-student connectedness entered as independent variables in the same step were used to examine the research question. In each multiple regression, one of the four types of affective learning was entered as the dependent variable.

The first multiple regression indicated that the model including student-to-student connectedness, self-disclosure: amount, and teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( F(6, 284) = 6.33, p < .0001, \) accounted for 12\% \( (R^2 = .12) \) of the variance in perceptions of students’ affect for course content. Specifically, the strongest significant predictor of perceptions of students’ affect for course content was connectedness, \( \beta = .200, p < .005, \) followed by self-disclosure (i.e., amount), \( \beta = -.174, p < .05, \) and teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( \beta = .134, p < .05. \)

The second multiple regression indicated that the model including student-to-student connectedness and self-disclosure: amount, \( F(6, 285) = 3.43, p < .005, \) accounted for 10\% \( (R^2 = .10) \) of the variance in perceptions of students’ likelihood of enrolling in a similar course. The strongest significant predictor of perceptions of students’ affect for course content was connectedness, \( \beta = .193, p < .05, \) followed by self-disclosure (i.e., amount), \( \beta = -.184, p < .05. \) The third multiple regression revealed that the model including teacher nonverbal immediacy,
teacher humor, and student-to-student connectedness, \( F(6, 290) = 9.86, p < .0001 \), accounted for 15\% (\( R^2 = .15 \)) of the variance in perceptions of students’ affect toward instructor.

The strongest significant predictor of perceptions of students’ affect toward instructor was teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( \beta = .213, p < .001 \), followed by teacher humor, \( \beta = .172, p < .01 \), and connectedness, \( \beta = .161, p < .01 \).

The fourth multiple regression revealed that the model including teacher humor, teacher nonverbal immediacy, student-to-student connectedness, and self-disclosure: amount, \( F(6, 289) = 11.67, p < .0001 \), accounted for 20\% (\( R^2 = .20 \)) of the variance in perceptions of students’ likelihood of enrolling in another course with the same instructor. The strongest significant predictor of perceptions of students’ likelihood of enrolling in another course with the same instructor was teacher humor, \( \beta = .230, p < .0001 \), followed by teacher nonverbal immediacy, \( \beta = .192, p < .005 \), connectedness, \( \beta = .155, p < .01 \), and self-disclosure (i.e., amount), \( \beta = -.131, p < .05 \). Overall, student-to-student connectedness was a stronger predictor for students’ affect for the course, and teacher nonverbal immediacy and humor were stronger predictors for students’ affect toward the instructor. Moreover, teacher self-disclosure (i.e., amount) was negatively linked to students’ affective learning.

**Discussion**

“Meaningful interactions between students and their teachers are essential to high-quality learning experi-
ences” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005, p. 207). If instructors incorporate effective, relational communication into their teaching, they may encourage students to become more connected with one another in the public speaking classroom. Connection to others in a cooperative, communal learning environment is essential to becoming an educated person (Palmer, 1993). Thus, high quality interactions between students, in addition to between teachers and students, in the public speaking classroom should also be considered essential to learning processes. Myers and Hunt (2011) noted that participation in the basic course is valued by instructors and their students, and Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield (2010) found student-to-student connectedness is positively associated with students’ willingness to talk in class. Therefore, it is essential for instructional communication scholars and public speaking course instructors to consider student-to-student relationships in the classroom as an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing the overall public speaking classroom experience.

Many college students enrolled in public speaking courses experience sweaty palms, “butterflies” in the stomach, or a “lump” in the throat prior to or during their speech performances (McCullough et al., 2006; Winters et al., 2006). Therefore, public speaking instructors seek, and implement, strategies intended to decrease student anxiety. In Bodie’s (2010) review of public speaking anxiety, he highlights the three most popular treatments of speaking anxiety: systematic desensitization, cognitive modification, and skills training. These strategies address physical arousal, negative cognitive beliefs, and trait anxiety. However, they focus on the individual experiencing the anxiety, and ignore con-
textual and situational factors. Given evidence in previous research that student relationships, instructor relationships, and a sense of community can provide a comfortable and supportive environment for public speaking students (Edwards & Walker, 2007; Robinson, 1997), this study examined the development of a relational environment between students and with instructors over time. Thus, incorporating a “treatment” for the environment and community in which the students are speaking may be an important technique for instructors to employ in reducing anxiety.

The results of this study extend previous research in several ways. First, the development of student-to-student connectedness was examined for changes over time. Second, changes in student-to-student connectedness were examined as they were associated with beginning of the semester reports of student-to-student connectedness (baseline) and perceived instructor communication behaviors at mid-semester and the end of the semester. Finally, the student-to-student environment and teacher behaviors were examined in conjunction with one another as influential factors in students’ affective learning. Instead of examining these constructs in general instructional classrooms, these findings are examined in the specific context of the public speaking classroom.

**Enhancing Connectedness**

Previous research and conceptualization of student-to-student connectedness focuses on the behaviors that students enact to build a supportive environment (e.g., praise one another, share stories, shows interest in
what others are saying). However, students in this study entered the classroom with existing perceptions of high connectivity \((M = 70.98)\). Because this study measured connectedness on the first day of class (baseline), before students had the opportunity to interact within that specific classroom, it can be argued that students may enter the classroom feeling a sense of shared identity, or homophily, as students who are about to embark on the public speaking experience together. Furthermore, some students may already have existing relationships with some of their peers prior to entering the public speaking classroom. Recent retention efforts include welcoming and community building events, learning communities, and first year programs to increase student engagement and persistence (Jamelske, 2009; Trotter & Roberts, 2006). It is possible that these programs influenced the already high perceptions of student-to-student connectedness. Overall, despite the already high levels of connectedness, the development of a supportive community continued to increase throughout the semester. Results showed that students’ reports of connectedness significantly increased over the course of the semester in public speaking classes. In part, the continued increases in connectedness, was linked to students’ perceptions of student-to-student connectedness on the first day of class.

Importantly, nonverbal immediacy and teacher humor also predicted the perceptions of increasing classroom connectedness. Specifically, teacher humor and nonverbal immediacy were positively linked with students’ reports of connectedness at mid-semester and the end of the semester. It is unclear whether instructor behaviors influenced connectedness or the already high
level of connectedness influenced the instructor’s behaviors. In a classroom where students are comfortable with one another, an instructor may also feel more relaxed and use greater amounts of humor and nonverbal immediacy.

One explanation for these results may be the occurrence of interaction mirroring or synchrony in the classroom. Johnson (2009) noted that students may mirror their instructors’ nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom not only with the instructors but also with their peers. These synchronous behaviors are co-occurring similar patterns of behavior that are a form of communicative display among interacting individuals (Manusov, 1992). La France and Ickes (1981) stated that synchronous behaviors are more appropriate and also more likely to occur when individuals are involved in ongoing interactions (e.g., the classroom). Synchronous behaviors function to establish rapport between individuals (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). Therefore, it is likely students and instructors may mirror one another’s relational communication behaviors in the classroom.

Surprisingly, self-disclosure did not emerge as influential in the perceptions of connectedness. Results found self-disclosure amount, relevance, and negativity did not predict connectedness. Prior research revealed negative, dishonest, overly intimate, or poorly timed disclosures are associated with negative perceptions and poor instructor evaluations (Lanutti & Strauman, 2006; Myers & Brann, 2009; Scott & Nussbaum, 1981; Sorenson, 1989). However, a recent study found students who report a sense of connectedness with their peers can still achieve positive learning outcomes even when their in-
structors misbehave in the classroom (Sidelinger et al., 2011). Therefore, negative teacher self-disclosures may not reduce student-to-student connectedness. The current study focused primarily on positive relational behaviors, but research should explore other possible negative instructor communication behaviors. Instructors’ verbal aggression may lead to decreases in perceptions of student-to-student connectedness or they may actually increase supportive communication among students. For example, Sias and Jablin (1995) found that peer cohesion and support increased when superiors were perceived as unfair and inconsiderate in the workplace. This may also happen in the classroom, students may turn to one another for support when their instructors behave inappropriately in the classroom. Ultimately, self-disclosure may operate to build a connection between the instructor and the students, but not between students.

Overall, prior research, along with this study, attests to the importance of supportive student-to-student relationships in the classroom. The connected classroom climate appears to be especially helpful in public speaking classes, and instructors need to consider how their communication behaviors influence student-to-student connectedness. The Connectedness Classroom Climate Inventory allows instructors to gauge their students’ perceptions of supportive peer communication over the course of a semester (Dwyer et al., 2004). This instrument was intended to enable instructors to check student connectedness, and if appropriate, alter any of their own communication behaviors. In light of this study’s results, public speaking instructors should consider gauging students’ perceptions of connectedness at
the beginning of the semester. A post hoc analysis revealed a significant difference in reports of student-to-student connectedness between students who were only present for the first data collection and students who were present for all three data collections. Students who were only present at the first data collection reported significantly lower levels of connectedness than those students who were present for all three data collections. This may indicate that students who do not feel a sense of connection with their peers may be less likely to attend class on a regular basis or more importantly more likely to drop the class. In general, this study speaks to the importance that instructors should remain aware of the overall classroom climate and be sensitive to changes in the environment throughout the entire semester.

Enhancing Affective Learning

As expected, student-to-student connectedness and most instructor communication behaviors contributed to affective learning. Interestingly, student-to-student connectedness and instructor communication behaviors functioned differently in their associations with affective learning. Student-to-student connectedness was a stronger predictor for students’ affect for the course, and teacher nonverbal immediacy and humor were stronger predictors for students’ affect toward the instructor. Overall, across the four types of affective learning, student-to-student connectedness and instructor disclosure (i.e., amount) were the most consistent predictors. These two variables only failed to emerge in predicting affect for the instructor. Consistent with previous research
(Johnson, 2009) students who are engaged in connected classrooms reported higher affective learning. However, this study extends Johnson’s research in that student-to-student connectedness has a stronger association with affect for course than affect for instructor, at least in public speaking courses. To this end, perhaps students place greater value on the whole, the classroom and other students as a group, in determining their liking for a particular course. Thus, finding ways to increase student affective learning in a course that is typically hated, or even feared, may improve the educational experience. Rodriguez et al. (1996) argued that affective learning mediates the relationship between instructor behaviors and cognitive learning. Following this argument, it becomes essential to increase affective learning in public speaking courses in order to allow for the maximum amount of cognitive learning to occur for students.

Contrary to our results, previous disclosure research has revealed a positive association between teacher disclosure and affective learning (Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Mazer et al., 2007). This may be explained by the high levels of connectedness present in the current sample. Students may have been more interested in disclosing and developing relationships with one another than with their instructors. Myers (1998) found that students disclosed a greater number of topics with their classmates. However, these opportunities to interact with classmates may be decreased by an instructor who uses precious in-class time to disclose about themselves. Further, an instructor who discloses often may not adhere to reciprocity expectations. Students may not have the ability to disclose in response to the instructor,
thus, violating expectations and norms about interpersonal behavior.

Overall, it may be best practice to inform instructors that while self-disclosure may clarify course material or build relationships (Downs et al., 1988; Frymier & Houser, 2000), self-disclosure appears to have negative or no effect on affective learning in the public speaking classroom unless it is directly relevant to the course. As a continuation of this study, future research should address types of teacher self-disclosure in public speaking courses. Do specific types of disclosure alleviate or exacerbate students’ public speaking anxiety? For example, if instructors share their negative experiences in their undergraduate public speaking classes, students may feel better about their own negative experiences. Or if instructors reveal public speaking was not problematic for them in their undergraduate classes, students may feel worse about their own anxieties.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While this study exhibited many strengths (e.g., longitudinal), there were limitations that should be addressed in future research. This study focused on student perceptions of connectedness, but other outcome variables would add insight into the classroom environment as well. Specifically, actual student behaviors would contribute to our understanding of how student perceptions influence student actions. For example, we may ask student to report on attendance, study habits, contact with fellow students and instructors outside of class. Second, this study only collected teacher behav-
iors at mid-semester and the end of the semester, assuming that students would not have had time to interact with the instructor to report on a baseline of instructor behaviors. Future research may ask for baseline teacher behaviors, but control for previous interactions and classes with the instructor.

Next, we were unable to gather data from those who did not complete the mid-semester and end of semester surveys. Without this information, we cannot draw conclusions about changes in connectedness or instructor behaviors that may have contributed to their exit from the classroom. Moreover, beyond instructor behaviors, Broeckelman-Post, Titsworth, and Brazeal (2011) found use of peer workshops in the basic course is positively associated with increases in student-to-student connectedness. Basic course peer workshops are in-class student instruction that encourages students to share their speech drafts with one another to seek feedback. As an extension of current connectedness findings, future research should determine if use of peer workshops and relational instructor communication behaviors co-construct a connected classroom climate. Basic course instructors need to recognize the positive implications of student-to-student connectedness and implement teaching methods and practices that will promote supportive communication among students in the classroom.

Although not examined in this study, the increases in connectedness over time also point to the possibility that connectedness has the potential to decrease over time, with negative student-to-student interactions or negative instructor behaviors. Following from this study, future research should continue to examine stu-
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dent connectedness over time, as instructor misbehaviors, aggression, or anger may negatively impact the overall environment. Often instructors are directed to build a positive environment in the beginning of class by including introductions and ice breakers. However, little advice is given to consciously continue building connectedness throughout the course of the entire semester. The post hoc analysis found a significant difference in T₁ reports of classroom connectedness between students who only completed the T₁ surveys and those students who participated in all three data collections. This suggests that student-to-student connectedness may reveal insight into attendance and retention efforts. This study did not determine if any students officially dropped their public speaking course, therefore, future research should examine the associations between student-to-student connectedness and student attendance and retention. Recent research found positive associations between students’ perceptions of instructors’ effective communication (e.g., nonverbal immediacy) and their likelihood to remain in college (Eman Wheeless, Wirr, Maresh, Bryand, & Schrodt, 2011). Therefore, a link may also exist between a connected classroom climate, in which students support one another, and student attendance and retention.

Finally, as discussed, it is possible that the high connectedness is a result of institutional efforts to welcome and connect with students. This study did not assess these efforts as it may impact the individual classrooms. However, future retention and engagement research may measure connectedness at the university level over time to examine the impact on retention and academic success. Moreover, student alienation on cam-

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pus often leads to negative consequences such as irritability and depression (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The first step to counteractive feelings of marginalization is for students to interact with their peers. Therefore, future research should extend the implications of student-to-student connectedness inside the classroom to possible links outside of the classroom. Prior research has shown student persistence in college is associated with positive engagement with faculty and student-related campus activities (Eman Wheeless, et al. (2011). Strong, supportive bonds that exist among students in the classroom may also encourage student persistence in academic programs.

**CONCLUSION**

Many students may enter the public speaking classroom with feelings of anxiety and apprehension. Prior research indicates that positive perceptions of student-to-student connectedness may alleviate some of those negative feelings (Sidelerger et al., 2011b). Given the positive links between connectedness and classroom learning outcomes (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Johnson, 2009; Sidelerger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010), this study explored the associations between student-to-student connectedness and instructor communication behaviors. Overall, instructors have the opportunity to encourage student-to-student connectedness in their classrooms and may capitalize on high feelings of connectedness throughout the course. Positive perceptions of student-to-student connectedness in the classroom can increase as a semester progresses and that increase is linked to
effective and appropriate instructor communication behaviors. The implications of this study point to a need for instructors to closely examine their own behaviors, as well as those behaviors occurring between their students with the understanding that they have the potential to use effective communication behaviors in the classroom that will assist students to develop a sense of connectedness with their peers. In turn, that connectedness may create a more comfortable environment for students to present speeches and participate in class. The public speaking classroom must be designed to provide positive experiences through the adoption of supportive, connected learning strategies.

**Notes**

Post hoc analyses found students perceived higher levels of student-to-student connectedness in public speaking course sections taught by female instructors than courses taught by male instructors. The independent samples t-test comparing students’ reports of connected in female instructors and male instructors classes revealed a significant differences, $t(323) = -2.46$, $p < .05$, with connectedness being significantly higher at $T_1$ in female instructors’ classes ($M = 72.46, SD = 11.03$) than in male instructors’ classes ($M = 69.46, SD = 9.65$). Significant differences were found with connectedness at $T_2$ ($t(331) = -2.43, p < .05$), students reported higher levels of connectedness in female instructors’ classes ($M = 76.64, SD = 12.41$) than in male instructors’ classes ($M = 73.74, SD = 9.20$). Similar results were found at $T_3$, students reported higher levels of connectedness in fe-
male instructors’ classes ($M = 80.92$, $SD = 11.27$) than in male instructors’ classes ($M = 76.88$, $SD = 10.93$).

A post hoc independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between students who completed the first set of surveys but did not complete surveys for the second and third data collections and those students who completed all three sets of surveys, $t(461) = -3.37$, $p < .005$. Students who only completed surveys during the first data collection reported lower levels of student-to-student connectedness ($M = 66.38$, $SD = 9.03$) at T1 than did students who were present for all three data collections ($M = 71.00$, $SD = 10.42$).

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Speech Center Support Services, the Basic Course, and Oral Communication Assessment

Karen Kangas Dwyer
Marlina M. Davidson

Assessment is mandated for most programs in higher education, and basic speech course directors and instructors are expected to respond to this call by generating a comprehensive assessment process that includes goals, tools, rubrics, strategies, and reports. Assessment can take many different directions and forms based on the university, campus and oral communication requirements, but one thing is for sure, it must focus on student learning—what they are learning, what they should learn, and what they will be able to apply outside of the college classroom (Helsel & Hogg, 2006).

The National Communication Association (NCA) has taken the lead in oral communication assessment by establishing a conceptual framework, criteria, standards, competencies, guidelines, techniques and methods for assessing oral communication at both the high school and college levels (Assessment Techniques and Methods, n.d.). The NCA suggests that assessment techniques should always be linked to a unit’s goals, should generate data that affects change, and should involve multiple methods that address cognitive, behavioral and affective learning outcomes (Criteria for Oral Assessment, n.d.).
To help students attain oral communication competency as part of general education requirements, many colleges and universities offer support services such as speech centers (also called speech labs or communication centers) that support the basic speech course and/or other oral communication general education courses. Although speech centers have been successful in helping students improve oral communication competencies (Dwyer, Carlson & Kahre, 2002; Ellis, 1995; Hunt & Simonds, 2002), only a few data-based research reports involving assessment and speech center support services have been published (Jones, Hunt, Simonds, Comadena, & Baldwin, 2004).

In 2006, Preston wrote, “as institutions strive to meet mandates of state governing agencies or regional accrediting boards and to conduct assessments of oral communication competencies, communication centers should surely be pivotal in the conducting of those assessments and disseminating their findings broadly” (p. 57). She issued a call for oral communication and speech center researchers to partner with institutional assessment offices to develop strategic plans, generate data, and report their results. In addition, Morreale, Hugenberg, and Worley (2006), in their U.S. colleges and universities survey of the basic communication course, called for additional investigation on how support services like those offered at a speech center enhance learning and provide assistance for students in a basic course.

The purpose of this research report is to respond to these calls by investigating the pivotal role a speech center plays in supporting oral communication and assessment at a state university. This is an important step
in examining speech center support services as part of oral communication general education assessment. Specifically, this study examined basic course student usage of speech center support services and perceived changes in public speaking anxiety (also called speech anxiety), public speaking confidence, and public speaking skills using an instrument administered through the campus online course delivery system.

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND**

**Assessment and Oral Communication Competency**

Assessment is a valuable process because it “allows academic institutions to demonstrate the value, credibility, and potency of their courses and instruction” (Morreale & Backlund, 2007, p. 2). For basic course directors, this process is particularly important because assessment programs can show that basic communication skills are both fundamental and crucial to student success in college and professional life (Allen, 2002).

The NCA has defined assessment goals and generated competencies, rubrics, and tools for K-12 and higher education oral communication assessment. For example, the NCA defines a competent speaker as a person who is “able to compose a message and provide ideas and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience” (Morreale, Rubin, & Jones, 1998, p. 7). The competencies include demonstration of the abilities to:

“1) determine the purpose of oral discourse, 2) choose a topic and restrict it according to the purpose and the audience, 3) fulfill the purpose of oral communication...”
by formulating a thesis statement, providing adequate support material, selecting a suitable organizational pattern, demonstrating careful choice of words, and providing effective transitions, 4) employ vocal variety in rate, pitch, and intensity, 5) articulate clearly, 6) employ language appropriate to the designated audience, and 7) demonstrate nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message” (Morreale et al., 1998, p. 7).

These NCA competencies are often supported in speech centers where students receive out-of-class assistance for basic speech course assignments. However, few studies have addressed how the speech center supports students in achieving the goals of their oral communication course.

Assessment programs of oral communication often rely on criterion-referenced evaluation, based on standards and rubrics set by the NCA. For example The Competent Speaker speech evaluation form is one such tool or rubric that has been identified and used with validity and reliability (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1993). Basic course instructors have used this form, or adapted components from this form, not only to evaluate student competency in public speaking, but also to assess student competency to critically analyze speeches.

Another tool used to assess oral communication competency is based on change in reported anxiety levels over the duration of the basic course (Dwyer et al., 2002; Dwyer & Fus, 2002). Because competence in communication has been directly related to decreased communication apprehension, “the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with oth-
pre- and post-tests have been used to measure change in anxiety levels in assessment processes. Pre-post tests as well as other assessment instruments rely on data collected in the public speaking classroom.

One venue outside the classroom that could be helpful in the collection of assessment data may involve speech centers on university campuses. In addition, little has been reported on the usefulness of speech centers and the impact of their support services on student learning. Thus, it would be beneficial to use an assessment tool which incorporates support services available through the speech center and the perception of the impact of such services on student communication competence.

The Lab-supported Basic Course

To help students attain oral communication competency as part of general education requirements, many colleges and universities offer a speech center or speech lab to provide support services for the basic course. These speech centers assist both instructors and students by offering a wide variety of services including assistance with topic generation, audience adaptation, research for supporting material, organizational development, outlining, speech delivery, and review of self-recorded speeches. Several research reports have shown that significant progress has been made in the development and offerings of speech centers in the last two decades but a few studies have reported their effectiveness, usefulness to students, and connection with gains in public speaking competency (Bumette, 1997; Buske-
One qualitative study by Jones et al. (2004), examining the effects speech centers have on students enrolled in public speaking courses, found initial support that speech centers do assist students with their public speaking skills and help them manage their public speaking anxiety. However, the study interviewed only ten participants, which the authors described as a limitation. Thus “in order for the educational hierarchy, including... university leadership, to fully realize the benefits of speech and other communication laboratories”, Jones et al. (2004) called for “comprehensive examinations... to completely understand the effects these facilities signify” (p. 133).

Communication researchers have investigated the ways speech centers are serving various student populations and support oral communication curriculum, but call for more research in specific ways the services help students. For example, Dwyer et al. (2002) reported that students with high and moderate communication apprehension (CA) experience reduced CA and improved grades as a result of choosing to use a speech lab. Because of the limited research on lab-supported public speaking courses, these researchers call for further investigation on the relationship among changes in anxiety level, perceptions of public speaking competency, and the use of speech center support services.

Hunt and Simonds (2002) also investigated the use of a speech lab in relationship to student benefit. They reported speech labs make a difference in student performance as students who use a speech lab tend to re-
port earning higher grades, but they also call for more research because “scholars in the communication discipline have not collected much data concerning the pedagogical benefits of speech labs, and consequently, lab administrators have little guidance in terms of knowing what works and what does not” (p. 63).

Ellis (1995) investigated a lab-supported public speaking class and its effect on student gains in public speaking competency. She reported a significant relationship between lab instructors’ verbal immediacy and a decrease in anxiety among highly apprehensive students. As the other researchers have done, Ellis called for more research related to the student benefits from lab-supported public speaking courses.

One reason for the limited investigation of the impact of speech center support services could be the recent emergence of speech centers on campuses. In a national survey on Speaking Across the Curriculum (SAC) and speech centers, investigators found, among other items, that the importance of speech centers on campuses has only materialized in the past few years and that there is an increased need for a connection between the speech center and campus-wide assessment (Helsel & Hogg, 2006).

Regarding campus-wide impact, Morreale (1998) reported that speech centers are beneficial to an entire university—undergraduate students, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), faculty, and departments. They act as a training ground for GTAs and benefit faculty because instructors can gain class time to work on other concepts as students work on some skills in the lab. Morreale pointed out that communication departments can benefit from speech centers because they increase
Speech Center Support Services

Institutional awareness of the communication discipline and they can provide assessment data for the department's review process. However, there has been little research, if any, investigating the use and impact of a lab-supported speech course that is part of a university-wide oral communication assessment program.

Research Questions

The calls for further investigation of the speech center-supported basic speech course as part of oral communication assessment have been well-documented. Thus, we proposed the following research questions involving the basic speech course supported by speech center services and included in a university-wide oral communication assessment of students’ perceptions of their usefulness and impact on competency.

RQ1: From what speech center resources that support the basic public speaking course do students report receiving help?

RQ2: What speech center resources do students perceive as helpful in supporting their development of public speaking skills?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the number of student visits to the speech center and perceived decrease in speech anxiety?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between the number of student visits to the speech center and perceived increase in public speaking confidence?

RQ5: Is there a relationship between perceived helpfulness of evaluating in-class speeches
(recorded in class and viewed at the speech center) and perceived competence (i.e., decrease in speech anxiety, increase in confidence in public speaking, or increase in public speaking skills)?

**METHODODOLOGY**

**Participants**

Participants in this study were 377 undergraduate students (163 males, 214 females) enrolled at a large Midwestern university, henceforth referred to as “X” State University. The participants were enrolled in 23 total sections of the basic public speaking course, with a maximum enrollment of 26 students per section. Since this course fulfills an oral communication general education requirement, a wide variety of majors were represented. Respondents also represented a cross-section of class rankings (235 freshmen, 83 sophomores, 45 juniors, 14 seniors). There were 554 students enrolled in these 23 sections at the beginning of the semester, but only 377 students completed the online speech center assessment measure (due to attrition or choices not to participate in the survey).

The course used a standard syllabus as well as the same textbook and student workbook in all the sections. Students were required to deliver at least four formal speeches, engage in classroom activities, and take two exams. All instructors were given weekly lesson plans, class policies, and instructional training materials. Instructors included trained/seasoned GTAs, adjuncts, and full-time faculty.
Oral Communication Assessment and the Speech Center. Oral communication general education assessment at “X” State University has been a part of the institutional research program since 1996. Over 1,000 students per semester or 2,500 per year (counting summer enrollment) enroll in a public speaking fundamentals course that fulfills the general education oral communication requirement. Three assessment strategies were developed as part of a comprehensive three-year cyclic process to assess learning outcomes related to public speaking competency, change in communication anxiety levels, and public speaking critical analysis skills.

The speech center at “X” State University was initiated, expanded, and funded through grants, awards, and priority funding, beginning in 1997 with the purpose of supporting oral communication competencies. While a valuable part of the required basic public speaking course at “X” State University, and part of the ongoing speaking across the curriculum initiative, the speech center had never been a part of the university assessment process. After more than 10 years, “X” State University evaluated their assessment procedures and determined the need to assess the impact of the speech center on oral communication competency because the speech center serves as an important component of the basic course.

The speech center at “X” State University is staffed by eight GTAs who also teach one or more speech courses every semester. They offer students assistance in 1) generating and developing speech ideas, 2) adapting to an audience, 3) researching supporting material and evidence, 4) writing speech outlines, 5) delivering
speeches effectively, 6) using speech-writing software, 7) viewing model speeches, and 8) evaluating their speeches recorded in-class and then reviewed at the speech center. The speech center room is equipped with 18 computers loaded with speech writing or outlining software and capabilities for viewing in-class DVD-recorded speeches.

At “X” State University, three public speaking classrooms are equipped with mounted cameras, microphones, and DVD recorders to unobtrusively record student speeches. After class, the instructor can take the DVD to the Speech Center where students can view and evaluate their in-class speeches using a standardized evaluation form. All students enrolled in the basic public speaking course were invited to use the Speech Center as much as needed.

Instrumentation

To assess speech center support services, members of the basic course committee created an online assessment questionnaire. The assessment consisted of one multi-answer demographic item (e.g., year in school, sex) and 14 additional questions. The research questions were generated by the speech course instructors in collaboration with the basic course director and were focused on student usage of the speech center, helpfulness of resources, and perceived change in speech anxiety level, perceived change in public speaking confidence level, perceived change in public speaking skills, and perceived helpfulness of viewing recordings of in-class speeches.
After determining research questions, instructors brainstormed items related to each question. The following items were generated: RQ 1, items 5, 6, 7, 8 (e.g., “When I went to the speech center on my own,” “I received help with outlining...research...presentational software”); for RQ 2, items 2, 3, 9, and 10 (e.g., “I found the speech center computers and software to be useful and helpful,” “I found viewing the DVDs of my in-class speeches to be helpful,” “I found the speech center instructors to be helpful”); for RQ 3, items 4, and 11 (e.g., “I went to the speech center ___ times this semester,” “Using the speech center helped reduce my speech anxiety,”); for RQ4, items 4 and 12 (e.g., “Using the speech center helped increase my confidence in public speaking”); for RQ 5, items 9 (“I found viewing the DVDs of my in-class speeches to be helpful” and 13, 14, and 15 related to public speaking competence, (e.g., “Since the beginning of the semester until now, I would rate my increase in public speaking skills as...increase in public speaking confidence as...my reduction in speech anxiety as...”). These competence items used to answer RQ5 relied on a three-item Likert-type scale ranging from “Very Great” to “Very Little.” The obtained a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for the short competence scale (i.e., speech anxiety, speech confidence, public speaking skills) was .81. See Appendix A for all questionnaire items and possible responses.

**Procedures**

The basic course director invited all basic public speaking course instructors to participate in the assessment process. Participating instructors invited their
students during the last week of a spring semester to complete a speech center assessment survey in an online course delivery system that each instructor used as part of their course.

The instructors who chose to participate (15 out of 20) downloaded the survey, instructions, and announcement from the All Instructor’s Public Speaking Blackboard Course into their own Blackboard courses. The All Instructor’s Public Speaking Blackboard Course was created to allow faculty to download a standardized public speaking course template with assignments, evaluations and additional resources into their own course. The grade book in Blackboard showed the instructor when each student had completed the ungraded survey. When an entire class had completed the survey, the instructors downloaded the assessment results into an excel file and sent each file as an e-mail attachment to the basic course director who combined the results into one file for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic information revealed that 42% of the 377 students reported visiting the Speech Center 5 to 6 times per semester. An additional 31% reported visiting the Speech Center 3 to 4 times per semester and 21% reported visiting the Speech Center 7 or more times per semester. Six percent reported using the Speech Center less than three times.

Responses related to Research Question One (asking from what speech center resources that support the basic public speaking course do students report receiving
help) and using the SPSS-19 report summaries, showed that 24% of students reported receiving help with outlining and 16% of students reported receiving help with research. In addition, 6% of students reported receiving help with presentational software and 6% of students reported receiving help with practicing their speech. More than half of the students indicated “not applicable” when asked about obtaining “help” with various resources including outlining (51%), research (55%), presentational software (65%), and practicing speeches (62%).

Responses to Research Question Two (asking what speech center resources do students perceive as helpful in supporting their development of public speaking skills) and using the SPSS-19 report summaries indicated that overall, students agreed the computers and software are useful and helpful ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .86$). In addition, students agreed that viewing the DVD recordings is helpful ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .79$) and writing self evaluations of their recorded speeches is helpful ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.08$). Students also agreed that the Speech Center instructors are helpful ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .89$).

Results of Research Question Three (asking if there is a relationship between the number of student visits to the speech center and perceived decrease in public speaking anxiety) showed that students overall tended to report they were “neutral” on whether the Speech Center helped reduce their speech anxiety ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.17$). However, correlations using Pearson r statistical analysis indicated a positive relationship between the number of times students visited the Speech Center and the more they agreed the Speech Center helped reduce their public speaking anxiety ($r = .24$, $p < .01$).
Results of Research Question Four (asking if there is a relationship between the number of student visits to the speech center and perceived increase in confidence in public speaking) showed that students overall tended to report they were “neutral” on whether the Speech Center helped increase their confidence in public speaking ($M =3.35$, $SD =1.15$). However, correlations using Pearson $r$ statistical analysis indicated a positive relationship between the number of times students visited the Speech Center and the more they agreed the Speech Center helped increase their confidence in public speaking ($r =.30$, $p <.01$).

Responses to Research Question Five asked if there is a relationship between perceived helpfulness of evaluating in-class speeches (recorded in class and viewed at the speech center) and perceived competence (i.e., decrease in speech anxiety, increase in confidence in public speaking, or increase in public speaking skills). Correlations showed students who agreed that writing self-evaluations of their in-class recorded speeches were helpful also reported a greater reduction in their speech anxiety over the semester ($r =.23$, $p <.01$), greater increase in public speaking confidence over the semester ($r =.30$, $p <.01$), and greater increase in public speaking skills over the semester ($r =.33$, $p <.01$). In general, students perceived they experienced at least “some” decrease in speech anxiety over the course of the semester ($M =3.33$, $SD =1.05$) and experienced at least “some” increase in public speaking skills over the course of the semester ($M =3.37$, $SD =.55$). Students also perceived “some” to “great” increase in confidence over the course of the semester ($M =3.61$, $SD =.75$).
DISCUSSION

This study examined the role a speech center plays in supporting oral communication as part of university-wide assessment. Specifically, this study queried student usage of speech center support services and perceptions of change in public speaking anxiety, public speaking confidence, and public speaking skills using an instrument administered through the campus online course delivery system.

The results indicate that students are using the Speech Center resources to support instruction in the basic course. Overall, the results support that students perceive the Speech Center resources as helpful and useful, and they use the Speech Center to get help with a variety of support services, especially outlining their speeches and collecting research. However, this study also found that all students are not taking full advantage of all the resources available at the Speech Center as many students checked “not applicable” when it comes to receiving help from some of the resources.

Most importantly this study found an association between the number of times students visited the Speech Center and the more they perceived the Speech Center helped reduce their speech anxiety and helped increase their confidence in public speaking. This adds to the findings of Dwyer et al. (2002) and Jones et al. (2004) who found that students who used the speech center also reported the center helped reduce their speech anxiety. Although this present study did not use a pre-test/post-test methodology (because it relied on the assessment of a large public speaking course that was lab-
supported), the findings did show that the more students used the speech center, the more they perceived reduced speech anxiety and increased confidence in public speaking. These findings further seemed to indicate that students need to be encouraged to use the speech center and its resources more than a few times in order to feel its impact on increased confidence and reduced speech anxiety.

A particularly important finding from this study is that students perceive viewing their in-class recorded speeches and writing self-evaluations at the Speech Center as helpful. In addition, those who rated writing self-evaluations of their in-class recorded speeches as helpful also reported a greater reduction in speech anxiety, greater increase in confidence, and greater increase in public speaking skills over the course of the semester. This is encouraging for basic course programs because universities have invested time and expense in equipping classrooms and speech centers with recording technology, computers, and software for viewing the in-class recorded speeches.

The findings of this study further reinforce the importance of university-wide speech center support services and lay some groundwork for including support services in future assessment processes. It will be helpful to discover how students perceive and use the speech center and how the center specifically impacts oral communication competencies, as set forward by the NCA. The communication literature already suggests that viewing in-class recorded speeches enhances student learning. For example, over fourteen years ago Bourhis and Allen’s (1998) meta-analysis of at least 12 studies involving video recorded speeches showed there
is greater skill acquisition when students watch and analyze their own speeches. They reported that students are better able to incorporate basic public speaking skills into their repertoires of effective communication behaviors; they acquire more positive attitudes towards the course, they tend to report enjoying the course more, and they find the classroom experience more valuable than those who did not view video-recorded speeches. However, they also reported that it was not always easy to provide this beneficial resource to students. The current study shows that speech centers can serve as the important and accessible resource to facilitate viewing and evaluating in-class recorded speeches, and that viewing DVD recorded speeches could enhance public speaking confidence and public speaking skills while helping reduce speech anxiety for those who tend to repetitively use the speech center. These are important findings given the prevalence of oral communication courses, the new development of speech center support services, and the calls for general education oral communication assessment.

Related to oral communication assessment, the findings of the current study begin to tie the speech center supported basic course to oral communication assessment. Consequently, reports such as this one can be used with those from other studies to help basic course directors and communication departments present evidence that speech center support services are important to the basic course, to the university, and to university-wide assessment. Further, these findings help answer Morreale et al.’s (2006) call for research-based evidence to aid basic course programs in their efforts to acquire
resources for oral communication courses and speech center support services.

**Limitations**

This study does have some limitations. For example, the questionnaire used in this study represented a first attempt at including speech center support services in university-wide general education oral communication assessment. As with the use of any questionnaire that is part of assessment, items often need to be refined, clarified and added. Additional questions might include: How could Speech Center instructors be more helpful? Does the Speech Center Orientation provide all the help or information needed to use the resources such as outlining software, virtual library, etc.? What Speech Center resources are most helpful? Questions such as these would help speech center staff learn why students don’t ask for assistance, as well as what assistance they need most. Many students answered “not applicable” to some questions, such as “When I went to the speech center on my own, I received help with outlining.” As a result, more attention needs to focus on why students are checking “not applicable.” Thus, additional questions need to ask if students are asking for help. If they are not asking for help, why are they not asking for help? Results might indicate the initial orientation gave students enough information on the use of the speech center resources and thus, they use the resources but do not need to request additional help.

Regarding instructor and class participation in the survey, some instructors chose not to include their class in this assessment study. Additional clarification is
needed as to why they did not participate in the online speech center assessment survey. Are all instructors comfortable using the online course delivery system? Are all instructors orienting their students to the Speech Center? Are all instructors promoting the Speech Center resources and services to their students? Are all instructors DVD recording student presentations in the equipped classrooms and then asking their students to view and evaluate these recordings in the Speech Center? These questions should be answered in future assessments.

**Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

The present study was an important step in attempting to include speech center support services in university-wide oral communication assessment administered through the campus online course delivery system. These findings have implications for basic course instructors and basic course directors. First of all, basic course instructors should continue to require students to participate in self-evaluations of their in-class speeches. This research confirms again, those students who view their speeches and set goals for their next speech, report the greatest increase in public speaking skills over a semester (Bourhis & Allen, 1998). In addition, viewing in-class recorded speeches tends to help students perceive increases in confidence and competence in public speaking skills.

This study also suggests that basic course instructors should make special efforts to encourage their students to visit the speech center and use speech center
resources. The more students visit the speech center, the more they tend to perceive the speech center helps reduce their speech anxiety and increases their confidence in public speaking.

This oral communication general education assessment of speech center support services indicates that basic course directors, speech center coordinators, and speech center staff need to find ways to promote resources offered through the speech center and encourage students to make more visits to the speech center. In this study, although students found help at the Speech Center with outlining, researching, creating presentation software, and practicing speeches, many of the students checked “non-applicable” in their responses to getting help with or using various resources available at the Speech Center. Speech center instructors and staff need to be trained in greeting and offering services to the students, as well as in using immediacy and affinity-seeking strategies. If students who use the speech center perceive the speech center instructors are immediate and approachable, they will tend to report a greater reduction in speech anxiety (Ellis, 1995).

Finally, basic course directors and speech center coordinators should seek to find ways to include the speech center in university-wide assessment efforts. They should even seek to help the speech center take a pivotal role in conducting assessment since speech center support services have been found to enhance learning and provide assistance for students in the basic course. In times of budget reductions, these findings become even more important for all institutional assessment offices and administrators to notice.
Future research should continue to develop assessment questionnaires and tools for investigating speech center support services, especially using the NCA rubrics so that gains in competencies can be tied to speech center usage. For example, students could be asked to rate the impact the speech center has on their perception of speaking performance and achievement of competencies including:

1. choosing/narrowing topic,
2. forming specific purpose for audience and occasion,
3. using audience-appropriate supporting material,
4. using audience appropriate organizational pattern,
5. audience-appropriate language,
6. using vocal variety,
7. using appropriate pronunciation/grammar/articulate, and
8. using appropriate nonverbal behaviors

(The Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form, n.d.). Students could complete self-assessments of their speeches based on these competencies that can be compared to their instructor’s assessment, speech center usage, and perceived impact. Present online technology and collection methods can assist greatly with this effort.

Additional research might ask students not only to complete a speech center assessment survey at the end of the course but also could include a pre-course survey of student communication skills and communication anxiety levels. Thus, a pre/post-survey of skills and anxiety levels along with a speech center usage survey could form a data-based research assessment report. Such a report would further reinforce the important role
speech center support services play in equipping basic course students with oral communication competencies.

In conclusion, the results of this assessment study reinforce the important support services a speech center on a university campus provides to basic course students and the more they take advantage of the speech center services, the more likely they are to report that the speech center helps with increasing public speaking skills, increasing confidence in public speaking, and reducing public speaking anxiety. As Emery (2006) points out, “communication centers can serve a crucial function in these potentially challenging times as resources for assessment strategies and as means to promote effective student learning across the curriculum” (p. 65).

When colleges and universities consider the major goal of preparing students for their future careers they must keep in mind that one of the top competencies and skills listed by academics, Fortune 500 companies, and human resource managers is effective communication skills (Hecker, 2005; Wall Street Journal, 1998; Winsor, Curtis, & Stephens, 1997). Oral communication general education and speech centers help provide this important preparation for college students so they can be more effective and successful workers in the marketplace.

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Speech Center Support Services

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**APPENDIX A**

**Speech Center Survey Items**

1. Demographic items including year in school and sex.

2. I found the speech center computers and software to be helpful and useful.
   5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

3. I found the speech center instructors to be helpful.
   5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

4. I went to the speech center ___ times this semester.
   0     (2) 1-2     (3) 3-4     (4) 5-6     (5) 7-8     (6) 9 or more

5. When I went to the speech center on my own, I received help with outlining.
   (1) Yes   (2) No   (3) Not Applicable

6. When I went to the speech center on my own, I received help with research.
   (1) Yes   (2) No   (3) Not Applicable
7. When I went to the speech center on my own, I received help with presentational software.
   (1) Yes    (2) No    (3) Not Applicable

8. When I went to the speech center on my own, I received help with practicing my speech.
   (1) Yes    (2) No   (3) Not Applicable

9. I found viewing the DVDs of my in-class speeches to be helpful.
   5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

10. I found writing the self-evaluations of my recorded in-class speeches to be helpful.
    5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

11. Using the speech center helped reduce my speech anxiety.
    5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

12. Using the speech center helped increase my confidence in public speaking.
    5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

13. Since the beginning of the semester until now, I would rate my increase in public speaking skills as
    5=Very Great; 4=Great; 3=Some; 2=Little; 1=Very Little

14. Since the beginning of the semester until now, I would rate my increase in public speaking confidence as
    5=Very Great; 4=Great; 3=Some; 2=Little; 1=Very Little

15. Since the beginning of the semester until now, I would rate my reduction in speech anxiety as
    5=Very Great; 4=Great; 3=Some; 2=Little; 1=Very Little
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 ex-

penses. With the increasing emphasis on oral commu-
nication competence, a tough labor market, and only get-

ting 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 con-
cerned 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 en-

abled 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 impend-

ing act of public speaking or anxiety related to asking

for help in either formal or informal settings. Although

communication centers supplement basic communica-

tion 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 communi-

cation centers and students who do not differ in their

help seeking behaviors and communication anxiety. The

study also investigates the correlation between commu-

nication apprehension and help seeking behaviors and

whether communication center usage and communica-
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, Olugbemiro, 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.
Help Seeking Behaviors

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Speech Anxiety</th>
<th>Group Anxiety</th>
<th>Meeting Anxiety</th>
<th>Conversation Anxiety</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>-.13*</td>
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<td>1.09</td>
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<td>-.12*</td>
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<td>-.35****</td>
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<td>1.51</td>
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<td>.29****</td>
<td>.31****</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<td>.30**</td>
<td>.30****</td>
<td>.31****</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<td>-.07</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
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<td>-.10</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.26</td>
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<td>.20****</td>
<td>.25****</td>
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<td>1.27</td>
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<td>-.17***</td>
<td>-.18***</td>
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<td>Informal Avenues</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.47</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**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
between 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
The four communication anxiety subscales added to this prediction, $R^2=.43$, $\Delta R^2=.26$, $F(7,64)=7.02$, $p<.0005$, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant $R^2=.50$, $\Delta R^2 =.06$, $F(11,60)=5.44$, $p<.0005$. In the final model for predicting effort, sex $t=2.33$, $\beta=.25$, $p=.023$ and age $t=2.03$, $\beta=.24$, $p=.046$ were positive significant predictors and year in school $t=-2.76$, $\beta=-.32$, $p=.008$ was a negative predictor. Group anxiety was also a negative predictor $t=-4.79$, $\beta=-.90$, $p<.0005$. Speech anxiety $\beta=.010$, conversation anxiety $\beta=.24$, meeting anxiety $\beta=.25$, and purposes $\beta=.20$, reasons $\beta=.03$, sources $\beta=.13$, and satisfaction with the communication center $\beta=-.14$ 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, $R^2=.27$, $\Delta R^2=.12$, $F(7,62)=3.23$, $p=.006$, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant $R^2=.31$, $\Delta R^2 =.04$, $F(11,58)=2.35$, $p=.018$. In the final model, sex was not a significant predictor $\beta=.20$, however, age was a positive predictor $t=2.53$, $\beta=.36$, $p=.014$ and year in school $t=-2.18$, $\beta=-.31$, $p=.033$ and group anxiety $t=-2.798$, $\beta=-.62$. 

Help Seeking Behaviors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Type of Help Seeking Behavior</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
<th>β</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.31*</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.21**</td>
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<td>Group Anxiety</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.62**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.44*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conversation Anxiety</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Meeting Anxiety</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Total Reasons for Attending</td>
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<td>Total Sources of Knowledge</td>
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<td>Total Satisfaction with the Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
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<td>0.50****</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
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<td>n</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
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*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001, **** p < .0005.
$p = .007$ were negative significant predictors. Speech anxiety $\beta = .12$, conversation anxiety $\beta = .20$, meeting anxiety $\beta = .12$, and purposes $\beta = .13$, reasons $\beta = .09$, sources of knowledge about the communication center $\beta = .07$, and satisfaction with the communication center $\beta = .10$ 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, $R^2 = .32$, $\Delta R^2 = .21$, $F(7,63) = 4.23$, $p < .001$, and when communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant $R^2 = .36$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(11,59) = 3.05$, $p = .003$. Sex was a positive significant predictor $t = 2.68$, $\beta = .33$, $p = .010$ and group anxiety was a negative significant predictor $t = -2.07$, $\beta = -.44$, $p = .043$. Age $\beta = .25$, year in school $\beta = -.22$, speech anxiety $\beta = .24$, conversation anxiety $\beta = -.12$, meeting anxiety $\beta = .09$, and purposes $\beta = -.02$, reasons $\beta = .08$, sources of knowledge about the communication center $\beta = -.12$, and satisfaction with the communication center $\beta = .15$ 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 $R^2 = .34$, $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $F(7,63) = 4.73$, $p < .0005$. When communication center variables were added to this the overall model was also significant $R^2 = .36$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(11,59) = 3.07$, $p = .003$. Sex was the only significant negative predictor $t = -3.16$, $\beta = -.40$, $p = .003$. Age $\beta = .00$, year
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<th></th>
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<th>Expenditure</th>
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<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<td>Step 3 Meeting Anxiety</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Total Purposes for Attending</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Total Reasons for Attending</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Total Sources of Knowledge</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Total Satisfaction with the Center</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Help Seeking Behaviors

in school $\beta=.05$, speech anxiety $\beta=-.13$, group anxiety $\beta=.09$, conversation anxiety $\beta=.16$, meeting anxiety $\beta=.23$, purposes $\beta=-.15$, reasons $\beta=.01$, sources of knowledge about the communication center $\beta=-.01$, and satisfaction with the communication center $\beta=.05$ 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 $R^2=.30$, $\Delta R^2=.14$, $F(7,61)=3.76$, $p=.002$. The four communication center variables added to this prediction $R^2=.40$, $\Delta R^2=.09$, $F(11,57)=3.38$, $p<.001$. Sex $t=2.10$, $\beta=.25$, $p=.04$ and total purposes for going to the center $t=2.25$, $\beta=.27$, $p=.028$ were positive significant predictors and group anxiety was a negative significant predictor $t=-3.58$, $\beta=-.75$, $p<.001$ to predict instrumental reasons to seek help. Age $\beta=.13$, class $\beta=-.24$, speech anxiety $\beta=.13$, conversation anxiety $\beta=.29$, meeting anxiety $\beta=.20$, total reasons for going to the center $\beta=.09$, total ways to find out about the center $\beta=.14$, and total satisfaction with the center $\beta=.09$ 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 $R^2=.22$, $\Delta R^2=.08$, $F(7,61)=2.40$, $p=.031$. The four communication center variables also added to this prediction $R^2=.35$, $\Delta R^2=.13$, $F(11,57)=2.76$, $p<.006$. Sex $t=-2.70$, $\beta=-.33$, $p=.009$ was a negative significant pre-
dictor and total purposes for going to the center $t=2.69$, $\beta=.34$, $p=.009$ was a positive significant predictor for expedience reasons for seeking help. Age $\beta=.12$, year in school $\beta=.06$, speech anxiety $\beta=-.10$, group anxiety $\beta=.18$, conversation anxiety $\beta=-.12$, meeting anxiety $\beta=.09$, reasons for going to the center $\beta=-.05$, sources of knowledge for the center $\beta=.07$, and satisfaction with the center $\beta=-.18$ 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 parallels 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 expedient 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.

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Learning to develop and deliver effective oral citations is an important speechmaking skill that helps to enhance the credibility of the speaker, increase the persuasiveness of the source, and reduce unintentional plagiarism. As experienced public speaking instructors, we have found that oral citation of sources is one of the most difficult aspects of speech-making for students. While many students come to the basic course with some level of experience in creating written reference pages and in-text citations, these skills typically do not translate to knowing when and how to cite sources out loud in an oral presentation. Instructors face a number of challenges: Most students will have had no previous instruction in writing or delivering oral citations in high school. In order to cover other essential topics and practice a variety of skills, only a small fraction of class time may be available to devote to oral citations. In addition, the communication discipline has no standardized “style manual” for oral citations, other than guidelines provided by class textbooks, and these vary from textbook to textbook. Lacking common standards, communication students may find that faculty at their own institutions, including instructors teaching different sections of the same introductory public speaking course, vary in their requirements as to what bibliographic content should be...
included in an oral citation. These factors create hurdles for students and for educators hoping to produce effective and ethical speakers. Overcoming these hurdles is important, as the consequences of ineffective source citation may include loss of credibility and intentional or unintentional plagiarism, problems that can jeopardize students’ success in the course and potentially, their future professional lives.

**Speaker Credibility**

The importance of establishing speaker credibility has been a concern of rhetoricians since the time of the ancient Greeks, nearly 2,500 years ago. Aristotle’s Rhetoric, published in the fourth century B.C.E., established the notion of ethos as perceptions of a speaker’s reputation, character and goodwill toward the audience, and emphasized the role of ethos in the persuasiveness of the speaker (Aristotle, trans. 1984). Quintilian, the first-century Roman rhetorician, was also concerned with moral character, which he considered to be an essential quality for any aspiring orator. In his Institutio Oratoria (Institutes of Oratory), he characterized ethical public speaking as “...the good person speaking well” (Quintilian, trans. 1856/2011, XII.1.1.).

The modern study of speaker credibility began in the World War II era under Yale psychologist Carl Hovland, funded by the U.S. War Department to investigate persuasive variables related to propaganda and military morale. Hovland’s work identified trustworthiness and expertise as the key components of source credibility (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Trustworthiness was
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defined as perceptions of the speaker’s sincerity and intention to persuade. Expertise was found to be related to age, position or status of the source, as well as similarity to the audience in terms of social background, values, or interests. Hovland’s research concluded that communicators with high credibility are more likely to gain acceptance for their messages.

Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969) added the element of dynamism as a third dimension of source credibility. Dynamism, or personal charisma, was found to interact with perceptions of trustworthiness and expertise to intensify audience perceptions of these attributes. Subsequent conceptualizations (Munter, 1986, 1987; Kenton, 1989) have further deconstructed the elements of the source credibility model. Kenton (1989), for example, delineates four constructs: goodwill and fairness, expertise, prestige, and presentation skills.

The literature on source credibility identifies specific speech-making techniques that can contribute to or detract from a communicator’s ethos, including effective use of transitions (Oyer, 2004), the speaker’s use of vocal variety (Beebe & Biggers, 1988), and language and style choices such as figures of speech (Kallendorf & Kallendorf, 1985), active voice (Enos, 1985), self-referrals through use of first person (Beason, 1991) and unintentional use of logical fallacies (Ramsey, 1981). Previous empirical research has focused on the credibility of the speaker, rather than on the credibility of sources cited by the speaker. Although modern textbooks often point to citation of sources as a means to enhance speaker credibility, we know little about the impact of effective versus ineffective construction of oral citations or effective versus ineffective delivery of oral
citations on speaker credibility or persuasiveness. Similarly, no previous articles were found about the unique challenges of teaching oral citation.

**Plagiarism in the College Classroom**

Confusion about how and when to cite sources in a speech, combined with pressure to achieve high marks, may lead at best to ineffective or awkward citations, and at worst, to intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Even among nationally-ranked college forensics competitors, scholars have found repeated patterns of misleading and inaccurate source citation, including plagiarism (Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Perry, 2003; Shafer, 2005; Wickelgren & Holm, 2008).

There are few empirical studies that examine plagiarism in the public speaking classroom and its link to citation skills. One study of communication students suggested a link between lack of information literacy skills and failure to cite sources properly (Meyer, Hunt, Hopper, Thakkar, Tsoubakopoulos & Van Hoose, 2008). Among other findings, the study found that subjects who had participated in information literacy instruction were better able to cite a source correctly in APA style. Holm (1998) asked student subjects to rate 11 public speaking scenarios on a scale ranging from “definitely cheating” to “definitely not cheating.” The scenarios included changing the date of a source, citing secondary, rather than primary sources, and summarizing a magazine article without giving attribution. He found that all of the situations seemed to be gray areas for students, concluding, “nothing seems to be completely cheating.
and nothing seems to be completely not cheating” for them (p. 11).

In a subsequent study, Holm (2002) surveyed 307 students about their own and others’ academic honesty in the public speaking course. More than half of the respondents admitted to one or more cheating behavior, most commonly, turning a magazine or newspaper article into a speech and making up information for a bibliography page. Students also admitted to lying about where they found information. Holm’s survey did not link fabrication of sources to students’ oral citations. Hale (1987) found that communication students were able to recognize examples of plagiarism from written examples, and concluded from students’ admissions as well as their skill in identifying plagiarism that his subjects knowingly plagiarized in their own writing.

Plagiarism is a growing concern in higher education, as evidenced by the annual International Plagiarism Conference for college faculty (Plagiarismadvice.org, 2009). Thirty-six percent of undergraduates admit to plagiarizing in written papers (Plagiarism.org, 2010). Although a similar statistic is not available for student speeches, public speaking instructors should not assume their students are immune to either intentional or unintentional plagiarism.

Not surprisingly, the bulk of the literature on plagiarism in the college classroom has come from the English discipline. Teaching techniques, when provided in the literature, almost exclusively relate to helping students avoid written plagiarism. For example, a leading book often used in doctoral programs, The Ethics of Teaching: A Case Book (Keith-Spiegel, Whitley,
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Balogh, Perkins, & Wittig, 2002), does not include any content on plagiarism in student presentations.

Although the standard instruction that students receive in many disciplines is to cite any information that is not common knowledge, Shi (2011) notes that confusion over what is common knowledge is a widespread problem among undergraduates. Online media, file sharing, music downloading, easily-accessible digital editing programs and cut-and-paste technology have created a “remix culture” that has blurred the traditional boundaries of the ownership of ideas, according to Blum (2009). Scholarly interest in plagiarism instruction and prevention has likewise been revitalized due to the Internet and students’ unprecedented access to information. The technology age may be aiding college professors in detecting plagiarized material in written papers and speeches (Keith-Spiegel et al., 2002). Search engines like “Google” and “Yahoo” allow instructors to enter suspected plagiarized material to see if it matches previously published material. Universities may also subscribe to services like Turnitin.com, that require students to submit their papers online, and provide the instructors and the students a color-coded version of the paper showing similarities between student writing and text already existing in the online world. While many see the educational value in such services, they can be faulted for only “policing” plagiarism and not teaching students how to avoid plagiarism to begin with.

Both colleges and individual educators have struggled with various approaches for helping public speaking students avoid plagiarism. Blum (2009) notes that historically, colleges have employed top-down approaches to academic integrity that frame plagiarism
either as a moral issue, often involving honor codes, or as a law to be enforced. A more effective approach, Blum argues, is to treat academic integrity as “a set of skills to be learned” (p. A35). We have observed that in the public speaking classroom, the same students we have turned in for plagiarizing parts of their speeches have come to college able to repeat the mantra they’ve heard in high school to “cite the source,” and agree in principle that plagiarism is a bad thing that they should avoid. However, knowing that plagiarism is bad and having the skills to a) recognize what types of content should be cited; and b) how to cite the source out loud in a speech rather than in a written bibliography are very different matters.

The need to teach public speaking students when and how to cite sources is reinforced by the poor examples provided by public officials caught up in embarrassing plagiarism accusations. High profile examples include then-President candidate Barack Obama’s alleged plagiarism of a 2008 speech from Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick (Zelany, 2008), and similar allegations against Joe Biden (Sabato, 1998), Hillary Clinton (Zelany, 2008), and state officials (Neff, 2005; Woodson, 2005). Higher education is not immune. In 2002, the president of Hamilton College in New York apologized for failing to cite a number of sources in a convocation speech he presented to the freshman class and subsequently resigned (Margulies, 2002). Richard Sauer withdrew his candidacy for the presidency of North Dakota State University in 1988 in the midst of allegations that he plagiarized part of a speech that he had given to many different audiences (Blum, 1988). The dean of Boston University’s College of Communica-
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In the limited literature related to ethics and public speaking instruction, a content analysis of public speaking textbooks was completed by Pearson, Child, Mattern, and Kahl (2006). This analysis of the top ten public speaking texts identified the subjects given the most attention in ethics chapters, as determined by number of paragraphs. The study found that ethics chapters devoted the most text to the subject of plagiarism, including defining plagiarism and consequences of plagiarism. However, the findings do not address whether the content on plagiarism included practical instruction for avoiding plagiarism, such as guidelines for proper source citation. Other topics frequently covered in contemporary textbooks’ ethics chapters are ethical listening, ethnocentrism, hate speech, and First Amendment rights. An analysis by Fiordo (2010) of 19 introductory public speaking texts found that they gave little, if any, attention to deception theory, including intentional lying and misinformation.

Other studies using a content analysis methodology to examine leading public speaking texts have focused on a variety of topics, including the readability levels of
the textbooks (Schneider, 1992), coverage of communication apprehension (Pearson, DeWitt, Child, Kahl, & Dandamudi, 2007; Pelias, 1989), coverage of technology in information-gathering chapters (Child, Pearson, & Amundson, 2007), and representations of gender (Cawyer, Bystrom, Miller, Simonds, O’Brien, & Storey-Martin, 1994; Gullicks, Pearson, Child, & Schwab, 2005).

It should be noted that teaching the ethics of public speaking has not always been universally embraced. Jenson (1959) reported that a body of literature had emerged in speech communication journals in the 1950s questioning whether or not a speech teacher should be teaching ethical speaking in addition to teaching speaking techniques. The consensus of these articles was that instructors had an ethical duty to their discipline to teach public speaking ethics. However, Jensen notes, "The literature discusses predominately only the general ethical aims of speech education rather than the specific methods of achieving those aims" (p. 219). In 1970, Johnson (1970) posed Jensen’s question again in a survey of public speaking instructors: “Does the speech teacher have a responsibility to discuss the ethical issues of speech?” (p. 58). Although 90% of public speaking instructors answered “yes” to this question, in practice, only 28% of them actually conducted a classroom lecture or discussion dedicated to ethics. They were also divided about the amount of class time that should be devoted to the subject of ethics. Johnson (1970) also reported on the coverage of ethics in textbooks used by the instructors he surveyed. At that time, only one of the fifteen books actually had an entire chapter about ethics and speaking, four failed to mention ethics at all, while the rest contained discussions broaching the subject of
ethics or “responsible speaking” (Johnson, 1970, p. 60). As Pearson et al. (2006) note, the National Communication Association did not develop its Credo for Ethical Communication until 1999. Its first principle of ethical communication provides a framework for addressing plagiarism in public address, but is more philosophical than instructive: “We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication” (National Communication Association, 1999).

Given the discipline’s 20th century ambivalence toward ethical instruction and very limited scholarship addressing either source citation or plagiarism in the public speaking classroom, we must question whether the practical issues in ethics are being covered in our classrooms as much as the broader philosophical understanding that all speakers have an ethical responsibility. Because the concept of orally citing sources can be difficult for students, and the consequences of plagiarism through poor source citation are costly, the textbooks we teach from are critical tools for establishing a foundation of understanding about ethical citation of sources. As Gullicks et al. (2005) note, “Textbooks are often viewed by students as authoritative, and therefore have the potential to influence a significantly large and impressionable audience” (p. 247).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which leading public speaking textbooks are provid-
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ing consistent and thorough advice about how to cite sources out loud in a speech.

RQ1: How do the leading public speaking textbooks instruct students to orally cite their sources?

Specifically, we seek to learn whether the textbooks reflect agreement about content that should be included in oral citations and how oral citations should be delivered. In addition, we examine whether the textbooks are internally consistent, following the authors’ own guidelines in examples.

RQ2: How thoroughly do leading public speaking textbooks cover oral citations?

Categories used to answer this question include quantity and variety of examples, instruction in incorporating citations into speaking notes, quantity of text devoted to oral citations versus written bibliographies, and supplementary practice exercises, activities, and video examples of oral citations.

METHOD

Sample. The top three textbooks in terms of sales for the 2008-2009 academic year were identified through the College Textbook National Market Report by R.R. Bowker, LLC (2009). These texts are: The Art of Public Speaking (10th edition), by Stephen E. Lucas (McGraw-Hill); A Speaker's Guidebook (4th edition), by Dan O'Hair, Rob Stewart and Hannah Rubenstein (Bedford/St. Martin's); and Public Speaking Handbook (3rd edition) by Steven A. Beebe and Susan J. Beebe (Allyn & Bacon/Pearson). For purposes of conciseness, the texts
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will be referred to as “Lucas,” “O’Hair” and “Beebe” in the remainder of this paper.

Together, these texts dominate the public speaking textbook market, comprising more than 55% of the market. The Lucas text, at number one, represents 41% of the public speaking textbook market. Some 105,000 students used one of these three texts in the 2009-10 year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>McGraw-Hill</td>
<td>The Art of Public Speaking</td>
<td>10th</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>O’Hair, Stewart &amp; Rubenstein</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>Bedford/St. Martin’s</td>
<td>A Speakers’ Guidebook: Text and Reference</td>
<td>4th</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Beebe &amp; Beebe</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>Pearson Education</td>
<td>Public Speaking Handbook</td>
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*Note. The source used to determine the top textbooks was College Textbook National Market Report by R.R. Bowker, LLC (2009). This is a proprietary document available to subscribers and made accessible to the researchers by special permission of a leading textbook publisher.*

The study employed standard content analysis methodology (Holsti, 1969; Kassarjian, 1977) designed to yield description of textbook content. Because public speaking textbooks vary in where they place content on oral citations, and many include content related to oral citations in more than one chapter, ten public speaking textbooks were reviewed to generate a list of index terms found to refer to oral citations. This list was used to systematically identify pages in each textbook that
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may contain content about oral citations. Any of these pages containing a mention of oral citations was included in the analysis. In addition, because students often use as models the sample student speeches printed out in their entirety in public speaking textbooks, we also included the first sample student informative speech and the first sample student persuasive speech in each textbook in the pages to be analyzed. The first three oral citations from each of these student speeches were included in the analysis.

Measures. A coding instrument was constructed to evaluate the textbooks. The codesheet contained a variety of measures that provided a detailed examination of the treatment of oral citations. Basic information about the format, length and location of text related to oral citations was recorded, including the chapter(s) in which this information was located; the number of pages devoted to oral citations, and, for comparison, the number of pages devoted to written bibliographies or works cited pages. Coding categories examining source citation content were defined as follows:

Rationale for proper source citation. This item identified whether the text provided reasons why speakers should orally cite sources, including avoiding plagiarism and enhancing the credibility of the speaker.

Instructions for citation content. This coding category examined the text’s instructions for oral citation content, including bibliographic elements that should or should not be mentioned in an oral citation, such as author’s name, author’s credentials, article name, book or publication title, website name, website URL, and publication date. Codesheet items also identified whether the text offered instructions for how to highlight
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the credibility of the source and whether it specifically noted any differences between oral citation and written bibliography content.

Analysis of oral citation examples. Examples of oral citations in chapter text and sample student speeches were examined for frequency and type. Type of citation was coded as quote or paraphrase. Source of citation was coded as online source, book or report, print periodical, personal interview, speech/lecture, movie or television program, other, and can’t determine. The bibliographic elements (date or recency, author, article title, periodical name, book or report title, website name, website URL) mentioned in each citation example were recorded. In-chapter citations were coded as “good” examples of what to do or “bad” examples of what not to do. Bad examples were defined as ineffective citations intentionally provided by the author to point out their flaws and how they might be corrected. The specific problem noted by the author was coded as “missing information,” “not conversational,” “not clear when direct quote begins or ends,” “doesn’t describe credentials of source,” “plagiarizes,” or “other.”

Instructions for citation delivery. Codesheet items identified whether the text encouraged or discouraged use of the phrases “and I quote” and “quote…end quote” in the delivery of oral citations.

Instructions for speaking notes. The codesheet identified whether instructions for writing oral citations on speaking notes/delivery outlines were included in the text.

Student exercises and supplementary resources. The codesheet identified the presence in the text of any student exercises focusing on oral citations, as well as any
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references to a supplementary CD-ROM, DVD or online resource specifically recommended to help with online source citation.

**Procedures.** Three undergraduate students who had completed the public speaking course were trained as coders. The coders were not informed about the specific research questions and worked independently. In an initial training session, coders were provided with written and verbal coding definitions and instructions and coded two “practice” textbooks that were not included in the analysis. Intercoder reliability was computed using percentage of agreement (Kassarjian, 1977). Intercoder reliability scores for the training texts ranged from 87.5% to 88.9%. After the training session, several codesheet items were modified and instructions to coders clarified to address items where disagreements had occurred. Then, each of the three chapters was coded by two coders. Disagreements between coders were resolved by a third independent coder. Subsequent intercoder reliability ranging from 88% to 96% on the three textbooks (mean = 92%) was achieved.

**RESULTS**

All three textbooks located instruction on oral citations in their "Supporting Materials" chapters, as well as in chapters or sections pertaining to ethics, in the context of discussions about avoiding plagiarism. Beebe also included additional content showing how sample oral citations should be incorporated into speaking notes in its "Outlining and Editing" chapter.
**RQ1: How do the leading public speaking textbooks instruct students to orally cite their sources?**

Avoidance of plagiarism is presented as a rationale for learning proper source citation in all three texts. Only Lucas also notes that proper source citation can also enhance the speaker’s own credibility. Lucas and O’Hair make the point that there is no set or universally agreed-upon format for orally citing sources. They acknowledge that a typical oral citation will be less complete than a formal written citation in a bibliography.

Of the bibliographic elements that could potentially be included in an oral citation, all the authors agree that an oral citation should include the author or sponsoring organization’s name and the publication date. Beebe and O’Hair also note that speakers should specify the type of resource (online article, for instance). There is disagreement as to whether titles need to be mentioned: Only Beebe suggests that article titles should be mentioned; Lucas specifies mentioning book and periodical titles, but not article titles. O’Hair suggests that a description of the source, e.g., “an article on sharks” (p. 75) is sufficient. In terms of guidance for which bibliographic elements may be left out of an oral citation, Lucas urges students not to cite URL addresses out loud, and O’Hair notes that full names, dates, titles, volume and page numbers need not be included (p. 75). The latter statement contradicts O’Hair’s recommendation on the same page that publication dates be cited.

While the texts differ on bibliographic details that should be included, all three emphasize the importance of describing the credentials of the source, and all pro-
vide examples that demonstrate how this enhances the credibility of the citation.

All the texts note that sources should be cited for direct quotations and paraphrases. O’Hair and Beebe are more specific than Lucas, also noting that statistics and any information that is not common knowledge should be cited. Only Beebe also notes that non-original visual materials, including graphs and pictures, should be cited.

In addition to citation content, the textbooks offer differing advice about citation delivery. Lucas and Beebe discourage use of the phrase "and I quote" to introduce a citation, as well as using "quote" and "end quote" to set off a quotation. Beebe recommends instead pausing before and after quoting. O’Hair recommends using “and I quote” to call attention to a source’s exact wording (p. 76).

**Internal consistency.** Internal consistency refers to whether the examples provided by the authors or by the student speakers whose speech texts are included in the analysis follow the guidelines for oral citations noted in the text. In the Lucas textbook, five of eight examples the author provides did not follow his own advice by noting the date or recency of the source. Two out of eight examples did not include the author or organization name. For example, Lucas offers the following as an example of an oral citation, even though it doesn’t note the date or recency of the source:

In their book, *When Children Work*, psychology professors Ellen Greenberger of the University of California and Lawrence Steinberg of Temple University note that intensive levels of work among youth tend to produce higher truancy and lower grades. According
to Greenberger and Steinberg, one study after another has found that working more than a few hours a week has a negative impact on teenagers’ academic performance. (p. 159)

Similar problems with consistency were found in the student speeches. In both the student informative and persuasive speeches, the students did not follow Lucas' instructions to note the date or recency of any of the six citations studied. Each speaker paraphrased a periodical but did not provide the author's name or date of the publication. In the sample informative speech, the student cited a book and a periodical, but did not note the date of either, or the author of the periodical article: “A study in the Annals of Internal Medicine confirms that acupuncture can relieve low-back pain” (p. 317). In three of six cases, the coders could not determine what the source of the citation was—whether it was a book, periodical, or online source, from the citation given.

In the O'Hair text, five of 16 examples did not mention date or recency, and two did not provide an author’s name. In three examples, it was impossible for coders to determine what the source of the citation was, such as a book, website, periodical, etc. Citations in sample student speeches also did not comply with the author's guidelines for oral citations. Three of six citations did not include a mention of data or recency. In four of six citations, the source of the citation could not be determined. For example, the following citation is not linked to an article, online source, or personal interview:

According to experts on the frontline, such as Dr. Brent Eastman, Chief Medical Advisor at Scripps Health Hospital in San Diego, America’s emergency
rooms are in a crisis that could jeopardize everyone in this room and all their loved ones. (p. 26)

In the Beebe text, while the authors instruct students to provide a date, type of resource, article title and author or sponsoring organization (p. 56), subsequent examples of citations leave out type of resource and title (p. 190); and article titles and authors (pp. 191, 212). There are no examples of citations in the sample informative student speech. In the student persuasive speech, one citation does not reveal type of resource and another leaves out the article author and title.

**RQ2: How thoroughly do leading public speaking textbooks cover oral citations?**

Lucas and O’Hair devoted the most text—approximately four pages if combined from various sections of the textbooks—to oral citation instructions. Beebe devoted approximately two and a half pages to oral citations. By comparison, O’Hair devotes four times as much text to the written bibliography—an appendix of 16 pages covering the written bibliography and various style guides. Beebe devotes three pages to written bibliographies and Lucas devotes two pages. Only Beebe provides specific examples of how to write citations in speaking notes.

**Examples of oral citations.** The textbooks varied in the number of examples they included and whether they provided examples of both effective oral citations and ineffective oral citations. They also differed in the variety of sources for citations that were used in examples (books, periodicals, online sources, personal interviews, speeches/presentations, television or movies); and whether they showed students how to handle “second-
hand” quotations used by another author. For instance, a second-hand citation might say, “Barbara Jones was quoted in a 2008 Time magazine article, saying that ‘Healthcare is the number one concern of senior citizens.’”

Lucas offered eight examples of proper oral citations in the text, and two examples of ineffective citations, both dealing with failure to describe the credentials of sources. O’Hair provided 16 examples of proper oral citations, and one example of an ineffective citation, also dealing with failure to describe the credentials of a source. Beebe provided five examples of proper oral citations and no examples of ineffective citations. In addition, Beebe’s sample student informative speech did not contain a single source citation.

In examples of proper oral citations offered by the textbook authors, Lucas provided examples of citations from books, periodicals and online sources, but not personal interviews, speeches/presentations, television or movies. Lucas provided examples of direct quotes and paraphrases. Two of the examples could be classified as second-hand quotations, showing how to quote or paraphrase someone who had been quoted by another author.

O’Hair provided examples of sources cited from a wider variety of sources, including books, periodicals and online sources, as well as public speeches/presentations, but not personal interviews, television or movies. Many of these were examples of lead-ins to citations to show students how to introduce a citation. But because they were incomplete, in seven cases it was impossible for the coder to determine whether the lead-in was setting up a direct quote or a paraphrase. O’Hair
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included no examples that would show students how to handle a second-hand quote.

The Beebe textbook offered examples of citations that cited an online source and print periodicals, but no examples citing public speeches/presentations, personal interviews, television or movies. Four of the five examples were direct quotes; one was a paraphrase. Two examples reflected second-hand quotes.

None of the texts included any examples of ineffective second-hand quotes. In addition, in their chapters on visual aids, none of the textbooks provided guidance to students on citing sources of images, such as photographs or charts, used in their visual aids.

Supplementary resources. None of the textbooks included student exercises to help students construct oral citations. Lucas referred students to additional written examples of citations online. O'Hair referred students to an online chapter quiz.

DISCUSSION

Without question, textbook authors have a difficult task in writing comprehensive books that carefully balance theory and application. With a vast amount of material to cover—including instruction on gathering supporting material, organizational strategies and delivery of a speech—it is not surprising when we see more breadth than depth on any one topic. In addition, we recognize that textbooks may take different approaches to the same content areas to ensure their distinctiveness. We wish to emphasize that we do not argue that lack of consistency among textbooks equates to poor
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quality instruction in oral citation. Rather, we propose that clear and thorough common guidelines for oral citations across public speaking textbooks would enhance understanding and acceptance of standards for effective and ethical speaking, with benefits for students, instructors, and the discipline as a whole. As one communication ethics scholar has noted, “Teachers find that such matters as fair use of material, plagiarism, acceptability of language, and use of particular motivational appeals (or even topics for speeches) become sources of difficulty when students, teachers, parents, and administrators do not share common standards” (Andersen, 1999, p. 459).

The current study finds that the most widely-used public speaking textbooks do not present a unified front to instructors or students as to what should be included in an oral citation, when an oral citation should be used, or how an oral citation should be delivered. In addition, internal inconsistencies within the texts between the guidelines given by the authors and examples of citations in chapter text or student speeches which do not follow these guidelines are likely to confuse students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING TEXTBOOKS

In general, we believe that students would benefit from a greater degree of explicitness in the textbooks’ guidelines for what bibliographic elements to include in oral citations and what not to include. While some texts were more prescriptive than others, ambiguity is more likely to lead to unintentional plagiarism or simply less
effective citations. Authors should not forget the audience for these textbooks: the typical first-year student much prefers concrete guidelines to general advice. O’Hair’s emphasis on flexibility, as excerpted below, may leave students with more questions than it answers:

Unlike a written bibliography, there is no set format for orally citing sources. As long as you clearly identify where your information came from and provide your listeners with enough context to accurately interpret it, you can vary your wording to suit your needs. (p. 133)

Based on this statement, students might legitimately wonder, "How much is enough context?" and "Does identifying where my information came from mean I don't have to cite the author?"

Another practice found in all the textbooks that may contribute to student confusion is the use of partial lead-ins as examples. These assume that students will know what bibliographic elements are needed to complete the citation, and miss an opportunity to showcase what a complete oral citation would sound like. For example, textboxes in O’Hair list opening words for citations that end in ellipses (“…”): “As published in the October 2008 edition of Nature...” (p. 143) does not reveal to the student reader whether they should include the author’s name. “According to John Miller, one of the three founders of the community’s rapid-transit committee...” (p. 138) does not reveal to the student whether they should include the source of this information (e.g., personal interview? printed account?) or the date of the statement. Replacing partial lead-ins with full citations would enhance understanding of the essential source.
information that should be included and how to make citation phraseology complete, yet conversational.

Most importantly, textbooks should correct internal inconsistencies by making sure that examples in the text and in sample student speeches actually conform to the authors’ guidelines for oral citations. This was perhaps the most surprising, and easily correctable, finding. In addition, we believe that students would benefit from seeing more examples of ineffective oral citations that illustrate common mistakes that students make and how they can be corrected. Similarly, students would appreciate seeing models of citations from a wider range of sources, including personal interviews, public lectures, television shows, and other media. All textbooks should explicitly address what to do when Internet sources do not provide authors, dates, or other bibliographic information, and give examples of what these citations would sound like in oral citations.

In terms of textbook organization, authors should consider whether dispersing information about oral citations across chapters might inadvertently weaken its impact. In O’Hair, for example, the most explicit information is located in the ethics chapter, not where students may look for it in the supporting materials chapter. Students whose instructors do not assign all chapters may miss critical information. At a minimum, in-text cross-references to information about oral citations in other chapters are needed.

Finally, authors should supplement textbook content with exercises and video examples that specifically address oral citations. For example, to help students practice constructing oral citations, textbooks might provide bibliographic information from a variety of sources and
instruct students to convert it to conversational citations. Supplementary video clips that allow students to hear ineffective oral citations, identify why they are ineffective (e.g., awkward, un-conversational lead-ins? Critical information missing?) and then hear how they can be transformed into effective oral citations would be valuable learning tools.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND THE DISCIPLINE**

Coverage of oral citations should be a factor considered in textbook selection. Instructors should read their texts thoroughly to see if they believe the guidelines for oral citations satisfy their expectations and grading criteria, and are adequately clear to students. Textbook selection should consider the quantity and quality of oral citation examples from a variety of sources in both the text and student speeches, where this information appears in the textbook (i.e., dispersed throughout or located primarily in one chapter?), and the teaching ideas and materials available in instructor’s manuals and supplementary media. Regardless of the textbook chosen, instructors may need to devote extra class time to oral citations. In particular, they should consider reviewing the types of content that must be cited, differences between bibliography entries and oral citations, the essential bibliographic elements that they expect to hear in oral citations, and a class activity that requires students to turn bibliographic information into conversational-sounding oral citations. Textbooks that facili-
tate these learning goals should be given positive consideration in textbook selection decisions.

To maintain consistency in rigor across sections of public speaking, instructors may consider proposing a uniform policy for their campus about what bibliographic elements are expected to be included in oral citations. Although this may address problems at the level of the communication department, it does not address the larger issue of inconsistencies across the discipline and outside of the discipline. In a potential worst-case scenario, conflicting institutional policies could lead to greater confusion on a national level as numerous institutions promoted their own guidelines. Ideally, we would like to see the National Communication Association recommend common standards for oral citation style, much as the Modern Language Association and the American Psychological Association have done for written style in their respective disciplines. This would enable educators from all disciplines to refer students to a standard resource when an oral presentation is assigned. In the absence of such a resource, however, greater uniformity among leading textbooks would go a long way to help establish commonly-held expectations in the communication discipline. While learning to craft effective citations may never be easy for beginning public speaking students, it is a skill that can be more easily mastered, and evaluated, by the presence of clear standards.
CONCLUSION

We agree with Blum (2009) that it is not enough to get students to philosophically agree that citing sources is important; they must have skills to convert others’ words and ideas into an oral citation. Although it is important to help the students understand the definition of plagiarism or even to distinguish between intentional or unintentional plagiarism, a theoretical treatment of the negatives of plagiarism may not help the students avoid wrongdoing in their next speech. Students need clear lessons of how to avoid plagiarism. Both textbooks and individual instructors can help with this.

We believe that it is important for the communication discipline to establish greater uniformity in its recommendations for oral citation content. An “anything goes,” “use your best judgment” approach is much more difficult for college students to grasp and model than the specific recommendations and examples found in style manuals for writers. A lack of commonly held standards blurs the line as to what constitutes an adequate reference, potentially leading to intentional or unintentional plagiarism that we see among both students and adult professionals. Greater uniformity between textbooks would be helpful in establishing common standards. In addition, the internal inconsistency within textbooks, in which authors did not model their own guidelines in student speeches and other examples, must be addressed.
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A limitation of this study is that it included only the top three public speaking texts. While these texts account for more than half of the market, the findings cannot be generalized to other public speaking texts. Future scholarship might include more textbooks to generate a larger data set that would allow for statistical analysis of findings. The content analysis methodology could also be used to analyze the video examples of student speeches offered as supplementary resources by leading textbook publishers to see if students in these videos are actually following the textbooks’ guidelines for oral citations. Future research might also supplement the content analysis with a measure of student comprehension of oral citation content in each text. Actual student speeches could be analyzed to determine the extent to which students are citing sources completely and accurately after exposure to instruction. Finally, a question that remains is, does teaching students how to cite sources effectively actually reduce plagiarism? Future research might examine whether adherence to common standards for oral citations results in fewer instances of plagiarism, as well as audience perceptions of enhanced speaker credibility. Overall, this study underscores the need for greater scholarly examination of academic honesty within the oral tradition, and greater attention and creativity from educators and textbook authors in helping students learn to cite sources effectively in their speeches.
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Have you ever remained parked in your car in order to hear the end of a song or a news story? This is called a driveway moment (Pine, 2007). Kenneth Burke, literary theorist and philosopher, refers to this fulfilling of our desires as an “appetite” that humans have for form (Burke, 1931). Driveway moments epitomize the need for form. You are not satisfied until you hear the end, which assumes the beginning and middle were interesting enough to keep you listening. The same need for the ending can be experienced with less-interesting songs, too. For example, sing the song “Happy Birthday” in front of someone and omit the last line. It will not take long for that person to finish the song, “...happy birthday to you!” This desire for the conclusion is what Kenneth Burke calls an appetite for form (Burke, 1931).

Form arouses and fulfills our desires (Burke, 1931). A symphony has form—sections and movements with subtle key relationships (Oxford, 2010). Movies have form— beginnings, middles, endings (King, 1988). Music has form—introductions, versus, choruses, bridges, and endings (Leikin, 2008). As teachers of the Basic Communication Course, we should recognize this appetite for form and incorporate form into our syllabi. Not just the kind of template that puts “matter” (Burke, 1961) such as assignments, goals and objectives, and teacher contact information into the syllabus. But rather form
in the way Kenneth Burke describes—form that has one part of the syllabus leading to the anticipation of the next part. The idea is that students ought to be gratified by the sequence of the syllabus as well as informed by the matter of the syllabus. A syllabus that induces “driveway moments” could hook students in, create interest in the content, and provide a satisfying conclusion by the end of the semester.

The Basic Communication Course varies in objective. For example, the course may be an Introduction to Communication course, a Human Communication course, and in some cases may be a Public Speaking course at a university (Petit, et. al., 2002). A search of higher education journals, pedagogical tomes, and literature from centers for teaching excellence found no evidence of a move to create syllabi, in the Basic Communication Course or otherwise, that applies form in the Burkean sense. Even Cornell University’s syllabus template for new teachers does not guide the teacher to incorporate form into the syllabus (Cornell University, 2005). One syllabus design checklist did include a mention, albeit brief, of course “flow” (Nilson, 2007).

Some communication scholars have specifically incorporated Burke’s theory to the Basic Communication Course, however. For example, ideas about symbolic action such as meaning in language, symbolic reality, persuasion, and rhetorical criticism have been included in the course content. Questions such as “What does it mean to say that humans are symbol-using?” and “How do humans use symbols differently from non-humans?” were posited to students in an effort to invite students to discuss the elements of and definition of human communication (Collins & Hearn, 1993). Other recent
Burkean views of education in the classroom vary. The composition classroom has been informed by Burkean perspectives (Jordan, 2009). One such classroom was addressed as a “dramatistic classroom” where the writing topics themselves were the questions of persuasion. The course’s focus was changed “dramatistically” in order to highlight and foreground reflection and, as Burke suggests, the theoretical study of the forms in all persuasion (Burke, 1931). With the incorporation of Burke’s three linguistic exercisings, this particular composition classroom became a place where rhetoric was taught as a tool for critical investigation via a Burkean pedagogy of critical reflection (Enoch, 2004).

Burke’s tropes, such as “representation,” have also been used as a method for teaching students about synecdoches and metaphors (Acheson, 2004; McFadden, 2001). Other teachers have applied Burke’s understanding of student motivation and assembled various rhetorical devices as a kind of critical “Comedie Humanie.” In this pedagogical method students made individual contributions to each other’s work, as if adding to a stamp collection. The teachers found this method an effective way of applying Burke’s ideas about participation (Beasley, 2007). In general, the application of Burke’s ideas into the classroom can be exciting for students (Gencarella & Olbrys, 2009; Lindenberger 1998).

But the syllabus is an appeal (Georgia State University, 2008; Munby, 1978; O’Brien & Millis, 2008) and effective appeals have form (Couchman & Crabb, 2005; Craig, 1993; Halmari & Virtanen, 2005). A lack of literature about implementing form in syllabus design was the incentive for the writing of this essay. This author is interested in how syllabus content can be connected and
builds toward a finale in order to fulfill student’s natural appetite for form and create a driveway moments in the Basic Communication Course classroom. First, syllabus strategy in the Basic Communication Course will be examined. Second, Burke’s ideas about matter and form and why these concepts are important to consider when developing syllabi for the Basic Communication Course will be discussed. This work will then discuss practical applications for applying form to the Basic Communication Course syllabus. Finally a summary will offer suggestions for the wider implications of this essay.

SYLLABUS STRATEGY IN THE BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE

Syllabus design for any course is an exercise in linguistic content, a specification for the selection and organization of content, a description of the role of teacher, learner, and teaching materials (Richards and Rodgers, 1982). As teachers we expect the syllabus to be taken seriously by our students; the syllabus functions as a contract with students (Georgia State University, 2008; O’Brian & Millis, 2008). In fact, some teachers are required to use the syllabus that is on record with their institution. Although some teachers are permitted to modify a syllabus once the term begins, there are usually some basic criteria that must be followed, such as the stating of grading philosophies, policies on plagiarism, and the listing of semester schedules (Moyer, 2001). But, as most teachers of the Basic Communication Course know, students may not read the syllabus.
Strategies that teachers have used for encouraging students to engage the syllabus include quizzes on the syllabus material and having students discuss the content in pairs. Other strategies for increasing student use of the syllabus include allowing students to participate in the partial development of the syllabus at the outset of class (Weimer, 2002). This “participative model” encourages students to help plan the course by deciding what criteria should be graded. Other active designs are experiential in nature whereby students are exposed to assignments and activities designed to simulate real-world tasks and experiences (Wingfield & Black, 2005). These models, along with other “learning centered” models, allow for student participation and investment in the course (O’Brian & Millis, 2008). There is also the “promising syllabus” design which fundamentally recognizes that students will learn best and most deeply when they have a strong sense of control over their own education rather than feeling manipulated by someone else’s demands. The promising syllabus includes an explanation of what students will have gained, in terms of knowledge or skills, by the end of the semester (Lang, 2006). This shift in focus away from what the teacher will cover to what the students will take away from the course gets close to providing a finale but does not quite achieve this goal. Instead, a finale assumes the presence of qualities that lead and prepare the audience, in this case the students, towards a conclusion (Burke, 1931). Instead, these approaches encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning (O’Brian & Millis, 2008) while the syllabus design itself is not considered as a rhetorical strategy for engagement in the course material.
In all of the literature about syllabus design, there is no mention of form; there is no mention of how the need for from is gratified via assignments that formally connect and end via a finale. In fact, few models have been documented that teach instructional design (Shambaugh & Magliaro, 2001). Even the Department of Education’s report “Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom,” so often cited by researchers studying effective rhetorical pedagogical strategies, does not address syllabus design as it relates to rhetorical strategy (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In fact, most of what is written about syllabus design, including syllabi for the communication classroom (Grant, 2004), provides a laundry list of items to include, such as objectives, text information, assignment information, and policies. At best, syllabus design has been examined as a means for providing a pedagogical framework at the level of objectives (Wedell, 2010) as opposed to the form that the items should take in the syllabus as pedagogical strategy.

As most teachers intuitively know, the syllabus functions as more than just a contract filled with information about assignments and grading policies. The syllabus is an appeal (Georgia State University, 2008; Munby, 1978; O’Brian & Millis, 2008). For example, students might be shopping for classes during their first week, deciding what courses to keep or drop based on the syllabi they receive (Georgia State University, 2010). This relationship between pleasure and recognition is central to any treatment of form in pedagogy (Hartelius, 2006).

Quantitative studies regarding syllabus effectiveness and appeal have concluded that syllabi provide a pedagogical framework at the level of objectives, that
expectations might be satisfied via the syllabus, and that there are cognitive and emotional aspects for investigations of student learning (Heikkila et al., 2011, McCuaig, 2009; Wedell, 2010). Other quantitative studies have concluded that the syllabus ought to be separate from the methodology of the course (Wette, 2009). One study in particular examined the role of the syllabus as a factor that influenced student performance. The results, however, concluded that the syllabus should be redesigned using different course material (D’Souza & Maheshwari, 2010). No mention was made in any of the quantitative analyses regarding syllabus discourse conventions and rhetorical strategies per se.

In an effort to apply Burke’s ideas of matter and form more systematically to the literature about syllabus and course design, this author will offer a useful prescription about how to more effectively intertwine the syllabus and assignments. The goal is to develop a more synthetic view of the syllabus that is more valuable than usual practices. The next section will discuss Burke’s ideas about matter and form, followed by an application of Burke’s ideas to the Basic Communication Course syllabus.

**KENNETH BURKE: MATTER AND FORM**

Burke’s primary view of rhetoric is that the use of words forms attitudes and induces others to act. This linguistic consubstantiality with action is different than persuasion. In general, Burke is concerned with the generation and fulfillment of expectations through the use of symbols or forms. For example, physical objects,
occupations, friends, activities, beliefs, and values, when shared, make us consubstantial with others: "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (Burke, 1950). In fact, this identification, for Burke, behaves persuasively and is appealing.

We develop our first patterns of judgment in childhood and our experiences of maturity are revisions and amplifications of those childhood patterns (Burke, 1954). These patterns consist of both form and matter (Burke, 1961). The distinction between form and matter is clear; the way things are formed may change the way the matter is perceived. Burke says specifically, “Matter is formless, and formlessness is almost nothing, and creation is the establishing of forms” (Burke, 1961). In the Basic Communication Course, the form is the syllabus and the matter is the assignments, including readings from the textbook. Consubstantiation in this context with students is possible if students are able to identify with the syllabus.

For Burke, matter that is molded by form should arouse and fulfill desires. A work, including the Basic Communication Course syllabus, should have the type of form where one part leads to the anticipation of the next part. The idea is that a student ought to be gratified by the sequence of assignments, thus leading to a driveway moment by the end of the semester. As teachers of the Basic Communication Course we teach our students that human communication has these same components—audience appeal, structure, and messages with moral and ethical implications (Lucas, 2008). Teachers in communication departments also apply
form in their curriculums—communication students progressively take courses that build foundations of knowledge, and students often finish their senior year with a capstone course that serves as somewhat of finale (University of Kentucky, 2003). The Basic Communication Course syllabus should also follow form.

Burke discusses four types of form—progressive form (subdivided as syllogistic progression and qualitative progression), repetitive form, conventional form, and minor/incidental forms. Syllogistic progressive form is like a perfectly constructed argument, advancing step by step, similar to a persuasive speech or debate. Qualitative progressive form is more subtle. Instead of incidents of plot preparing us for future incidents, presence of qualities prepare us for the introduction of other qualities. For example, the grotesqueness of a murder scene prepares us for the hideousness of another scene. We are essentially led from one frame of mind to another. Repetitive form is the consistent maintaining of a principle under new appearances, restating the same principle but in different ways. This is the basic principle of art, succession of different images but with the same mood. Conventional forms are forms that appeal as form per se (Burke, 1931). A Mother Goose rhyme that includes repetition, verse form, and rhyme is an example of a conventional form (Anderson, 2007). And the last of Burke’s forms is minor, or incidental forms such as metaphors, paradoxes, disclosures, and reversals. Works can have these rhetorical devises, the use of words and phrases in terms other than literal, throughout them. These four types of forms can overlap and conflict with one another. But the basic premise of each
form is the creation and gratification of needs. Form itself is the appeal (Burke, 1931).

The syllabus can be viewed as the form of the Basic Communication Course. As teachers we have the opportunity to create a need for the course and then gratify those needs through the matter of the syllabus. Just as a dog will gnaw at a piece of wood in lieu of a bone, a student will try and make sense of a course syllabus even though it is not formally tied together. Lack of form in a syllabus is problematic even when the assignment matter of the syllabus is primarily interesting, such as the showing of a film. For example, a teacher of the Basic Communication Course, with whom this author is familiar with, once remarked, “I’m going to show my students a movie. They’ve been working hard and just need a break.” The teacher thought she was doing her students a favor. But to her surprise, the students were dissatisfied. Some were bored, some were annoyed that she was not “teaching”, and some students failed to attend the movie viewing. Applying the principles of form as Burke expresses, the inclusion of an interesting exercise for the sake of entertainment value would not be appealing. The showing of the movie was incongruous, broke form, and was not appealing because the movie was unidentifiable with an attitude or value associated with the course. The students were unable to consubstantiate the activity with the overall value of the course. This is admittedly a sophomoric transgression that the teacher made. However, the example can illuminate the importance of thinking more deeply about how each assignment (including the showing of a movie) in the syllabus should build upon the preceding assignment and fulfill a student’s desire for form.
Perhaps surprisingly, the key ideas teachers are interested in and subsequently incorporate into their syllabi are not usually the key ideas that students are interested in learning about (Kidman, 2009). This notion gives particular credence to the argument that the syllabus itself ought to gratify some need that the students have. In other words, the syllabus, in and of itself, is a rhetorical appeal. A syllabus that formally articulates objectives, connects assignments to one another, and builds toward a finale can help achieve this goal. The next section will discuss practical applications for applying form, Burkean style, to the Basic Communication Course syllabus.

**APPLYING FORM TO THE BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE SYLLABUS**

The Basic Communication Course syllabus can address both form and function. Burke’s pentad is useful in this case as a method for designing the syllabus so that the form of the syllabus is privileged while still allowing for function. The structural framework of Burke’s (1969) pentad posits that a narrative consists of five elements: scene, agent (actor), act, agency and purpose. The scene is where the act is happening. The agent, or actor, is who is involved in the action and that person’s role. The act is articulated as what is happening, as what the action is, and as what is going on. Agency refers to how the agents act and by what means they act. Finally, the purpose refers to why the agents act and what they want.
Burke’s analysis can be effectively applied to the Basic Communication Course syllabus. The initial section(s) of the syllabus should set the scene by listing the course number, class location, and meeting times. Setting the scene may also include articulating the objectives and required texts (Ahl, 2007; Gallagher, 2011). The initial sections of a syllabus may also introduce the agents. The students are the agents (actors) and the main actor is, of course, the teacher. For this author, the roles of the actors are made explicit via teacher contact information and the policies (Appendix). Students are given information on issues such as disability accommodations, plagiarism, and academic integrity among others. After the scene has been set and the actors and their roles have been made clear, the act, or what action the students will take in the course, should be made explicit.

The act can be articulated in the description of the course assignments. In order to effectively follow form, the information, or matter, of the assignments should support the objectives and policies (Heller, 2003). The assignments, in order to satisfy a student’s appetite for form, should also connect to one another and build toward the semester’s end. In other words, one assignment ought to be the preparation for the next assignment, and/or lay the groundwork for the completion of the next assignment. Assignments should be arranged so that readings, speeches, and other activities work together to lead students from one frame of mind to another, creating and gratifying student needs for the course objectives. Then at the semester’s end a finale, such as a persuasive speech, can satisfy the student’s
need for form in such a way as to create driveway moments.

For this author, the assignments succeed from one another within a common topic and build toward a final debate (Appendix). For example, students must keep the theme of diversity and/or social justice threaded throughout each topic. The topics must also connect to their major (or interests if they are undecided). The speeches build in both expectations of delivery, as is made clear via increasing point values, but also build in terms of matter. In the first speech (introductory), students discuss their major, interests, and what the terms social justice and/or diversity mean to them. In the second speech (narrative), students tell a story that either connects to their career interests or about how they became interested in your major. In the third speech (ceremonial), students deliver a speech about a diverse contributor to their major/interests. For the next speech (informational), students deliver a speech about an object, a process, an event, or a concept that is connected to their major/interests. For the finale, students participate in a debate and persuade about issues of diversity and/or social justice as those issues connect with their major/interests. In this example, speech topics and research act as preparation for subsequent speeches. In fact, the informational speech topic is the same topic that the students use for the final debate. For instance, a student who informs about green energy in the penultimate speech of the semester would attempt to persuade audience members to “go green” during the final debate.

Next in Burke’s pentad is agency. Agency, in the sense of plot, can be the means by which the students of
the Basic Communication Course act. The agency can be made clear via a day-by-day course schedule. This “doing things with words” is necessary for Burke in order to teach diverse learners (Payne, 2005). This author uses a table that lists the scheduled meetings of the course, the class topics, assignment due dates, and reading materials that will be covered (Appendix). With this model, students are able to clearly see how assignments build toward one another. In other words, students can see how the plot will unfold.

As with any good narrative, a syllabus should also have a purpose, or a point. For the Basic Communication Course, and depending on the specific type of course that the Basic Communication Course may employ, the purpose may vary. In general, the rationale should address such issues as what population of students will be served, what student needs the course meets, and what institutional, community, or societal needs the course may connect to. In other words, the rationale should make clear what the teacher is doing and why (Diamond, 2008). Another way of looking at a rational is to call it a set of beliefs (Olshtain & Dubin, 1986) that specifies the purpose of the course (Taylor & Richards, 1979). This author lists the rational of the Basic Communication Course last in the syllabus in accordance with the order of Burke’s pentad (Appendix). The author’s purpose is to prepare students for public articulation of meaningful topics (issues of social justice and diversity) in an increasingly global job market. The point is that students ought to be able to persuade about meaningful topics in their field upon graduation, such as during a job interview, as opposed to having experience persuading about such typical public speaking
topics as seat belt usage or lowering the state drinking age.

Applying Burke's pentad to the syllabus can make for a synthetic Basic Communication Course. For example, in the introduction speech, an education major may discuss why they chose to become a teacher and how attending an inner-city school affected their learning. For the narrative speech, the student could tell a story about a turning point in their life when they realized they wanted to become a teacher. For the ceremonial speech, the student could deliver a tribute about a diverse teacher that overcame obstacles similar to their own. The student could next inform about inner-city school environments. And at the end of the semester, the student could participate in a debate about why inner-city schools should receive more state resources. This form allows each presentation to prepare the student for the next presentation, builds each assignment toward a finale, and leads the student to the rationale, in this case to be able to effectively articulate about issues the student will face when they enter the job market.

The implications of this essay for multiple formats of the basic communication course vary in the types of assignments that instructors require of their students. For example, the teacher of a writing-intensive Basic Communication Course should formally connect the writing assignments together so that they build toward a finale. A teacher of a Basic Communication Course that defines and discusses the ethical implications of human communication should make sure each assignment builds on the next assignment and prepares the student to fulfill the course rationale. In any case, the design of the
Basic Communication Course should follow Burke’s pentad.

The application of Burke’s pentad to this author’s syllabus makes for an "organic classroom," one that focuses on the link between critical rhetorical pedagogy and community action (Schneider, 2006). This multiple-lens approach is the opposite of what Burke would call a "terministic screen" (Melzer, 2009). As Burke (1969) has pointed out, students do not yet see argument as part of everyday life. By fashioning the Basic Communication Course syllabus to follow Burke’s pentad, students can be shown how important argument is to their success (Petit, et. Al., 2002) and how language can have an effect in their world (Arabella, 2009).

**SUMMARY**

The syllabus is an appeal (Georgia State University, 2008; Munby, 1978; O’Brian & Millis, 2008). By applying Burke’s ideas about matter and form, specifically via Burke’s pentad, the Basic Communication Course syllabus takes on congruous form and builds toward an ending, a finale. Assignments become intrinsically connected, essentially interesting, and thus satisfy student’s appetites for form. When syllabi are developed with form in mind, students have a map—a structure for the course material—and know where the course is taking them.

The goal of this essay is to develop a synthetic view of the syllabus. Other Burkean ideas can inform the Basic Communication Course. For example, Burke’s term of "identifying" with another person who shares your
values and beliefs (1969) can be applied in the public speaking course, an introduction to communication course, as well as other forms that the basic communication course takes (Petit et al., 2002). Burke’s ideas could also inform a class in new media and how visual cues provide agency (Yancey, 2009).

Using Burke’s theories to inform the Basic Communication Course is an intuitive connection considering that Burke’s ideas are central to the understanding of communication in general. But the ideas set forth in this paper need not be confined to the Basic Communication Course. Other communication courses may benefit from the implementation of form to the syllabus. For example, a writing oriented communication course could have assignments that build upon one another and end with a public presentation. Indeed, all syllabi, regardless of the discipline, could benefit from effectively intertwining the syllabus and assignments. In any case, we have, in the end, a more synthetic view of syllabus and course design for the Basic Communication Course that is more valuable and valued than usual practices.

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APPENDIX

Note: The author abbreviated the syllabus below, most notably in the narrative descriptions of the assignments, for the sake of brevity. Essential information was retained in order to provide a sufficient example for the suggestions presented in this essay.

Basic Communication Course 0052
Spring 2011

Dr. Kristen Lynn Majocha
Office Hours: M W F 1-2pm
Room 249 Biddle Hall
Phone: x7205; Email: klynn@pitt.edu

Course Description: This course is designed to enhance your speaking skills as an effective performer and audience member of a diverse world. You will generate speeches that relate to you and relate to a diverse world. You will understand field related issues of diversity and social justice. You will also learn how to evaluate peer speeches on the same issues.

Course Objectives:
• To develop voice and body language skills for the effective delivery of speeches.
• To develop speeches which demonstrate a positive awareness of issues of diversity and issues of social justice.
• To structure speeches which are considerate of diverse audiences.
Syllabi According to Kenneth Burke

- To demonstrate effective defense of ideas, beliefs, and values that demonstrate a positive awareness of diversity and social justice.
- To evaluate peer speeches for effective performance and for evidence of a positive awareness of diversity and social justice.


Policies

Disability Accommodations: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your teacher and the Office of Disability Services (ODS), G04 Student Union Building, (814) 269-7062 as early as possible in the term. ODS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s ideas and/or work as your own. This will result in failure of the assignment and possibly of the course. In extreme cases, University action may be taken. Be sure to properly reference ideas and information that are not originally your own.

Academic Integrity: A breech of academic integrity includes, but is not limited to, “Indulges, during a class session in which one is a student, in conduct which is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the instructor or fellow students”.

Basic Communication Course Annual
Attendance: Attendance is required and is mandatory. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class period.

Late Deductions: Late work will receive a 10% deduction for each day it is late. Unexcused absences on presentation days will result in failure of the assignment.

Test Taking Policy: Unexcused absences on test days will result in failure of the test.

Electronic Device Policy: Uses of cell phones and other electronic devices is not permitted during lecture or speeches.

Assignments

Introductory Speech (extemporaneous, 50 points): Two-minute speech about yourself. Discuss where you are from, your major/interests, and either what issues of diversity you face, what you think diversity is, or what you think social justice is.

Narrative Speech (extemporaneous, 100 points): Three-minute speech where you tell a story that either connects to your career interests or about how you became interested in your major.

Ceremonial Speech (manuscript, 100 points): Four-minute special occasion speech about a diverse contributor to your major/interests. A word-for-word manuscript is required.
Informational Speech (extemporaneous, 200 points): Five-minute speech about an object, a process, an event, or a concept that is connected to your major/interests. All topics must be approved by the teacher. A written outline is required.

Debate (extemporaneous and impromptu, 300 points): You will participate in a twelve-minute debate with a peer persuading on either a fact, value, or policy about issues of diversity and/or social justice as these issues connect with your major/interests. All topics must be approved by the teacher. A written outline for the construction portion of the debate is required.
### Tentative Schedule

*Changes May be Made by Instructor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 1/5</td>
<td>Syllabus review; personality types and public speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 1/7</td>
<td>Stage fright; Ethics, diversity, and social justice</td>
<td>Chapters 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 1/10</td>
<td>Listening; Intro/transitions/conclusions; speech overview</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 1/12</td>
<td>Introductory Speeches (choose numbers)</td>
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<td>F 1/14</td>
<td>Introductory Speeches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 1/17</td>
<td>University Closed, no class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 1/19</td>
<td>Presenting the speech, language use, narrative speeches</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 1/21</td>
<td>Speech preparation—outlining the speech</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 1/24</td>
<td>Narrative Speeches</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 1/26</td>
<td>Narrative Speeches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 1/28</td>
<td>Ceremonial speaking, ceremonial speech overview</td>
<td>Chapter 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 1/31</td>
<td>Presenting the speech - delivery</td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 2/2</td>
<td>Speech preparation; visual aids</td>
<td>Chapters 9 &amp; 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2/4</td>
<td>Ceremonial Speeches</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/7</td>
<td>Ceremonial Speeches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 2/9</td>
<td>Informational speaking; info speech overview; topics</td>
<td>Chapters 4 &amp; 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 2/11</td>
<td>Organizing the body of the speech, audience surveys</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<td>Tentative Schedule (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/14</td>
<td>Audience survey distribution (choose speaking order)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 2/16</td>
<td>Team meetings, have outline; choose peers to evaluate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2/18</td>
<td>Supporting ideas, Power Point</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 2/21</td>
<td>Handling question and answer sessions; residual messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 2/23</td>
<td>Chapters 5, 6, &amp; 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 2/25</td>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 2/28</td>
<td>Speaking to persuade: Debate overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 3/2</td>
<td>Spring recess, no class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 3/4</td>
<td>Spring recess, no class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 3/7</td>
<td>Choose a topic (choose debate partner and topic)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 3/10</td>
<td>Method of persuasion (choose debate day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 3/18</td>
<td>Toolmanizing arguments; choose peers to evaluate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M 3/21</td>
<td>Table Topics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 3/23</td>
<td>Debate workshop (in class)</td>
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<td>F 3/25</td>
<td>Debate workshop (in class)</td>
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<td>M 3/28</td>
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Course Rationale: To prepare you for public articulation of meaningful topics (issues of social justice and diversity) in an increasingly global job market. The point is that when you are asked questions in a job interview, you ought to be able to answer those questions in an informed and persuasive way.
Author Biographies

Marlina M. Davidson (M.A., University of Nebraska, Omaha, 2005) is a lecturer in the School of Communication and Speech Center Consulting Coordinator for the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In the UNO Speech Center she consults with faculty, staff and students on presentation skills and instructional communication techniques. She teaches public speaking, interviewing and the Speech Capstone classes. She is currently finishing her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Her research interests include organizational communication, basic course, and training and development.

Karen Kangas Dwyer (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1995) is the Robert T. Reilly Diamond Professor and Assistant Director of the School of Communication at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). She has published textbooks, instructor’s manuals, and several articles related to teaching public speaking, public speaking anxiety, instructional communication, and connected classroom climate. She has received the UNO and Nebraska state-wide teaching awards and has served on four editorial boards for communication journals. Her work has included developing the UNO Speech Center, teaching special public speaking classes and workshops for highly apprehensive communicators, as well as developing a graduate program in human resources and training. In addition, she is the author of
the book *Conquer Your Speech Anxiety* and the co-author of the Dutch public speaking book *Vanzelf-sprekend*. The UNO Basic Course Program that she has directed for 16 years received the National Communication Association Basic Course Division Program of Excellence Award for 2010.

**Brandi N. Frisby** (Ph.D., West Virginia University, 2010) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Kentucky. She has published over 15 journal articles focused on interpersonal and instructional communication. She reviews for over 10 journals and serves in leadership positions for both the National Communication Association and the International Communication Association.

**Jennifer Heisler** (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2001) is an Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Communication and Journalism at Oakland University. Heisler is the Faculty Advisor of Iota Eta, the Communication Honor Society. Heisler teaches Communication Theory and various Interpersonal and Family Communication courses. Heisler is an active researcher focusing on interpersonal issues within the family. Her current work examines the socialization of gender through parent-child communication. Her publications can be found in *Journal of Family Communication, Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, Communication Quarterly, Communication Teacher,* and *Communication Education*.

**Flaviu A. Hodis** (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) is a senior lecturer in the School of Educa-
tional Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

**Georgeta M. Hodis** (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) is a research and development officer in the Jessie Hetherington Centre for Educational Research, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

**Emily Holler** (M.A., Eastern Illinois University) is Public Speaking Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Communication and Public Speaking Coordinator at Kennesaw State University. In addition to teaching multiple sections of Public Speaking each semester, she also teaches Human Communication, Interviewing, and Health Communication.

**Adam C. Jones** (Ph.D., University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2007) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Illinois College. Paul Schrodt (Ph.D., University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2003) is the Philip J. and Cheryl C. Burguières Professor, Graduate Director, and Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Texas Christian University. A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2010 Central States Communication Association’s annual convention in Cincinnati, OH.

**Katherine N. Kinnick**, Ph.D., is director of Pre-College Programs and Professor of Communication at Kennesaw State University. She has taught the Public Speaking course since 1993. In 2010, she was selected as the recipient of KSU’s highest faculty award, the Dist-

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tistinguished Professor Award. She was named KSU’s Distinguished Teaching Award winner in 2003. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Previously, she had a ten-year career in agency and nonprofit public relations.

Kristen Lynn Majocha (Ph.D., ) is an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and has taught the basic public speaking course for seven years and served as Graduate Student Director of the Public Speaking course while at Duquesne University. Recent publications include “Diversity and Social Justice: Transforming the Public Speaking Course Syllabus,” Pennsylvania Communication Annual (volume 66, 2010), and “(Dis)Covered Bridges: Public Articulation and the College Classroom” (second author) accepted for publication in Intertexts.

Audra L. McMullen (Ph.D., Ohio University, 2000) is an Associate Professor and Communication Studies Coordinator in the Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies at Towson University. She also works with TU’s nationally ranked speech and debate program. McMullen is author/co-author of over 15 articles focusing primarily on instructional communication and communicating with people with physical disabilities.

Michelle Moreau is Coordinator of the Communication Center and Instructor in the School of Communication Studies. Her research interests are speech pedagogy, communication centers and PowerPoint. Michelle received a BA and MA in Speech Communication from the
University of Alabama. Michelle taught communication at the University of South Alabama for seven years and served as Basic Course Director, training graduate students to teach public speaking.

**C. Leigh Nelson** is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at James Madison University. She received her doctorate from Purdue University and her Masters from Washington State University. Her research is focused on the intersection between mass media and interpersonal communication. More recently her scholarship has focused on alcohol use across various communication contexts. She has also conducted research in communication anxiety, help-seeking, and the impacts of communication center usage.

**Robert J. Sidelinger** (Ed.D., West Virginia University, 2008) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism at Oakland University. He has published over 15 journal articles focused on interpersonal and instructional communication. His publications can be found in *Communication Education, Basic Communication Course Annual, Communication Studies, Communication Quarterly*, and *Communication Research Reports*. His instructional communication research primarily focuses on student-to-student connectedness in the college classroom.

**Toni S. Whitfield**, is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at James Madison University. She holds a Doctorate in Education and a Masters degree in Communication from the University of West Florida. Dr. Whitfield has conducted research in the areas of...
communication anxiety, help-seeking, and the impacts of communication center usage. She has also conducted research on pedagogical issues such as: service learning and preparation of graduate students in higher education.
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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 non-traditional 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.

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