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Editor’s Page

Over the past 20 years, the basic communication course has become a staple of many of general education programs. The ability to communicate effectively is viewed as a prerequisite to interpersonal relationships, success in the workplace, and meaningful participation as a citizen in our democracy. The role of the basic communication course in general education affords the discipline with substantial political capital on many campuses—administrators often look to the basic course as an ideal location for launching new initiatives and capturing important data regarding student learning outcomes. To the extent that basic course directors are able to deliver those initiatives effectively, they may earn additional access to university resources. Without question, this is an important course. For more than 20 years the Basic Communication Course Annual has been the preeminent outlet for scholarship exploring and debating the best practices for the basic course in communication and this volume continues that tradition.

The articles presented in this volume of the Annual cover a wide range of topics that advance our understanding of basic course scholarship, practice, and pedagogy. Initially, the lead article in this volume by Valenzano explores the role of the basic communication course in general education and encourages readers to consider how the course might be protected from the some of the changes washing across the landscape of higher education.

Thompson and Robinson’s article examines classroom power through the implementation of critical reflection exer-
cises aimed at promoting student agency and learning in the basic course classroom. Their research provides clear guidelines for basic course instructors in terms of implementing critical reflection practices in the communication classroom. Hodis and Hodis examine static (cross-sectional) and dynamic (longitudinal) relations among communication apprehension, communicative self-efficacy, and willingness to communicate in the public speaking context. Their findings advance our understanding of basic course instruction and open new avenues for theory development.

Davidson and Dwyer’s research explores student use of an e-textbook in a large multi-section basic public speaking course. Their results may be surprising to some readers in that they indicate that participants preferred traditional textbooks to e-texts. Similarly, their results demonstrate that when it comes to e-textbook reading, participants preferred computers to smaller devices like iPads and cellular phones.

The next two manuscripts explore the development of students’ public skills in the basic course. Farris and Houser assess the validity of two instruments (Informative Presentation Assessment Form and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form) measuring student public speaking competency. This study also examines the development of students’ public speaking skills after receiving training and the findings provide support that instruction positively influences competency. The next study by Gaffney and Frisby explores students’ perceptions of changes in efficacy and affect toward a variety of communication skills (e.g., interpersonal, writing, visual, public speaking, group collaboration) over a sequence of two hybrid basic course classes. Their results have implications for assignment sequences and should stimulate some debate among basic course directors about the efficacy of requiring two basic courses in communication to maximize student learning outcomes.

The final two articles in this volume examine the use of International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) in the basic course
and the importance of goal setting in basic course pedagogy. Initially, Miyazaki and Yamada discuss how non-native English speaker identity, or non-nativeness is displayed, developed, and negotiated through interactions with both native and other non-native speakers. Finally, LeFebvre examines how goal setting strategies and self-generated feedback from video affects student grade improvement on subsequent speaking occasions.

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.

Sincerely,

Steve Hunt (Editor)
Joe Mazer (Associate Editor)
Directing the Winds of Change:
The Basic Course and General Education ...................... 1
Joseph M. Valenzano III

Communication departments remain heavily reliant on the inclusion of an introductory communication course in their institution's general education program. For this reason it is essential for Basic Course Directors (BCDs) to educate themselves on general education. In doing so they will find a new iteration of change to general education where the required course and distribution model are disappearing in favor of an interdisciplinary outcomes-driven approach. Such a shift can have dramatic repercussions on the basic course and communication programs if the course is not further connected with other areas of general education. In this essay, I argue for Basic Course Directors to rethink how they design their respective courses so that they are better protected from the changes sweeping the landscape of general education. To do so, I provide a brief overview of the history of general education, detail the importance of the basic course to communication departments and external constituencies, and provide some suggestions for guiding a “re-imagining” of the basic course.
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Assessing the Transition of Student Public Speaking Competence
Kristen LeBlanc Farris, Marian L. Houser, Crystal D. Wotipka

Public speaking remains one of the most sought-after skill sets by employers. However, a method to accurately assess these public speaking skills has long been debated by educators and scholars alike (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). This study sought to examine the assessment tools used to demonstrate student learning of public speaking skills in the hybrid orientation of the basic communication course. Statistical analyses were conducted to determine the validity of two assessment instruments (Informative Presentation Assessment Form and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form) measuring student public speaking competency. Results established concurrent validity of the two assessment instruments used to measure students’ public speaking competency for the informative and persuasive presentations. Another goal of the current study was to assess the change in student public speaking behaviors after receiving public speaking training. A pre-post design was used to determine whether trained or untrained students would improve more throughout the course of the semester. Results revealed the trained group experienced a greater increase in competency than the untrained group. Discussion and implications for future research are included.

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Amy L. Housley Gaffney, Brandi N. Frisby

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and affect toward a variety of communication skills (e.g., interpersonal, writing, visual, public speaking, group collaboration) over a sequence of two hybrid basic course classes. As part of a larger assessment initiative, both quantitative and qualitative data from the first course (n = 793) and the second course (n = 273) were analyzed. Students reported greater affect and efficacy during the second course when compared to the first course. Specifically, students reported six affective changes including expanded knowledge, enhanced collaborative skills, increased openness and acceptance, heightened awareness, increased confidence, and the ability to critically examine. The students referenced observing these changes in academic and work life, but most frequently felt that these skills would impact their everyday life. The results have implications for assignment sequences, incorporating visual communication into the basic course, and requiring two basic courses to maximize affect and efficacy changes in students.

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not monolithic but is more relational and multilayered than it tends to be assumed. Obtaining a teaching position was an epiphany for our relationship, changing the perceptions about and attitude toward our own non-nativeness. Our narrative about the issue at hand speaks not only for other ITAs but also for all groups of people involved in basic communication education. Two practical implications are presented to better the entire basic communication situation. We suggest that holding “enacting voice sessions” provides all teaching assistants and a course director with opportunities to share their voices about teaching, and that the discussion about non-nativeness of ITAs needs to be incorporated into the public speaking classroom to cultivate students’ understandings of cultural diversity in their everyday context.

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Directing the Winds of Change: The Basic Course and General Education

Joseph M. Valenzano III

“Since changes are going on anyway, the great thing is to learn enough about them so that we will be able to lay hold of them and turn them in the direction of our desires. Conditions and events are neither to be fled from nor passively acquiesced in; they are to be utilized and directed.” – John Dewey

These words, spoken by American education reformer John Dewey near the turn of the twentieth century, remain relevant today—specifically for Basic Course Directors (BCD). Change is a constant in higher education, sometimes moving at a rapid pace, other times at a more glacial rate. In the past such changes have been a boon for Communication departments, resulting in the addition of the basic course to general education requirements. Now, however, forces of change in general education threaten to remove the basic course from the list of required or recommended courses on several campuses—that is, unless, as Dewey advises, departments become proactive and “lay hold of” the forces of change.

The basic course provides the curricular and financial foundation of Communication departments across the country, and if removed from the list of required courses could decimate a unit. This is why BCDs must
educate themselves on the shifting focus of general education taking place within the American Association of Colleges and University (AACU), and relevant accrediting bodies. Then, to maintain the place of communication education in the curriculum for their students, they need to adapt their courses in a way that responds to the new interdisciplinary outcomes-based direction of general education.

In this essay I will argue that changing the approach to designing the foundational communication course is necessary to better secure the place of the basic course in general education at any institution. To make this case I first demonstrate how tenuous placement in general education can be by briefly describing the history of the structure of general education programs and detailing how it is changing today. I then explain how the basic course’s current configuration in many cases continues to leave it vulnerable to elimination or reduction within general education programs. Finally, I propose a way for BCDs to pivot their class designs in such a way that not only preserves the place of the basic course in the undergraduate curriculum, but creates a stronger course that is less likely to be threatened in the future.

**GENERAL EDUCATION: A PRIMER**

In order to appreciate the gravity of the situation facing undergraduate education it is essential to understand the fluid history and current context of general education programs in higher education. In this section I provide a brief history of the ever-changing structure of higher education. I will then explain what the AACU
and other accrediting bodies across the country are asking institutions to move their general education programs towards today.

**A Brief History of General Education**

The history of general education is the story of managing curricular tensions within America’s colleges and universities. The first tension is definitional, whereby general education is often conflated with liberal education. This is the “depth versus breadth argument” that is all too common even today. The second involves curricular choice and required courses. It is the most prevalent, and has resulted in several significant adjustments to the undergraduate experience since the nineteenth century. Then there is the friction between what the government and higher education institutions see as the purpose of higher education: skills versus knowledge. Finally, on campuses everywhere we find the fight between disciplinary and departmental interests, and the desire for an interdisciplinary foundation in a student’s education. To understand the myriad dimensions of the debate over general education it is important to understand its definition and history.

General education is often conflated with liberal education when, in fact, they are different aspects of a curriculum. Liberal education involves the pursuit of “knowledge for its own sake,” while general education refers to curricula designed to help students do things, such as think critically and behave ethically (Cohen & Brawer, 1996, pp. 342-343). These are not mutually exclusive, per se, and in fact what we now refer to as a university or college’s general education program com-
bines both the knowledge component of a liberal education and the practical dimensions of general education so that “undergraduates should acquire an ample store of knowledge, both in depth, by concentrating on a particular field, and in breadth, by devoting attention to several different disciplines. They should gain the ability to communicate with precision and style, a basic competence in quantitative skills...and a capacity to think clearly and critically.” (Bok, 1986, p. 54). General education, as Cohen and Brawer (1996) argue in the case of community colleges, is necessary to ensure that all students receive both knowledge and skills in their education. Thus, today, general education involves educating students about the broad concerns of multiple disciplines while training them in the theories and practices of one area of specialty. This model, however, is a recent phenomenon in higher education and although common, is delivered within various different structures on campuses across the country.

Higher education did not always subscribe to the major/concentration area model of curriculum delivery. In fact, Harvard University initially required a set curriculum for all students. This set curriculum was not general education, but rather the education every student received—there were no majors (Boning, 2007). In 1828 a document known as the Yale Report first raised the specter of curricular reform by opening a debate over the true purpose of higher education, calling upon university education to focus on developing the minds of students (Bourke, Bray & Horton, 2009). This report proved a bit before its time, because it was not until the presidency of Charles Eliot in 1869 that Harvard reformed the undergraduate experience by creating an in-
individualized elective system for every student, thus resulting in a broader range of course offerings available to students (Miller, 1988). It exponentially and irrevocably increased the influence and importance of academic departments on college campuses (Wehlburg, 2010).

The focus on mental development in the Yale Report and Harvard curricular changes were not the only events during the nineteenth century that indelibly left their mark on general education. The government passed one of the single most important pieces of legislation, the Morrill Land-Grant Act, in 1862. This law provided funding for each state to establish at least one institution of higher learning devoted to the development of skills and knowledge in agriculture and mechanics (Wehlburg, 2010). This federally-backed focus seemingly ran counter to the development of the mind sought in places such as Harvard and Yale. With this act, the government promoted education aimed at supporting industry, but it also opened the doors of higher education to a larger segment of the population. The Morrill Land-Grant Act thus initiated a debate over whether education should equip students with, as Martin Luther King, Jr. would later state in his commencement address to Morehouse College in 1948, “noble ends, rather than means to an end.” The end result of both this piece of federal legislation and the internal machinations of schools such as Harvard and Yale was the gradual elimination of a coherent undergraduate education in American colleges and universities, and a focus on advancing knowledge in a number of specific disciplines (Gaff, 1983).
A desire for a stronger curriculum led to several general education reform movements throughout the twentieth century. The first to note took place at Harvard under the direction of Eliot’s successor, Abbott Lawrence Lowell. Lowell dismantled his forebear’s elective structure in favor of a distribution model of undergraduate education. Students now could not select whatever courses they wished to study, and instead were required to take foundation courses in biology, physical sciences, social sciences and humanities so that there was a general experience for all students (Thomas, 1962). This model became quite popular due to its common curriculum that still preserved some degree of choice for students, and many other institutions across the country emulated the approach in principle (Cohen, 1988). As more and more schools adopted a general education program that provided information relevant to all students, the format and content of the model began to vary. General education reform thus took the form of a reaction to the overspecialization of the elective system by redeploying an integrated approach to general education through the departmental model (Wehlburg, 2010).

Efforts to begin formalizing a combination of the disciplinary structure of institutions and the desired integrated general education curriculum began again at Harvard in the middle of the twentieth century. In 1945 Harvard published a report entitled “General Education in a Free Society,” which detailed a need for such a combination (as cited in Wehlburg, 2010, p. 6). Although the specific recommendations of the report were not adopted, the idea of protecting against students overspecializing in specific areas without understanding the integrated nature of knowledge fundamentally al-
tered general education. Since the publication of the Harvard report institutions have sought to balance the needs of what all students should know with the needs of education in specific disciplines through some form of the distribution model.

The tension between these two concepts that are central to the mission of higher education saw more tumult in the 1960s and 1970s. The government again burst the doors of access wide open with the Higher Education Act of 1965 which created scholarships and loans for students, and ultimately created a more diverse student body than ever before. As a result, students demanded a general education program that reflected their diversity and helped prepare them for the workplace (Gaff, 1983, Boning 2007, Wehlburg, 2010). This resulted in a smaller general education program, more discipline specific electives, and fewer interdisciplinary courses for students. Students and faculty made little effort to connect the general education courses all students took to the content within their specific domains of study. With the pendulum swinging back toward specialization—this time through a concerted effort of both students and faculty—the perception of general education as something to be “checked off” as having been completed grew.

The course based distribution model of general education ultimately came under fire in a report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1977). It called the state of general education a “disaster area” and argued it destroyed the integrity and value of an undergraduate degree. This report was not without its effects, as it sparked another wave of reform in higher education. Schools across the country changed
the structure and foci of their general education curriculum, but largely maintained some semblance of a distribution model. Between 1977 and the turn of the twenty-first century, general education remained a slave to the ideas of the elective and distribution models, and sought to balance the teaching of knowledge with the training in skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. Change took the form of adding new classes and distribution areas to the general education curriculum, rather than examining and adjusting the existing problematic model (Brint, et al, 2009).

In recent years, however, educational associations such as the AACU and national accreditation agencies have sought to remedy this reliance by shifting the focus from what students do while they are in school, to what they can do when the finish it. In the next section, I detail the current efforts of general education reform to better explain how BCDs can seize control of reforming their own courses, for the purpose of better positioning them as part of general education in the future.

Reforming General Education in the Twenty-First Century

Reforming general education seems to be a constant effort on college and university campuses across the country. In fact, according to a 2009 report by Hart Research Associates commissioned by the AACU, 89% of member institutions were “in some stage of assessing and modifying their general education program” (p. 2). Additionally, of that number, 56% also indicated that general education had become a priority for their institution, but half also indicated their programs did not integrate well with major areas of study (Hart Research
Associates, 2009). In effect, for the majority of institutions, general education had evolved into something separate from a student’s educational experience—a checklist of sorts that had little to no relevance to their college education.

What makes this data even more shocking is that in 1994 the AACU examined member institution general education requirements and found something similar. They determined that the loose distribution model of general education resulted in three specific problems, all detrimental to a student’s education: 1) general education curricula lacked any type of organizing philosophy that students could understand, thus encouraging them to see general education as distinct from their major experience; 2) curricula were fragmented, and even within general education there was no connection between courses students were required to take; and 3) students did not see a valid reason for studying general education content, and thus lacked motivation to learn core concepts within the liberal arts (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 1994). In short, general education was neither general, nor seen as education, and as the Hart Report later indicated, little had changed to remedy these issues in fifteen years.

Despite the arthritically slow response to the calls for general education reform since the late 1970’s, there has been some effort to repair the undergraduate educational experience. AACU recently launched the “Liberal Education and America’s Promise” (LEAP) initiative to create systemic change in the nation’s educational infrastructure. Through the program AACU partners with educators of every level to encourage the inclusion of four components to curricula at every level: assessment,
high impact learning practices, essential learning outcomes and inclusive excellence. In its short existence the program has compiled resources to defend the importance of liberal education and general education from economic, civic and democratic standpoints (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2002).

In addition to the LEAP initiative, the AACU has also encouraged institutions to change their approach to general education from one grounded in the distribution model, to a form that focuses on achieving outcomes. This model does not require courses, per se, but student achievement of core competencies through assessing a variety of educational experiences both within and outside the major area of study. An example of such a program can be found at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There, general education moved from a convoluted hard to follow distribution model to a core “centered around student achievement of ten distinct learning outcomes” and a commitment “to assessing student achievement of the outcomes” (Fuess, Jr. & Mitchell, 2011, p. 6). The program, now called “Achievement Centered Education (ACE),” “provides students with opportunities to develop and apply relevant skills, knowledge and social responsibilities regardless of their majors or career plans (Fuess, Jr. & Mitchell, 2011, p. 6). Students must pass an ACE-certified course for each outcome, but multiple courses can fulfill specific outcomes, thus essentially doing away with the traditional required course model for general education.

The changes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are instructive. They embody the type of systemic change the AACU and accrediting bodies across the country are looking for because the curriculum is guided
by student learning outcomes, something now required by all regional accreditors (Wehlburg, 2010). Their transparent approach eliminated confusion regarding the new general education program, and illustrates that “by detailing their approaches to general education institutions leave little room for guesswork on the part of students or faculty” (Bourke, et al, 2009, p. 234.). Their dynamic attempt to integrate general education into majors creates the possibility for “a new and better understanding of the undergraduate educational experience” (Wehlburg, 2010, p. 10) for students and faculty. The hope of such systemic change at all institutions, as Wehlburg puts it, is establishing “a coherent educational program that combines all of a student’s educational experiences [that] might increase retention and overall learning” (Wehlburg, 2010, p. 10). The drive toward outcomes-based general education programs represents a significant change from the near 175-year tradition of elective and distribution models, and if BCDs do not design their courses with this approach in mind, they may lose their status as a central component of general education at their institution.

**General Education: Summary**

The history of general education is one colored by constant change, and today we see the latest iteration of that change. What makes this reform movement different, however, is the shift away from a focus on specific courses and departments toward an outcomes-driven interdisciplinary undergraduate experience. Such a move spells significant change for the way departments, communication included, deliver their major and participate in campus wide curricular endeavors. In the
next section of this essay I explain why it is essential for communication departments and BCDs to remain committed to involvement with their institution’s general education programs.

**THE BASIC COURSE AND GENERAL EDUCATION**

The basic course in communication mirrors general education in several ways. It is an animal that has evolved over time, and is integrated into the undergraduate experience in different ways at different institutions. The attention communication scholars pay it in this regard demonstrates how significant the course is to the discipline. Additionally, much like general education, instruction in oral communication is also seen as essential by external constituencies both on and off campus. What the literature and the definition of the basic course must be attuned to, however, is that both employers and on-campus constituencies believe in the necessity of “oral communication” skills for students, but they do not say what that means, nor do they stipulate it must be provided by communication departments. These vagaries leave the basic course open to criticism and under threat. In this section of the essay I detail the laudable and extensive study devoted to the basic course and demonstrate how it shows the vital nature of the course to departments and the discipline at large. I also illustrate how the demands of external constituencies, although on the surface seemingly endorsements of the basic course, contain a potential threat to the place of the course in undergraduate education. As such, I argue the course must adapt itself to the interdisciplinary outcome-centered nature of general
education reform, or risk losing its position in a student’s education.

The basic course is a central component to most communication departments across the country, so much so that there is an annual peer-reviewed journal (The Basic Communication Course Annual) devoted to examining the class in all its forms. Although the course itself has changed over the years, and even today is delivered in various different formats depending upon the make-up and needs of a particular institution, survey studies tracking those changes consistently appear in some of the top journals of the field (i.e., Gibson, Gruner, Hanna, Smythe & Hayes, 1980; Gibson, Hanna & Huddleston, 1990; Morreale, Hanna, Berko & Gibson, 1999; Morreale, Hugenberg & Worley, 2006; Morreale, Worley & Hugenberg, 2010). The changes to the basic course tracked in these and other studies demonstrate the importance given the course by the discipline.

The expansive literature on the basic course shows support from members of the discipline for education in the skills and knowledge related to oral communication (i.e., Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000; Morreale & Pearson, 2008; Morreale, Worley & Hugenberg, 2010). Specifically, Morreale and Pearson (2008) argue for the centrality of communication instruction in the development of social, cultural and vocational skills in students. Hunt, Novak, Semlak and Meyer (2005) also found that critical thinking skills increase in students who take the basic course, and a later study argued that the basic course is exactly where critical thinking instruction should take place (Mazer, Hunt & Kuznekoff, 2007). In fact, Morreale, Worley and Hugenberg provided a comprehensive examination of the shifting structure and
delivery models of the basic course across the country in their 2010 survey which appeared in Communication Education. There is no denying that the discipline pays a great deal of attention to the basic course, and recognizes its importance to the field and undergraduate students.

It is no secret why scholars and departments care about the basic course. As Dance (2002) noted, “in many ways the undergraduate course in basic public speaking is the discipline’s ‘bread and butter’ course” (p. 355). It bears noting that public speaking is not the only format of the basic communication course, but regardless of its focus, the basic course is central to the communication discipline. The course serves several important functions that make this designation apt. First, it serves as the gateway to the discipline for students who may not be familiar with it, thus assisting in the recruitment of students to the major. Second, it serves as the most significant revenue producer for departments, allowing for additional resource allocations to be made to the unit. Third, it provides justification for continuing support of adjunct faculty and graduate programs to handle the significant teaching responsibilities associated with such a large enrollment course, which in turn allows full-time faculty to teach more specialized courses, advise graduate students and conduct research. The financial and recruiting windfall the course generates is yet another reason why the basic course is the lifeblood of the discipline.

The level of student demand for the course is often reliant on its inclusion in general education. For instance, Engleberg, Emanuel, Van Horn and Bodary (2008) found that 83% of two-year institutions require
at least one communication course for completion of general education requirements. Additionally, Morreale, Worley and Hugenberg (2010) found that 55.3% of four-year institutions reported the course was part of general education. This represents a significant number of students who travel through the department, often during their first or second year. In fact, as Deborah Craig has noted, “few departments on campus can boast a core course that is required of every student entering the institution” (2006, p. 245). Such evidence supports the notion that the basic course is a central recruiting and revenue tool for departments, regardless of whether it is a two or four year institution. What is noticeably absent from these analyses, however, is the fact that the primacy of the basic course is driven by the distribution model of general education that the AACU is encouraging institutions to shift away from. A major question facing departments going forward is how to retain the basic course as the place students receive communication instruction when, under an outcome-centered general education model, other units can develop oral communication courses that would compete with the basic course for the same population of students thereby reducing demand in communication departments. The impact of such developments on resource allocation and maintenance of graduate programs could be catastrophic for some communication departments.

The attention the discipline pays to the assessment and academic study of the basic course, as well as the more practical purposes the course serves for departments across the country, indicates the high degree of importance the course holds for the discipline. The National Communication Association (NCA) also articu-
lated as much in 1996 when, in its *Policy Platform Statement on the Role of Communication Courses in General Education*, it endorsed efforts on every campus to include oral communication instruction in general education programs. Their endorsement, however, was for a required course as part of general education, and, as already illustrated, the model of required courses as part of a distribution in general education is gradually going away in favor of outcomes based undergraduate programs. That said, it is an attempt by NCA to leverage the skills associated with the discipline and the interests of external constituencies to generate a place for the basic course in general education.

The importance of oral communication is not simply recognized by those who study it for a living, but by many other groups as well. In fact, both the AACU and NCA often tout the demand for training in communication skills in college curricula. In their 2009 report, Hart Research Associates referenced a study from 2006 commissioned by AACU that surveyed business leaders and executives regarding on what they felt colleges and universities should focus their energy, and it found 73% of them sought more attention on communication skills. Other organizations such as the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (2008-2009) echo the same desire. Crosling and Ward (2002) also used business surveys to argue for the inclusion of oral communication training in the education of business students. Even the national accrediting body for engineering includes effective communication skills in their desired goals for undergraduate students studying within their field (Kelly, 2008). Clearly, there is an external interest in the discipline and, specifically, the skills that the basic course

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provides. However, given these surveys are recent and ask for more of an effort on training in communication skills it bears noting the implicit argument is that communication departments and their current iterations of the basic course seem to not be doing an adequate job, thus creating a potential threat to disciplinary ownership of training in communication skills. Additionally, these reports focus on oral communication, but fail to define what that means, perhaps contributing to the notion communication departments might be missing the mark in the focus of current versions of the basic course.

The threat to the basic course in these seemingly positive endorsements seems quite clear, but how can the discipline and departments address it? The answer lies in the both the reliance on the delivery of skills as the focus of the basic course, and the move away from the distribution model toward an outcome-driven undergraduate education. The skills focused basic course does not have much, if any, integration with the rest of a student’s education, and now many departments are invited to develop courses that help fulfill a communication outcome for their students without having to have them take a course offered by the communication department. In fact, credit hour reduction movements at schools and in university systems across the country are forcing departments like business and engineering to look for places to trim general education credits, and oral communication is one place they have considered eliminating or reducing.

In actuality, this is not the first time the skills focus of the basic course has come under fire. Michael Leff, writing in 1992 upon taking up the role of BCD after
being away from the course for nearly twenty years, observed that the syllabi and structure of the basic public speaking course had not changed much since when he taught it in the 1970s. Additionally, Leff commented on how stagnant the basic course in communication was when compared to efforts to improve and update the basic course in English departments where, “in that precinct, the rhetorical revolution has made a firm imprint on the basic composition course. The venerable ‘product’ model and its accompanying typology of assignments (e.g., exposition, narration, argument) have receded and seem on the way to extinction” (p. 116). What Leff identified in his comparison of the evolution of the basic courses in Communication and English is only further magnified when one takes a cursory look at developments in English pedagogy.

English scholars have taken hold of the winds of curricular change and sought to adjust their basic course accordingly. To that end, they discuss how rhetorical education as conceived in their discipline is central in developing a whole education, one that “offers a bridge between worlds private and public, academic and civil” (Booth & Frisbie, 2004, p. 163.) English departments have sought to redefine the idea of the composition course as a service course by recasting it as connected with the whole education of students, rather than focusing on narrow instruction in grammar and composition (Lane, 2004). Such a shift represents a response to the move towards interdisciplinary integrated general education currently underway, and is helpful for communication departments who wish for their course to remain a relevant part of general education.
Due to the centrality of the basic course in growing the major, sustaining the department and educating students it is essential that BCDs stay ahead of the general education curve and integrate their courses more fully into their university’s curriculum. This will help reduce the perception of the basic course as something not connected to their education, while also making the course more meaningful and attractive as an option for students to take in an outcomes-driven general education program. In the next section I will offer a way to adjust designing basic courses in a format neutral manner so that they more clearly connect with other aspects of a student’s general education at any institution, while still highlighting parts of the communication discipline and preparing students for the beginning of their professional careers.

“Re-imagining” the Basic Course

There is no one standard basic course in communication, just as there is no one standard for general education, but that fact should not keep the two from being more directly and intentionally integrated. In fact, such integration will help preserve, and perhaps even enhance, the importance of communication instruction as a part of undergraduate general education. Integration is possible for any institution, regardless of the focus of their basic course. In fact the two dominant types of basic courses are, according to Morreale, Worley and Hugenberg (2010), public speaking and hybrid models as they account for 86.7% of the basic courses in the country. In this section I suggest a plan for “re-imagining” the basic course, regardless of its configuration, that will better integrate the basic course with general
education by focusing on the outcomes both campus and professional constituencies desire. This approach can transform the basic course into an outcomes-based course that serves the needs of students and universities. I also offer a brief example of what this course might look like after following this approach, as well as a discussion of possible challenges BCDs and departments might face in implementing such a change to the basic course.

Out with the Old: Starting the Basic Course from Scratch

One of the aspects of the history of general education reform that is instructive when beginning course reform is the responses of institutions following the Carnegie Report. Recall that in the decade following the harsh assessment of general education in that report institutions responded by simply adding new courses, essentially patching over the real problems rather than addressing the issues head on. This inevitably further exacerbated the problems with a disjointed and confusing general education program. The lesson here for course reform is to not simply change assignments or patch over the course, but to examine all aspects of the course at a critical, and even microscopic, level. This involves laying aside what a course currently does or what students do during the course (i.e. assignments), and focusing on what students should be able to do when they finish the course. The focus then becomes on skills that transcend contexts, rather than on developing and delivering context specific assignments or tasks. When students are taught to give a speech that’s all they will know how to do, but if they are taught how to explain
then that is something they can do in multiple situations, not just in a formal speech.

The first step to creating an outcomes-based basic course lies in setting aside traditional conventions of the basic course. This means that the basic course no longer should be labeled a “public speaking” or “hybrid” course, but rather a foundations of oral communication course. In this vein the course can focus on students learning certain oral communication skills and abilities, rather than simply being able to deliver a specific speech for a class, present a group project or even regurgitate memorized vocabulary regarding interpersonal communication. Just as AACU is concerned with what students can do when they leave an institution, BCDs should be concerned with what students can do upon completing their course—and they must be open to the idea that what that is may not be what they have been traditionally training them to do in the course. When BCDs are open to rethinking the goals, student learning objectives and specific outcomes of the course only then can they begin to identify what those things are, and that necessarily involves outreach to constituent campus and professional units.

**Identifying Constituents’ Needs**

Earlier, I pointed out that both client departments across campus as well as professional organizations strongly desire communication skills training for university students, however they fail to clearly articulate the type of oral communication skills they want taught. Traditionally, BCDs and communication departments interpreted this to mean skill in either public speaking or small group communication. The main responses,
then, are apparent from the 86.7% of schools that focus their basic courses on one or both of these skills. In an effort to focus on multiple oral communication skills some communication departments moved their courses to hybrid models that cover a little bit of several types of communication. As I demonstrated earlier, the problem with both of these models is clear: both client departments and company executives feel students still need more training in these areas because they are still underprepared in terms of oral communication skills when they graduate. So, two questions must be addressed when re-imaging the basic course into an outcome-based experience: 1) what do companies mean when they say “oral communication”?:; and, 2) what specific communication skills do client departments feel students need to learn and develop? The answer to these two questions should guide the creation of the student learning outcomes and goals for the basic course.

The communication needs of specific employers will vary depending upon the industry, but this does not mean the basic course should necessarily focus on a broad range of skills. Such an approach will water down the training students receive. Instead, there are two concrete ways to get a better idea as to what oral communication skills employers look for in students who graduate from a specific school. The first is to identify the primary employers who recruit students from your particular campus and engage them in a conversation about what exactly “oral communication” means to them. The second is to speak with alumni about the specific oral communication needs they had in the jobs they entered upon graduation.
Gathering employer data should not be too onerous a task for a BCD. Most institutions have Career Centers that track employers who recruit on campus. Working with them to make contacts at companies that actively try to hire graduates from an institution will help start conversations about the oral communication skills they seek in potential employees. In the event this is difficult, simply examine the employment needs of the community and state in which the institution resides. Look to see who in the community or state is hiring and what types of jobs they are hiring for. Contact their human resources department and ask what types of oral communication skills they seek in applicants. This information is useful when trying to determine what oral communication skills students should be able to demonstrate upon completing the basic course at your institution.

Engaging client departments and colleges on campus is an even easier task than contacting companies and prospective employers of students. It is in a BCDs best interest to reach out to ask faculty in Engineering, Business, Liberal Arts and Education divisions what they feel are the oral communication needs of their students. Ask them what they believe students need to know how to do that a basic course in communication can help provide. In the liberal arts, ask faculty what conceptual links can be made between other general education courses and the basic course in communication. This information will help you both serve the skills needs of students and faculty, as well as integrate the curriculum with the rest of a student’s education.

In making these contacts and holding these conversations BCDs must be prepared to find out that what
they are currently doing in the basic course is not what client departments and prospective employers want. For instance, if the course is currently a public speaking course, faculty and employers may report that giving a professional presentation is not what they envision as an important oral communication skill; rather, they may feel students need to know how to listen better, or explain something complex in a short period of time. Public speaking in this situation may not be the best way to instruct students how to do these things. Then again, they might find out they are hitting the mark; nevertheless, the outreach is beneficial.

At this stage of the process it is important for BCDs to pay close attention to how they frame the questions they ask. For example, asking someone what their students’ “public speaking needs” are encourages a specific understanding of the course that does not get at the skills and knowledge that should be the outcome of the course. Framing the query around what communication skills do your students need to learn or develop might prove more fruitful. So, before engaging in the interview, follow the rule of being prepared to ask questions that get the answers that will truly be helpful. Additionally, BCDs must avoid the trap of defending the current course design, and be open to change so it can best be understood and thus directed.

**An Outcomes Based Basic Course**

Once the oral communication needs of client departments and prospective employers are identified, BCDs can then design the course learning outcomes. These outcomes are called course goals by some, student learning objectives by others, but all invariably focus on
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what students should be able to do upon completion of the course. Outcomes and objectives are fundamentally different from assignments, and so they should not be phrased as an assignment, but rather a transcendent skill. The assignments are the means of determining how well the student demonstrates the skills. In this section I will give you some examples of outcomes a basic course might have and how the way they are articulated can provide flexibility in terms of assignments used to measure their achievement.

Just about any public speaking focused basic course contains modules on informative and persuasive speaking, but these are not necessarily good student learning objectives when described that way. When it comes to informative speaking the core goal is to explain a complicated topic to an audience of non-experts. When the learning outcome is conceived in this fashion, it impacts student topic selection, research requirements and the language skills necessary to accomplish the objective. That said, such a goal can be achieved and assessed through a speech, a small group assignment, or even a brief presentation. Thus, the outcome of the course is the ability to explain complex material, but there are multiple assignments which an instructor might use for the student to demonstrate this skill.

With regard to persuasive speaking, again the outcome is one of effective, ethical advocacy for a position—not the performance of a speech. In fact, advocacy occurs far more often in interpersonal and small group settings than in formal presentations to audiences. The objective, though, when understood as one of ethically advocating a position on a topic opens up different possible assignments to demonstrate this skill. Students could
deliver a formal address, work in a small group or engage in a conversation with a peer about an issue. All of these help students demonstrate a communication skill that crosses contexts.

While I have focused on just two potential outcomes of a basic course, they are by no means the only possible outcomes BCDs might identify by engaging client departments and employers. Perhaps civility, dialogue, collaboration or message analysis are key skills identified through this process. Nevertheless, focusing on the student learning objectives, and not the assignments used to measure them, allows BCDs flexibility in course construction, integrates the course with the needs of the rest of the campus, and positions it well in the push for an outcome-based general education that currently faces higher education across the country. In the next section I briefly detail how one campus, the University of Dayton, followed this approach in re-imaging their own basic course.

**Case Study: The University of Dayton**

Over the last six years the University of Dayton has been undergoing a dramatic change in its general education program, and the effect it has had on the basic course is illustrative of the challenges and necessary responses communication departments face with the move to outcomes-based higher education. In the first initial draft of the new general education program the university did not include the basic course, a decision that if left unchecked would have decimated the department. In reply to this draft the department engaged its core constituencies both on and off campus to determine what possible path forward existed.
Two faculty members met with members of departments from all the colleges on campus, as well as employers who hire graduates from the university on a consistent basis to determine their communication needs. The first reaction was one of, at best, ambivalence until the questions were reframed to encourage the respondents to think about the oral communication needs of their students. Ultimately four themes emerged, as there appeared to be a need for a course that would help students do the following: 1) explain complicated ideas to non-experts; 2) advocate a position in an ethical manner; 3) engage in civil dialogue where the goal is understanding, not necessarily agreement; and, 4) critique and respond to the oral messages of others. These four themes became the learning outcomes for the course.

The department then began construction on the new version of the basic course. Initially, multiple means of achieving those goals were tested in different pilot sections, and after three semesters of testing the new basic course began to take shape. This course uses both conversation as well as short presentations about controversial topics to assess how well students learn how to perform the course objectives. The assignments have changed slightly each term to better target achievement of the student learning outcomes, a hallmark of a flexible course that is achievement, not assignment, focused.

The course is also intentionally integrated with other aspects of the new general education program. Specifically, students study some material from classical rhetoricians like Aristotle and Plato whom they encounter in their history and philosophy courses. They also learn outlining and citation skills, which are covered in
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English courses as well. There are intentional areas of conceptual integration in the content of the course, but the focus still remains achieving student learning outcomes. Ultimately, the content and assignment are adjusted based upon assessment of student achievement of the core learning outcomes of the course, so it is always in a state of change, but that change is directed by the BCD and the department so that it maintains connections to the campus, university mission and career orientations of students.

Challenges to this Approach

Re-imagining the basic course is not a simple task, and does not come without challenges. In this section I will detail some of the obstacles to effectively redesigning a basic course from its current configuration as an assignment-focused distribution model fulfilling course, to a substantive outcomes-based component of an integrated general education curriculum.

Making even small changes to the content of the class can be a difficult proposition for a course and a discipline that is prone to instructional inertia. This inertia is borne out of the unique position in which BCDs find themselves: reporting to a chair, and responsible for recruiting, training and coordinating the efforts of a disparate group of instructors who are committed to the course and discipline, but not necessarily any particular institution or its goals. As Weber, Buekel-Rothfuss and Gray (1993) note in the opening line of their essay on basic course leadership, stories about BCDs running into walls with their superiors and the instructors in their charge are not uncommon at all. These same two parties that traditionally cause consternation in BCDs
might resist, to varying degrees and for different reasons, a reformulation of the course. Additionally, in an outcome-based model the course may be in a constant state of flux, thus increasing the attention a BCD must pay to training.

In their essay reviewing the status of the basic course, Morreale, Worley and Hugenberg (2010) reported on the major challenges faced by BCDs across the country. Topping the list was standardizing the basic course across sections, where 46.5% of two-year institutions and 55.6% of four year institutions reported it as a problem. They found that there are also differences between two and four year schools in that “two-year programs appear to more strongly favor teachers using the same syllabus and the same textbook, and meeting the same learning objectives” than four-year schools, and “two year schools permit teachers slightly greater autonomy in determining course content and instructional methods” (p. 417) than their four-year counterparts. The definition of consistency evidenced here is one of course content and assignments, rather than on course outcomes. Viewed this way the challenge to changing to an outcome-based basic course may very well be the disciplinary mindset and focus on assignments and content as the important part of a course, and not the abilities the course is designed to teach.

When the focus is on assignments and content one could look at an outcomes-based basic course and see it as promoting less consistency, but that is not necessarily accurate. So long as the same outcomes exist across sections, there will be consistency on what matters: achievement of the learning objectives. If different instructors use different assignments for students to dem-
onstrate achievement of the student learning outcomes, that is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, forcing someone to instruct and assess assignments with which they are unfamiliar may result in a poorer experience and less actual teaching in the classroom, than if that instructor could use assignments with which they are familiar and comfortable to assess the same learning outcomes. Additionally, in this approach there is no prohibition on BCDs establishing a specific set of assignments for all sections, so long as the assignment is determined to be the best way to assess achievement of the student learning outcomes. In fact, such an approach may be warranted if the BCD is responsible for training and supervising an army of adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants.

The second most significant problem reported by BCDs in that report relates to the first: qualifications of instructors. This problem is more prevalent at two-year schools where the need for more instructors is greater, but just shy of 20% of four year schools reported this as an issue as well. When there is a large enrollment course such as the basic course, schools often understandably must rely on adjuncts and graduate students who are not as committed or well versed in the discipline as full-time faculty. These adjuncts also bring varied levels of knowledge and experience to a course, thus affecting the consistency issue that topped the list of challenges faced by BCDs. Ultimately, such staffing decisions are a necessity for basic course instruction due to the number of sections that must be offered, but it invariably creates a problem for consistently achieving specific course outcomes.
The need for a standardized classroom experience and the horde of adjuncts and graduate students which deliver the basic course present challenges to even the smallest adjustments to the basic course. Such inertia, however, should not lead BCDs to throw up their arms and resign themselves to the status quo, for such an action may have negative repercussions in the face of general education reform. Demonstrating we can deliver a class that achieves the outcomes client departments and employers deem important goes a long way toward delivering a basic course designed for higher education in the twenty-first century. BCDs should not, as Dewey declared, flee from or “passively acquiesce” to such circumstances, but rather should be active directors of change.

**Directing Change as a BCD**

General education reform has been a force throughout the history of higher education in this country. It has led to the creation of departments, the proliferation of elective courses in areas of specialization, and an increased connection between education and the workplace. For the longest time the distribution model has dominated the delivery mechanism for undergraduate general education, but the latest iteration of reform seeks to dethrone that approach in favor of an outcomes-driven curriculum. This tectonic change threatens to, at a minimum, reduce reliance on communication departments to deliver the basic course by allowing multiple courses to be developed to achieve particular outcomes. If communication departments and BCDs do not proactively seek to make adjustments to the way they design and deliver their basic course and engage their cam-
pus—in particular the purveyors of general education—then they risk losing the “bread and butter” of the discipline. This does, in fact, play out quite often as there are numerous recent stories of communication departments losing the responsibility for delivery of communication instruction to other disciplines.

In this essay I suggested a plan for re-designing the basic course, regardless of format. This approach, as illustrated by the case study of the University of Dayton, creates a more dynamic experience for students and a more defensible course for communication departments when discussion of general education rears its head. It is imperative for BCDs to educate themselves on the history of general education at their institution and adjust their courses accordingly. It is not enough to rely on the vague workplace recommendations for training in oral communication because in an outcomes-driven general education environment any department can meet such a goal; those clarion calls from employers do not ask for a communication course taught in communication departments, or even a public speaking or hybrid course—simply training in communication, broadly construed. To miss this important distinction is to risk losing the lifeblood of the communication department to other units who argue more completely for the achievement of learning outcomes related to oral communication in courses they develop.

To be sure, it is not a simple task due to the size of basic course programs and the institutional inertia that accompanies courses taught by legions of adjuncts and graduate students. That said, BCDs must live up to their title by directing change, rather than reacting to it. There are no guarantees in life or general education,
and so BCDs must proactively move to maintain the centrality of oral communication instruction by communication professionals in their institution’s general education program by engaging departments across campus and prospective employers of our students to determine how best we can use our expertise to prepare our students for the future.

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Embracing and Rejecting Student Agency:
Documenting Critical Reflection Practices in the Basic Communication Course Classroom

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In the past two decades, student-centered learning is an idea that has moved to the forefront as educators have begun to place more value in students becoming more actively involved in their education, leading to increased interest in both student agency and reflective learning (Brookfield, 1995; Ericson & Ellett, 1990; Palmer, 1998; Weimer, 2002). This represents a shift from the more traditional model of teacher-centered learning. To date, a majority of extant educational and instructional research has primarily focused on the importance of the teacher in instructional environments. Although the teacher is an important aspect of the teaching learning process, the emphasis on instructor ability and responsibility in empirical research has diminished the perceived role that students have in educational contexts whereby creating an imbalanced learning equation that ignores student responsibility for their personal, affective and cognitive development. This imbalance has created a need for research focusing more directly on the experience of the learner in a more student-centered environment.
At the heart of student-centered learning is the idea that the balance of power in the classroom needs adjustment; in traditional classrooms power lies almost solely with the teacher (Brookfield, 1995; Palmer, 1998; Weimer, 2002). The teaching and learning process consists of two interactants, the teacher and the student, which co-exist in the context of a classroom exploring specific content, in this case the basic communication course. While the ways in which teachers use power to control classroom learning and student behavior has been heavily explored (e.g., Kearney, Plax, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987) the linear focus of this research, on the role of the teacher, has ignored the role of the student in the construction of power in the classroom (Sprague, 1994). More specifically, instructional scholars have operationalized power, as techniques that teachers use to change student behavior (e.g., Richmond et al, 1987). As a result, the exploration of power in educational settings has been primarily concerned with classroom management techniques implemented by the instructor (e.g. McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Sprinkle, Hunt, Simonds, & Comcadena, 2006). Power has not been examined as thoroughly in terms of learner characteristics or behaviors of choice in educational settings like the basic course. The lack of information on student power has created a gap in the literature and knowledge that we possess about this student behavior also known as student agency. This is a noteworthy oversight as power in the educational context is far more complex than a set of teacher behaviors (Sprague, 1994).
One educational movement that has placed a great deal of focus on student-centered learning is critical reflection. Reflection has become a buzz word in educational circles, and as Ford and Russo (2006) poignantly noted, it has been defined in a variety of ways conflating the term, making it important for scholars to specifically delineate what they mean by “reflection”. In this study, critical reflection consists of two key elements, student reflection and agency, drawing specifically from how Brookfield (1995) and Weimer (2002) conceptualized the idea. Student reflection consists primarily of employing reflective exercises in the classroom throughout the semester which foster student thinking about their learning experiences (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). Student agency is the ability for students to determine courses of behavior that positively impact student learning and performance, which may include altering course assignments, content, or policies (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). The push for critical reflection stems from the notion that students learn most effectively when given a level of agency to make adaptations in a course and reflect on their learning as this grants students an increased level of control in their educational experience (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). Unfortunately, most classroom practices do not exercise this type of student learning experience despite the wealth of literature advocating reflective practices in the classroom (Ford & Russo, 2006). It is critically important, as Ford and Russo argued, that researchers “examine ways in which reflection is enacted in the classroom” (p. 1) in order to document the effects of the process, specifically as related to learning outcomes.
One context where critically reflective practices can be examined on a larger scale is the basic course. Because the basic course director typically oversees a number of sections, reflexive practices could be implemented across these classes. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the number of teaching assistants and instructors that basic course directors oversee represents an important pedagogical training ground to help critically reflective teaching practices become more mainstream as teacher assistants progress to faculty members. Furthermore, as these faculty members practice reflexive teaching and learning behaviors in the basic course they are more likely to implement it in other courses they teach resulting in reflexive practices across courses that stemmed from its introduction in the basic course. Although it is important for faculty to be exposed to and practice reflexive pedagogy, it is also vital for students to be introduced to critically reflective teaching practices early in their university experience to both normalize and create expectations of agency and reflection in their coursework. In sum, the basic course director role serves both as a means to expose students to critical reflection as well as teachers. The present study makes a unique contribution to research in the basic course context, focusing on the role of students in the critically reflective learning process while examining teaching practices in the basic course that create opportunities for agency to occur in the instructional setting.

This study explored classroom power through the implementation of critical reflection exercises aimed at promoting student agency and learning in the basic course classroom as phenomena that significantly im-
impact the instructional environment. Minimal research exists on reflection. One study that has focused on reflection was conducted by Ford and Russo (2006) which explored teachers’ perceptions of the critical reflection process, examining how teachers enact reflection in their classrooms and what results they report. Ford and Russo found teachers use a variety of writing activities (e.g., reflection exercises, one-minute papers, synthesis papers) to foster student reflection in their classrooms. Teachers reported the outcomes of reflection in their classrooms included performance (student higher level thinking and understanding) and agency. Of particular interest Ford and Russo noted that while “Most respondents [teachers] identified practices or strategies they used to promote student reflection, and many referred specifically to a ‘reflection paper’...there were very few specific connections with formal reflection practices or the literature of reflection” (p. 5). Ford and Russo did not define “reflection” for their participants, thus, few teachers used the reflection practices as conceptualized by educational scholars (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). Our study builds on Ford and Russo’s (2006) study by specifically analyzing students’ reflections on their learning in the basic course classrooms where teachers employed more formal reflection practices as outlined by the educational literature (see specific details in methods section), thus, making a unique contribution to the study of critical reflection and simultaneously bringing a new area of scholarship to basic course research. Further, Ford and Russo (2006) called for research that focuses on students’ perceptions of reflection practices in the classroom.
Accordingly, three research questions guided the study: (1) how do students react to the critical reflection process? (2) how do students embrace and reject power in critically reflexive classrooms? and (3) how does the critical reflection experience affect the student learning process? These questions helped to discover how students react to the content, activities and assignments, changes students make within the basic course when granted agency, and how the critical reflection process enhanced or detracted from learning in the basic course. These questions also prompted our thinking about the role of the basic course director as curriculum developer and pedagogical expert in relation to instructional strategies that incorporate critical reflection and ways in which he/she can advocate for student agency via reflection in the basic course.

**METHOD**

The study used an interpretive approach to gain a more comprehensive, in-depth understanding of students’ perceptions of the critical reflection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1988) as well as students’ views on increased levels of agency in the classroom. This paper stems from a larger study, but our analysis here focuses on four basic course sections: Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication (three sections) and Perspectives on Human Communication (one section) taught during the fall 2008 and spring 2009 semesters. The Honors Fundamental of Speech and Communication is a hybrid course combining the study of public speaking and introductory elements of communication in a variety of contexts (e.g., Interpersonal, Organiza-
Perspectives of Human Communication is a course focusing on communication theories in multiple contexts ranging from interpersonal communication to mass media. An investigation of critical reflective practices in the basic course allowed for a more diverse student population, increasing the likelihood that students of all majors and demographics enrolled in the critically reflexive basic course would be exposed to the process and share information with other professors and students about critical reflection and student agency that may result in a pedagogical paradigm shift that focuses on engaged learning through reflection and agency. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, only four basic course sections were included, as we first wanted to start with basic course sections taught by teachers experienced with critically reflective teaching practices prior to examining these practices on a wider scale basis with teachers less familiar with these practices. This initial study with basic course sections should spur a follow-up study as well as provide valuable feedback for teacher training with respect to critically reflective teaching practices necessary for a larger study in the future. The 81 student participants in this study consisted of 48 females and 33 males. The demographic make-up also consisted of four African American, one Hispanic, and three other students.

**Data Collection Procedures**

A series of five critical reflection assignments (five questions per reflection on average; final reflection consisted of 13 questions) were administered over the course of each semester which asked students to reflect
on their learning in the basic course, ways to improve the classroom experience throughout the semester, and their perceptions of student agency during their experience in a critically reflective classroom. Some reflection assignments were conducted in class while others were completed electronically via Blackboard. Students were also given the option to alter the basic course syllabus, granting them agency to make changes to enhance their educational experience. Adhering to Weimer’s (2002) “syllabus draft” procedures, students had the opportunity to revise the syllabus (e.g., change assignments) pending teacher approval. With respect to the first research question, how do students react to the critical reflection process, we asked questions such as, What have you liked/disliked about the critical reflection exercises? In terms of the second research question, how do students embrace and reject power in critically reflective classrooms, students provided feedback through questions such as what forms of student agency do you wish you had more (or less) of in this (and other) courses? Finally, with respect to the third research question, how does the critical reflection experience affect the student learning process, questions in the reflection exercises included what would you like the instructor to do differently to improve student learning.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used to analyze over 400 critical reflection responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We first conducted open coding on the data collected from the basic course. Open coding consisted of the initial categorization of student data, which lead to the identification of preliminary themes. Axial
coding consisted of multiple stages, including reading the transcripts again in order to re-conceptualize the categories as well as interpret emergent themes. We clustered related codes and systematically reduced the data. Our themes were consistent across the data collected from each classroom. In the final report, we weaved in exemplar quotations from the reflection responses, serving as rich data to support our emergent themes.

As mentioned earlier, both researchers have naturally employed critical reflection exercises into the basic course sections they teach, a practice which led to the idea for this research project. Therefore, it was necessary for us to address our researcher bias as related to this research. Bias is inevitable in interpretive research as the researcher(s) themselves are the primary instrument (Creswell, 2002; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), and in our case, we both acknowledge our “buy-in” to the importance of the critical reflection process. In order to address our biases, we constantly compared the data, analyzing student participants’ responses to insure that our analysis stayed true to the data. We also shared rich quotations in the findings section to directly illustrate participants’ experience of the reflection process from their perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**FINDINGS**

The questions from each of the reflection exercises produced rich data regarding students’ perceptions of the critical reflection process. Data analysis revealed emergent patterns in response to the three research questions, including students’ positive reaction to the
critical reflection process, students’ tendency to both embrace and reject power/agency in the classroom, and influence on student learning. The emergent patterns indicated that students believe the critical reflection process enhanced their educational experience in the basic course. We incorporated excerpts from students’ responses to illuminate their perceptions of the critical reflection process.

**Positive Student Reaction**

In response to the first research question, students primarily reacted positively to the critical reflection process. With respect to the critical reflection exercises, a majority of students across all sections found value in the reflection process, many viewing courses which offer them the chance to reflect and adapt the syllabus as ideal (the ability to adapt the syllabus will be addressed in response to the second research question). Students typically offered comments such as the reflection exercises are “a good process for giving feedback” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*) while others elaborated with statements such as, “I liked the critical reflection process because students get to speak their mind about the course and are asked their opinion about changing the course. I would not change anything about the critical reflection process” (*Perspectives on Human Communication*). Students explained that the reflection exercises gave them the power to provide feedback to help improve the basic course while they were still taking it, making the feedback more effective and meaningful as the teacher received better information that could be implemented almost immediately. The reflection exercises enabled the teacher to know
what was going well (and not so well). In the critical reflection exercises, a majority of students indicated that the course concepts were explained very well. In fact, one student even commented, “The course was already going well; we didn’t need to do so many reflection exercises” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). This theme consisted of three relevant subthemes: successful classroom practices/need for clarification, student-teacher communication, and ways to further improve the critical reflection process.

**Identifying successful classroom practices and need for clarification.** One reason that students reacted positively to the reflection exercises, stemmed from the opportunity for them to identify classroom practices that worked successfully. Students indicated they liked courses in which the teacher employed a mixture of student discussion, question/answer sessions in class, student activities/group work, case studies, visual models, and lecture with minimal PowerPoint slides. Students also enjoyed the use of videos, especially via YouTube. While students identified the aspects they liked in the course, they also pointed out things they would like to change within the class so the teacher could try to address it. For example, in one course a student requested that the teacher offer “more explanation about the paper due at the end of the semester” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). During the overview of the reflection patterns during the course itself, the teacher went over the paper more thoroughly to help clarify what students needed to do to be successful on the assignment.

Additionally, the reflection exercises encouraged students to reflect on what they did and did not under-
stand and informed the teacher what to specifically review prior to the test. For example, in the *Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication* sections 13 students indicated before the first test that they struggled with the debate over communication and intentionality. Accordingly, the instructor focused a good deal of time on this issue during the test review session. Another example concerns the *Perspectives on Human Communication* course in which a student commented “It would be helpful if we could periodically meet to discuss the progression of assignments and make sure that I am doing them correctly.” This student’s concern was addressed via the extension of office hours and the inclusion of instant messaging and video chats. The addition of alternative communication channels allowed for an improved student-teacher communication interaction as well as assisted the student in better understanding the course content. However, the instructor also learned ways to redesign her classroom space so as to further advance opportunities for student-teacher communication and improved student learning.

**Student-teacher communication.** Interestingly, students identified positive change in student-teacher communication and relationships. Students attributed this positive change to the fact that the reflection process opened up and increased communication between the teacher and students, both of which made students feel more comfortable in the basic course classroom. One student commented “[I] don’t feel as if the teacher is on a completely different level than students” which “makes me more comfortable speaking up in class” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). Further, another student added that the process created
a more “caring” relationship between teacher and student:

I feel comfortable talking to my professor in this class and asking questions as opposed to other classes where I am almost afraid to talk to my professor. I definitely like that you do the reflections because it shows you care. *(Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)*

Students even suggested that the reflection exercises made the teacher seem more knowledgeable because they had so much information about what was working well and what needed to be further addressed in the course. One student commented, “I feel more open and like we are on a deeper level, which helps him have credibility and effectiveness” *(Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)*. Several students echoed that the critical reflection exercises assisted in the creation of a more open classroom environment.

**Improving the critical reflection process.** While students liked most aspects associated with the reflection process, students also identified elements they did not like about the reflection process. Primarily, students did not like the repetitive nature of the reflection exercises, offering specific suggestions like the teacher “only ask each question once throughout the semester” *(Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)*. Additionally, students mentioned that the reflection process differed from what occurred in other classes, which took some students time to adjust to; most students grew accustomed to the process and did not mind it as they became more familiar with it. Although students typically adjusted to the reflection process, a majority of students indicated they probably would not use the reflection
process in the future, primarily because they believed other teachers do not offer reflection exercises as part of their courses. One student specifically commented, “I probably will not use this process again because most of my teachers do not listen to me” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication). Another student noted, “This is the first time that a professor has asked the students about the course and its activities” (Perspectives on Human Communication). However, students also expressed the desire for reflection exercises to be offered in other courses. For example, one student noted:

I will suggest this to my future teachers so that as a class you get feedback...because it's one thing for me to say something, but sometimes when you have lots of people suggesting the same thing change happens. (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)

A second student commented on the desire for more opportunity in other courses to participate in critical reflection practices:

I wish other classes allowed this type of student agency and feedback. There seems to be a very impersonal relationship between students and professors in other classes, thus causing minimally effective learning environments. Courses are offered for students and should therefore be structured around what proves most beneficial to their learning. (Perspectives on Human Communication)

Fortunately, a few students developed plans to use the reflection process in the future as in the following case: “Every once and a while I like to sit down and think
about my coursework...now I have a structure to do that” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*).

**Student Agency: Rejecting and Embracing Power**

In addition to students’ favorable response to the critical reflection exercises, students also reacted positively to the opportunity to adapt the basic course to assist in their learning experience. While students certainly embraced the power to make improvements to the course within the semester itself via the reflection exercises, the opportunity to alter course assignments represented the primary way students embraced and rejected student agency in these critically reflective classrooms. Interestingly, most students indicated they placed more value on the syllabus changes than the reflection exercises, though students noted both were very beneficial to their learning. Students who embraced the opportunity to alter course assignments were glad they took advantage of the increased levels of agency. Conversely, students who rejected the agency offered to them in the critically reflective basic course typically wished they had taken advantage of the opportunity to alter the course.

Most students appreciated the level of agency offered to them in the courses included in the data set. In fact, students commented that the level of agency in critically reflective classrooms was ideal. A prime example of this comes from a student who stated “I wish I had this much power to change and improve the syllabus in all of my classes. It makes learning more interesting because it is more catered to me personally” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). Another student shared, “I believe student
agency is effective and creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom. It definitely enhances motivation and learning” (Perspectives on Human Communication). Students embraced the opportunity to change assignments as it allowed them to work to their strengths. Students who made changes to the syllabus typically altered course assignments in the following ways: replacing individual projects with group assignments, developing teaching units in place of a paper or test (primarily those planning to teach), and replacing tests with synthesis papers. In addition, students changed due dates, added more extra credit opportunities, and dropped their lowest grade. Students who embraced the opportunity to make changes to the basic course found a connection between that and increased learning (more details on student learning are discussed in the final emergent pattern). Most students believed strongly that students should be the one who is primarily responsible for their own learning, as illustrated in the following exemplar:

I think it is important for the student to have some power in decision making in the courses they take. College is about individual performance and you are the one paying for your education. I think you should be able to shape things to the way you perform best so you can get the most out of your class. (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)

Students tended to think that they should bear the responsibility for their own learning, which the increased levels of agency enabled them to do. Although students viewed the responsibility for learning as primarily their own, most students believed that teachers still needed a good deal of power in the classroom. Students suggested
they should be able to make a few changes to the course, but the teacher still needed to have some things required in the course.

While some students embraced the opportunity to adapt the basic course to better suit them, surprisingly a majority of students rejected the agency offered them, choosing not to make changes to the course syllabi though all students participated in the reflection exercises. The primary reason students chose not to alter the syllabus was that they were uncomfortable with the freedom to make such choices since they had never had that opportunity in other courses. It is important to note, nearly all the students explained that even if they did not make changes to the course, they truly appreciated that they had the chance to make changes if they chose. This student sentiment is expressed by the following individual: “After reviewing the syllabus, I do not see anything I would like to change at the moment. Thank you for the opportunity though. It is good to know there are other options available” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). Students grew more accustomed to learning in a critically reflective classroom as the semester continued, and students who rejected agency at the beginning of the course indicated that if they were given the opportunity to make changes to a course in the future, they would be much more likely to do so. However, many students doubted whether they would be granted the opportunity to adapt a course to better fit their needs in other courses, even though they desired these opportunities. Students made striking comments that suggested in other courses they had little to no agency to affect change. For example, one student commented that they [students] “were
slaves to our teachers’ wills” in most other courses and another student noted that “I usually change me to fit the course” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication). Additionally, a Perspectives on Human Communication student shared, “Well, only your class lets the students get involved in how the class is going. It’s great in your class. As for other classes, just another assignment in the wind.” These statements offer critical insight into the results of not offering students a level of agency that enables them to adapt the course in order to improve their educational experience as well as describes what student life is like for them in other courses.

Interestingly, students who made changes to the course were so pleased with their experience that they often encouraged students who did not change the syllabus to do so, one student stating that they should “not be afraid to make changes to the syllabus” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication). Some students’ experience in a critically reflective classroom changed their view of student agency as they had never had the choices to alter assignments as they did in these basic course sections, leading to a more positive view of students taking a more proactive approach to their own learning rather than have the teacher decide everything students would do in the classroom. Put simply, a student reported, “I used to think I had no freedom of choice (related to course assignments), but this class has changed my perspective for the better” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication).
Reflective Practices and Learning: An Adaptive Intersection

Based on the findings, students believed that the critical reflection experience enhanced the student learning process in the basic course. The critical reflection process enhanced student learning both via the process of reflecting on their experience in the course throughout the semester and the opportunity to alter assignments as alluded to in the first two emergent patterns. However, the connection between the critical reflection process and learning merits further attention. The following two sub-themes help to capture students’ perceived connection between reflective practices and learning: freedom to learn through syllabus adaptation and learning through reflection.

Learning via syllabus adaptation. Students indicated the critical reflection process enhanced the learning process because they had the ability to alter the course assignments in the syllabus which helped to both create a more positive attitude towards the course as well as increase student motivation, in turn, producing higher achievement and better understanding of the course content. One student commented, “I believe student agency is effective and creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom. It definitely enhances motivation and learning” (Perspectives on Human Communication).

Across the data set, students indicated that they learned more because the opportunity to adapt the syllabus enabled them to study course content and develop assignments they cared about studying/completing. These elements increased student excitement/enthusiasm about and interest in the course. These
Factors worked together to foster a learning environment in which students increased their effort and motivation to learn in the course. For instance, a student declared, “I think it definitely enhanced my learning, and I know that it has really helped others. I stuck to the syllabus, but having the alternate options made me feel more at ease about the material” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication).

Students explained that the ability to adapt the syllabus also enhanced their learning by increasing their freedom and the flexibility of the course due to the option to alter course assignments. Moreover the option to change the course encouraged students to become more proactive as they were more involved in shaping their own learning process, which helped students think outside the box of what normally is done in a course. These options also enabled students to draw upon their strengths and interests. Combined, students indicated that these elements increased their motivation to learn because as one student put it, they could “negotiate and contribute to how the class works...which makes (students) more comfortable with the learning environment” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication).

One student who altered course assignments suggested that the reflection process, “Definitely, improved my understanding (of course content) and grade” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication).

Enhancing student learning through reflection exercises. The reflection exercises themselves enhanced the student learning process. For example, a student stated that the reflection process enhanced the learning process because it, “Let me look back at what we’ve done” throughout the course itself (Honors Fundamen-
Thus, the process of reflecting on the course enabled students to learn the material more effectively (e.g., students learned by reflecting on their learning). Students further explained they valued the voice they were given within critically reflective classrooms, as represented in the following excerpt:

> It influenced my learning because it opened up the possibility of having a voice in the class. That allowed me to have the freedom in my learning to be more open and try new things. I wanted to learn more and be more involved with the class” (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication).

Thus, the reflection process increased students’ motivation to learn in the basic course. The reflection exercises enabled students to identify what they were learning in the course throughout the course itself, but also enabled students to identify and inform the teacher what they struggled to understand so that they could work together to help improve their comprehension of the most challenging course content. One student explained this process:

> Critical reflections keep my mind thinking about this class. I believe that they are vital to help you and me because I know that if I am confused on something, I can put it in here [the reflection exercises] and you will be able to answer it. (Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication)

To put it simply, the process of constantly reflecting on their learning created greater student involvement. A student commented that the process facilitated students being “more involved in shaping (their) own learning
process” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*). One student even commented that the process of completing the reflection exercises and reviewing the patterns that emerged from other students’ responses in the class “Made me feel like we were receiving the best education based on our responses” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*).

Further, the reflection exercises also encouraged students to inform the teacher what was not working in the basic course so that changes could be made which might enhance the students’ learning experience in the course. The power to make changes to the class during the course itself coupled with the process of reflecting on what they have learned (or not learned) made the reflection exercises a valuable part of the learning process. Additionally, the reflection process created a more positive learning environment. The following excerpt provides a telling example of how the reflection process helped to create such a place:

> The level of student agency was effective because it allowed the students to suggest ideas that catered to their needs. Most of their needs were similar to mine, so the ability to influence the course ultimately enhanced my learning and performance. (*Perspectives on Human Communication*)

The participants pinpointed student input as an integral part of the reflection process. One student stated, “The critical reflections helped in terms of allowing us to give feedback and let the instructor know our thoughts on a lot of matters” (*Honors Fundamentals of Speech and Communication*).

In summation, the critical reflection process granted students’ agency to alter course assignments and en-
couraged them to reflect on the class and their own learning, creating a more positive view of the class leading to a class environment that was more conducive to student learning.

**DISCUSSION**

This study explored classroom power through the implementation of critical reflection exercises aimed at promoting student agency and learning in the basic communication course classroom as phenomena that significantly impact instructional environments. It specifically did so by investigating how students react to the critical reflection process, how students embrace and reject power in the critically reflexive classroom, and how the critical reflexive process affects the student learning process. These results tap into a new area of inquiry in the *Basic Communication Course Annual*, providing key data to help basic course directors make important decisions about whether or not to introduce critical reflection practices into the basic course context.

The use of critical reflection exercises as they related to student learning and classroom choices about content, course assignments, and learning activities, in general, had a number of positive outcomes in the basic course classroom. The results offer support to Weimer’s (2002) suggestion that giving students increased agency offers several benefits including improved communication between teachers and students, increased student effort, less resistance, and positively changes the classroom environment. For example, students reported their appreciation of and desire to have more opportunities to engage in student agency activities. Furthermore, stu-
students articulated they not only enjoyed the process but they felt that they controlled their learning resulting in them feeling good about the course. Scholars advocating critical reflection have noted the importance of students having increased levels of control in their learning experience (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). This feeling encouraged students to learn more and assisted them in developing their academic identities further as students. These findings support the work of Thomas (as cited in King, 1983) regarding the effect of student agency on self-confidence building and identity formation. It also solidifies the connection between the affective and cognitive learning relationship (Plax et al, 1986).

These research findings further underscored the importance of teacher-student communication. Interestingly, according to students, elevated levels of agency and reflection improved student-teacher communication. Students want an opportunity to provide input on course design, assignments, and content. Essentially, students want to convey to instructors their interests in specific content and their personal learning strengths. This requires a teacher communicator style (Norton, 1983) that is encouraging, open, and warm consisting of teacher generated messages that seek student feedback and solicit student input into how classes are conducted and structured. These results are relevant to teachers across disciplines and across various levels of courses.

However, this type of basic course classroom environment can only exist if teachers undergo a radical paradigm shift regarding their beliefs and perceptions about students and the role that communication plays in learning. Basic course directors can play a significant role in this shift due to the large student population
they have access to and because they work directly with faculty, adjuncts, and future teachers in the discipline. Basic course directors have multiple opportunities to emphasize critical reflection as a way to alter courses, engage students, and provide more information related to teacher evaluation. A communicative organization (in this instance classroom) can only exist if there is a valuing of the interactants. In other words, teachers cannot position themselves in a class as the “sage” of subject matter and expect students to engage. Instead, students must be viewed as individuals who enter the basic course with experiences, ideas, and valuable contributions. Students must be seen as active participants in the world and part of their world consists of the classroom.

In addition to providing information to teachers on course content and design, students also want to share feedback about pedagogical strategies that enhance the classroom experience. The findings of this study reveal that students enjoy sharing with instructors teaching techniques that assist them in the advancement of their learning. This can be a very valuable tool for teachers across course levels. However, in order for teachers to benefit from student input about teaching, students must learn the language of teaching. Consequently, students must identify and understand pedagogical strategies such as assessment techniques, case studies, group work, instructional discussion, and presentations among other kinds of teaching activities so they are able to provide more meaningful feedback to instructors about their pedagogical performance. Therefore, in addition to teachers providing instruction on course content, we advocate dedicating time to discussing the learning activi-
ties associated with the course assignments and content so that students are better able to analyze their own learning processes and exercise classroom power while assisting in the instructor's development of pedagogical content knowledge.

Some students experienced frustration in doing the critical reflection exercises and other students chose not to make course changes. Students experienced frustration with the critical reflection process as they felt they would not be able to use it to modify future courses. It was discouraging to discover that a majority of students indicated they probably would not use the reflection process in the future and that so few students took advantage of the opportunity to alter the syllabus to fit their learning style. To alleviate this frustration, basic course directors can implement faculty development seminars and workshops to assist educators in engaging in the critical reflection process to improve their own teaching. Furthermore, instructors should be trained on how to develop and implement the critical reflection process into their courses in order to promote student agency and to increase teacher-student communication while positively influencing student learning. Although basic course directors face a challenge in recommending that those teaching the basic course offer students agency to make syllabus changes due to the need for more standardization, there are certainly elements of the basic course which can be modified while not interfering with larger general education assessment purposes. Further, teachers in all courses can take important steps to increase students' exposure to critical reflection practices.
As for the students who chose not to make course modifications, many of them reported that they were uncomfortable doing so. This discomfort may stem from the lack of experience the student had with the critical reflection process as well as course modification options leading to student agency opportunities.

In order for student agency to exist and for students to recognize their role in the teaching learning process, educational institutions must create a culture that is conducive to this type of student participation and interaction in classroom settings (Brookfield, 1995; Weimer, 2002). This also means that student experiences, skills, and voices must be valued in the process of learning. Consequently, teachers must recognize that they along with their texts are not the only possessors of knowledge in a classroom. Beyond teacher’s relinquishing instructional control to their students, they must also come to terms with their own personal vulnerabilities. Critical reflection practices and student agency often reveal information to the teacher that can challenge their professorial identities, create cognitive dissonance regarding theory and practice, and invert their pedagogical ideals. Encouraging critical reflection and student agency is a risky business for the educator; however, it is a calculated gamble with enormous benefit to both the teacher and the student. Basic course directors can play a fundamental role in further advancing these pedagogical opportunities. There is significant need for departments of communication to emphasize pedagogy as well as content. An emphasis on pedagogy creates changes that could alter other communication courses (e.g., once an instructor teaching the basic course uses critical reflection then they are more likely to use it in
another course they teach). Department-wide critical
reflection permits the inclusion of student voices in cur-
ricular modifications departmentally. Critical reflection
could balance the teaching-learning equation and fur-
ther solidify the teacher, content, and learner relation-
ship while simultaneously impacting the department's
decision making.

STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a variety of strengths associated with this
research project. For example, the study permitted us to
further explore the critically reflective classroom, stu-
dent perceptions of critical reflection activities, and to
reflect on our individual pedagogical practices in our re-
spective learning spaces. This study also underscored
the role that communication plays in learning spaces,
the student-teacher relationship, and the fundamental
importance of obtaining feedback about what we do as
instructors and what students feel and think as learn-
ers. Although this research project represents an impor-
tant step in documenting student perceptions of the
critical reflection process as related to increased levels
of student agency and the relationship between reflec-
tion and student learning in the basic course, limita-
tions exist. First, as acknowledged in the methods sec-
ton, researcher bias was present. As teacher’s who ac-
tively practice critical reflection, this data and analysis
may provide an overly positive view of the reflection
process. However, because few teachers actively practice
the formal reflection process as conceptualized by edu-
cational scholars (Ford & Russo, 2006), it was an impor-
tant step to collect and analyze data from students in
the basic course classroom where critical reflection is enacted. We did take several analytical steps to reduce bias and were careful to include data in the final report that reflected both students’ preference for and struggles with critically reflective classrooms. Another limitation relates to the findings regarding student learning. While most students strongly believed that critical reflection practices enhance their learning, this data was self-reported. More specific measures of student learning needed to be developed for future research. Finally, it is important to recognize that three sections here represented honors sections. Students in other sections may react to reflecting on their own learning and student agency differently.

This study represents the first in a long overdue area of study and represents only an initial step into research with critically reflective practices in the communication classroom. The next important step is for researchers to conduct studies across a much larger number of basic course sections in order to directly compare differences in student learning in classes where critical reflection is and is not employed. Consequently, an examination of control and treatment groups may provide insight as to the specific teacher, student, and classroom variables that lead to student agency and power in instructional settings such as the basic course. Such research has the potential to play a significant role in increasing the acceptance and use of critically reflective methods within the discipline and beyond.

In sum, this study answers the call by educational scholars to empirically examine critically reflective teaching practices in order to document the process and outcomes (Brookfield, 1995; Ford & Russo, 2006;
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Weimer, 2002). We believe these results provide evidence for those employing critical reflection in the classroom and may encourage others to try these practices. When students are granted agency and reflect on their learning throughout the semester they benefit greatly, whether that be in direct learning or improved communication in the classroom. We hope that basic course directors will take note that students are reluctant to fully embrace the critical reflection process as a central part of their academic experience until more teachers embrace this process; basic course directors have agency to both train and inform faculty at various stages in their career, creating a more accepting atmosphere for critically reflective teaching practices that may lead to classes beyond the basic course being affected by this inclusive pedagogical strategy.

REFERENCES


Embracing and Rejecting Student Agency


Embracing and Rejecting Student Agency


The basic communication course (BCC) is a pivotal part of communication instruction of college students as it provides them with an important opportunity to develop essential communication skills and, thus, become effective communicators (Hunt, Novak, Semlak, & Myer, 2005; Hunt, Simonds, & Simonds, 2009; Pearson, Child, Herakova, Semlak, & Angelos, 2010). Regardless of how the BCC’s format may differ across instructional settings, the course “can play a substantial role in preparing students to be more critical producers and consumers of information” (Hunt et al., 2009, pp. 22-23). Additionally, the BCC facilitates the development of students’ communication skills and offers instructors the opportunity “to help students experience social support and connection” (Bingham, Carlson, Dwyer, & Prisbell, 2009, p. 30). Communication research, in general, and research linked to the BCC, in particular, point that three salient communication constructs, namely communication apprehension (CA; McCroskey, 1997), self-perceived communication competence (SPCC; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988), and willingness to
communicate (WTC; McCroskey, 1986, 1992, 1997) are closely related to students’ ability to develop important communication skills (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012; Hodis & Hodis, 2012; Levine & McCroskey, 1990; McIntyre, Babin, & Clement, 1999; Rosenfeld, Grant, & McCroskey, 1995). Hence, there are pivotal theoretical and practical benefits derived from analyzing how CA, SPCC, and WTC, as well as their interrelations change during the semester in which students are enrolled in the BCC. In particular, because enhancing students’ communication skills is often associated with decreases in apprehension (Byrne et al., 2012) and increases in willingness to communicate and confidence in own ability to communicate effectively, assessments of how change in one construct (CA) relates to changes in the others (SPCC and WTC) are particularly informative for the BCC, as they can provide access to essential information (e.g., how effective the BCC is in concomitantly reducing apprehension and enhancing WTC and SPCC).

Appropriate analyses of change processes require simultaneous investigations of the static (cross-sectional) and dynamic (longitudinal) relationships among the constructs of interest. Even though recent studies (Hodis, Bardhan, & Hodis, 2010; Hodis & Hodis, 2012) analyzed some facets of change processes in the context of the BCC, no investigation has yet mapped how two or more processes of change involving multiple communication constructs interact over time during the term in which students are enrolled in the BCC. This is a problematic limitation because cross-sectional analyses, while providing a snapshot of relationships among constructs at a particular point in time, cannot inform on whether they change over time and on how
change in one construct relates to changes in the other. Moreover, snapshots of changing phenomena are sometimes quite inaccurate and, thus, can bring about conclusions that may substantially depart from actuality (see Maxwell & Cole, 2007 for detailed discussions).

In particular, cross-sectional analyses of CA, SPCC, and WTC can only reveal that apprehension is negatively correlated with WTC and SPCC and that WTC and SPCC have a positive linear association. This type of information has limited utility for BCC instructors because it only underlines that highly apprehensive students are likely to have low communicative self-efficacy beliefs (CSEB) and, consequently, exhibit low WTC levels. In contrast, simultaneous investigations of static and dynamic trends can shed light on whether: (a) changes in apprehension relate to changes in SPCC and WTC. If this proves to be true, the information is essential for estimating the downstream benefits of reducing CA for enhancing SPCC and WTC; (b) the relations among changes in CA, SPCC, and WTC are similar to those among initial levels of these constructs. This type of information is invaluable for the directors of the BCC when they evaluate the extent to which instruction in the course has differential benefits for students having different initial levels of apprehension, communicative self-efficacy beliefs, and willingness to communicate; (c) initial apprehension is (or not) associated with subsequent changes in SPCC and WTC. This type of knowledge is yet again pivotal for the BCC instructors and administrators; it pinpoints the extent to which apprehension levels at the beginning of the BCC influence how much students enhance their SPCC and WTC; (d) the magnitude of SPCC at the beginning of the semester
is associated with subsequent changes in WTC and SPCC. For BCC instructors/administrators this knowledge sheds light on the extent to which increases in WTC and SPCC during the BCC are influenced by having high (vs. low) initial SPCC levels. In these instances, it becomes apparent that more work needs to be done to shed fresh light on these issues by undertaking comprehensive examinations of static and dynamic relations among these constructs, as they unfold in the framework of the BCC.

This study advances extant communication research in important ways and, thus, provides salient information for teachers, administrators, and directors of the BCC. First, it sheds fresh light on the effects that instruction in the BCC has on the evolution of CA, SPCC, and WTC. Thus, given that these constructs change over time (Hodis et al., 2010; Hodis & Hodis, 2012; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987), this research assesses whether instruction in the BCC can result in concomitant decreases in average CA levels and increases on mean SPCC and WTC. Second, it advances current understanding of the interplay among cross-sectional and longitudinal relations among these constructs. In particular, by proposing a theoretical model that accounts for how change in CA relates to changes in SPCC and WTC and informs on how initial levels of the constructs impact subsequent changes in them, this study brings to light theoretically important and practically significant aspects of how these constructs relate to one another during the semester in which students are enrolled in the BCC. Finally, by comparing and contrasting cross-sectional and longitudinal patterns of relations among communication apprehension, self-efficacy, and willing-
ness to communicate, this research underlines the potential opportunities that appropriately-tuned instruction in BCC offers for lowering student apprehension while, at the same time, enhancing communication self-efficacy, and willingness to communicate.

**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

*Communication Apprehension (CA)*

The first comprehensive conceptualization of the construct regarded CA as being a broadly based feeling of anxiety related to oral communication (McCroskey, 1997). Subsequently, the conceptualization was expanded to include all types of communication, and to pertain not only to anxiety related to actually communicating but also to fear associated with anticipating communication encounters (McCroskey, 1984, 1997). Research targeting communication apprehension is broad and extensive (see Daly & Miller, 1975; McCroskey, 1970, 1977, 1978 for some early accounts). The current investigation, focusing on trends associated with the BCC, involves CA that relates to public speaking and, thus, reflects people’s apprehension related to communicating in this specific context (McCroskey, 1997).

CA can be attributed to a combination of genetic factors and upbringing/learning (McCroskey, 1982, 1997; see also Bodie, 2010; Hsu, 2009; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). With regards to CA related to public speaking, the type of the public speaking assignment (e.g., impromptu), the novelty and/or unfamiliarity of a situation, its level of formality, and the degree of attention one receives from others all influence the level of one’s apprehension (McCroskey, 1997; see also Beatty &
Friedland, 1990; Buss, 1980; Witt & Behnke, 2006). Noting also that CA related to speaking in public has been found to be “the best predictor of performance anxiety” (Beatty & Friedland, 1990, p. 146), these findings give some indication regarding why in BCC most students face increased levels of uncertainty and stress when getting ready to deliver their public speeches.

Communicative behaviors of people having low vs. high apprehension levels differ considerably (see Dwyer, Carlson, & Kahre, 2002 for a detailed discussion). Specifically, highly apprehensive individuals disclose less information about themselves, have a more negative image about themselves, make few positive self-statements, participate less in classroom activities and discussions, and talk less with their teachers than their low CA counterparts (Beatty, Frost, & Stewart, 1986; Martin, Valencic, & Heisel, 2002; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). In addition, people who are highly apprehensive are more lonely, tend to withdraw more from situations where communication is necessary (Richmond & McCroskey, 1989), and are regarded by peers as exhibiting “behaviors that would lessen their desirability and worth as interaction partners” (Colby, Hopf, & Ayres, 1993, p. 222).

CA is an important “causal agent in student success” (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989, p. 100), in both academic and interpersonal areas. In particular, CA is negatively associated with self-esteem (Vevea, Pearson, Child, & Semlak, 2009), student retention in college (Ericson & Gardner, 1992; McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey & Andersen, 1976; McCroskey et al., 1989), help-seeking behavior (Nelson, Whitfield, & Moreau, 2012), integration into the wider university community
Static and Dynamic Interplay

(Nelson et al., 2012), self-efficacy related to both public speaking courses and college in general (Dwyer & Fus, 1999), as well as ability to pay attention, understand, and recall class content (Booth-Butterfield, 1988), and is positively related to a tendency to avoid meeting a faculty or talking to another fellow student (McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978). In this light, it is not surprising that CA was found to have a negative relation with GPA (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976; but see also Dwyer & Fus, 1999). Interestingly, students’ CA does not seem to be related to the instructional style paradigm employed (Wolfson, 2005). Several strands of communication research have analyzed how the CA of students evolves (e.g., Beatty & Andriate, 1985; Carlson et al., 2006; Duff, Levine, Beatty, Woolbright, & Park, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2002; Dwyer & Fus, 1999, 2002; Howe & Dwyer, 2007; Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997; Sidelinger, Myers, & McMullen, 2011). Results generally seem to point that the (public speaking related) communication apprehension of students decreases over time.

Communicative Self-Efficacy Beliefs

A recent review of the broader literature on academic self-efficacy (see Hodis & Hodis, 2012) provides links that connect it with communication research centered on self-perceptions of communicative competence. In addition, it shows that the SPCC scale (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) can be an effective measure to gauge communicative self-efficacy across four communication contexts, including public speaking. Importantly, findings in Hodis and Hodis (2012) show that students’ self-efficacy beliefs related to communication in public speaking...
speaking settings increased linearly during a semester in which students were enrolled in a BCC.

In general, people’s behavior across various life and academic settings is strongly influenced by self-efficacy beliefs that are domain-specific (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). These kinds of beliefs reflect individuals’ perceptions that they are capable of organizing and employing in an effective manner, whatever relevant skills they possess, in order to achieve their specific goals (Bandura, 1997). In the domain of communication, own perceptions of competence, rather than actual competence itself, have been shown to exercise a strong influence on corresponding decision-making processes related to communication (McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

Understanding self-efficacy as a “generative capability” (Bandura, 1997, p. 36) that organizes and coordinates subordinate (sub)skills helps shed some light on why people having near-identical levels of communication skills related to public speaking do sometimes exhibit widely different patterns of actual performance. Additionally, because self-efficacy beliefs shape the process of goal-selection in achievement settings (Friedman et al., 2009), it is likely that students’ choice of goals in the BCC is strongly influenced by the magnitude of their specific self-appraisals regarding communication in the given context (Hodis & Hodis, 2012). This argument is further supported by research findings showing: (a) communication courses that were effective in enhancing student communicative self-efficacy also brought about additional desirable outcomes, such as a decrease in attrition rates (Rubin et al., 1997), and (b) people who perceive themselves as having low efficacy
with regards to communicating with strangers and acquaintances also report unproductive learning experiences and poor communication with teachers, aspects that can jointly contribute to underachievement (Myers & Bryant, 2002; Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002; Rosenfeld et al., 1995).

**Willingness to Communicate (WTC)**

WTC (McCroskey, 1986, 1992, 1997; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) “is the one overwhelming communication personality construct which permeates every facet of an individual's life and contributes significantly to the social, educational, and organizational achievements of the individual” (Richmond & Roach, 1992, p. 104). Taking into account that teachers evaluate more positively (and have higher academic expectations of) students who are more willing to engage in communication (McCroskey, Daly, & Sorensen, 1976; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; Richmond & McCroskey, 1989), it is clear that WTC plays a pivotal role in the learning-teaching process. At the social level, students who are more willing to communicate have also more friends and see their school experience as more rewarding than those students who are less willing to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). These findings underscore both the importance of employing, in a communication classroom, adequate strategies aimed at increasing students’ WTC and the dangers associated with equating unwillingness to do so with a lack of class preparation.

McCroskey (1992, 1997) operationalizes WTC as reflecting “individual’s predisposition to initiate communication with others” (McCroskey, 1997, p. 77, emphasis in...
original), given that she/he “has free choice to initiate or avoid communication” (McCroskey, 1992, p. 20). A thorough examination of the communication literature reveals that class size as well as student introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, openness to new experiences, communication skills level, CA, and self-perceived communication competence are possible antecedents of WTC (Byrne et al., 2012; Hodis et al., 2010; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1999; McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987, 1990; Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2012).

Research concentrating on WTC in the public speaking context is relatively scant. However, the results available show significant variability in students’ WTC scores related to speaking in public, possibly illustrating a wide range of determinants associated with students’ cultural and educational environments (see Asker, 1998; Barraclough, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988; Hodis et al., 2010; McCroskey, 1986, 1992; Richmond & McCroskey, 1995; Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1991). Nonetheless, some important factors influencing public speaking related WTC may transcend cultural and/or educational context differences. Specifically, it is possible that the anticipation (or the actual performance) of a public speech may trigger cognitive and psychological processes, which in turn, may impact people’s willingness to speak in public (Miller & Stone, 2009). In addition, it is likely that public speaking related communication apprehension and self-efficacy beliefs (indicating one’s confidence that one can use whatever skills one possesses to give a good public speech) interact to affect one’s WTC in public speaking settings. Point in case, Grace and Gilsdorf
(2004) posit that: (1) a good oral presentation is grounded on confidence rather than brilliance, and (2) “apprehensive students will speak better or more willingly when confident and worse when afraid” (p. 171).

In sum, it appears that the magnitude, as well as the evolution of WTC in public speaking settings, is affected by cultural and educational environments. Moreover, recent findings offer encouraging evidence that WTC in public speaking contexts can be enhanced, given appropriate instruction/effective interventions (see Ayres, Schliesman, & Sonandre, 1998; Miller & Stone, 2009; Weaver, 2007). Furthermore, with regards to the specific case of the BCC, Hodis and colleagues (2010) show that during a semester in which students were enrolled in a BCC, their WTC scores related to public speaking increased, on average, with 11% over their corresponding WTC levels at the beginning of the course. These results are in line with those reported by Morreale, Hackman, and Neer (1998) who found that students enrolled in a laboratory-centered basic interpersonal course reported increases in own perceptions of willingness to communicate between the beginning and end of the class.

**Interrelationships among Communication Apprehension, Communicative Self-Efficacy, and Willingness to Communicate**

Several studies investigated cross-sectional relationships among some (or all) of these constructs. For instance, MacIntyre (1994) and MacIntyre and colleagues (1999) found that significant negative relations exist between CA on the one hand, and WTC and SPCC on the other. However, it is unclear whether these studies used...
Importantly, the CA-WTC relationship was found in only one of the investigations (i.e., MacIntyre, 1994) and not in the other. This finding is surprising in light of McCroskey and Richmond’s (1987) unequivocal argument stating that one’s “level of CA is probably the single best predictor of his or her willingness to communicate” (p. 142). Additionally, the MacIntyre studies also pointed out that at the cross-sectional level a positive relation exists between SPCC and WTC. This finding is consistent with the observation that “people who perceive themselves competent in communicating are more willing to initiate a communication” (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012, pp. 3-4). When reviewing these findings it is important to keep in mind that although cross-sectional studies can provide snapshots of the relations among given constructs, they offer access to less information than longitudinal studies do. Moreover, noting that “potentially explanatory variables in a cross-sectional setting may not be as relevant when viewed longitudinally” (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010, p. 96; see also Maxwell & Cole, 2007), it is unclear whether relations detected at the cross-sectional level are informative for describing longitudinal interrelations. Furthermore, in a longitudinal framework, time-related changes are measured directly, whereas in cross-sectional studies, conclusions about change can only be made indirectly (Anstey & Hofer, 2004; Williams, Edwards, & Vanderberg, 2003). This aspect is of crucial importance as “there is a truism about applied research that an inadequate concept of change leads to diminished or misguided applied research” (Golembiewski, Billingsley, & Yeager, 1976, p. 133, emphasis in original).
As far as longitudinal relations among apprehension, self-efficacy, and WTC are concerned, with one exception (details follow), the extant literature is largely silent. Considering that the need to investigate these constructs across time has been recognized over two decades ago (e.g., Rubin et al., 1990), this paucity is surprising. This lack of longitudinal research becomes even more puzzling when one notes that the given conceptualizations of the constructs regard them as dynamic entities. A good example illustrating the (implicit or explicit) dynamic operationalization of the constructs is offered by the plethora of studies presenting various strategies aiming at reducing CA, increasing SPCC, or heightening WTC (Ayres & Hopf, 1987, 1990; Ayres et al., 1998; Kelly & Keaten, 2000; McCroskey, 1972, 1977, 1984).

The lone study assessing longitudinal relations among some of these constructs (i.e., Rubin et al., 1997) found a negative association between change in CA and change in SPCC. This result indicates that people whose CA scores decreased slowly had also smaller increases in SPCC compared to peers who exhibited a more abrupt decrease in CA. Notably, these findings (as is the case for the findings in the MacIntyre, 1994 and MacIntyre et al., 1999 studies) refer to overall constructs, which means that conclusions are grounded on the analyses of indexes obtained as averages across dyadic, small group, large meetings and public speaking contexts.

In sum, the overwhelmingly cross-sectional nature of the extant communication research is able to provide only limited information regarding how these important constructs relate to each other over time throughout the
BCC. Thus, conducting longitudinal investigations of
dynamic relations among change processes in the frame-
work of BCC is pivotal because the BCC is particularly
well suited to provide students with a host of opportu-
nities leading to meaningful mastery experiences in
given communication contexts (e.g., being able to per-
form increasingly elaborate communicative tasks, such
as persuasive public speeches). Noting that mastery
experiences are the most influential driver of people’s
self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Usher & Pajares,
2008), and recognizing the importance of communicative
self-efficacy beliefs, communication apprehension, and
willingness to communicate for the effectiveness of communication instruction in the BCC, it appears that
mapping how CA, SPCC, and WTC relate both within
and across time in the context of BCC can provide
important fresh knowledge. To this end, the study
undertakes an in-depth investigation of both cross-
sectional and longitudinal relationships among these
constructs by means of three waves of data collected
from students enrolled in a semester-long BCC. To align
the scope of the investigation with the focus of
instruction in the given course, which was centered on
public speaking, the research analyzes the afore-
mentioned relationships as they relate specifically to the
public speaking communication context.
In line with the theoretical rationale delineated pre-
viously, a theoretical model was employed to offer a
conceptual representation of both cross-sectional and
longitudinal relations characterizing CA, SPCC, and
WTC. This model, which is presented in Figure 1, posits
that: (a) initial apprehension and self-efficacy levels
(i.e., CA and SPCC latent intercepts) are predictors of
Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Relations Among Initial Levels and Rates of Change for CA, SPCC, and WTC. Ai = initial apprehension; Ci = initial self-efficacy; Wi = initial WTC; As = change in apprehension; CS = change in self-efficacy; WS = change in WTC; b = regression coefficient summoning the relations between a given predictor and criteria (for example, b_{ci|ai} reflects the influence of Ai on Ci); cov = covariance. In order to prevent clogging the diagram, three latent factor covariances, namely the ones between the residuals of WTC latent intercept and the residuals of the WTC and SPCC latent slopes, as well as the one between the residual intercept and slope of SPCC are omitted.
WTC initial levels, and (b) initial apprehension and self-efficacy levels together with rates of change in apprehension and self-efficacy (i.e., CA and SPCC latent slopes) are predictors of changes in WTC. In addition, to account for the influence of CA on SPCC, the model also posits that (c) initial self-efficacy levels are predicted by initial apprehension levels and (d) rates of changes in self-efficacy are predicted by both initial levels and changes in apprehension. Consistent with this conceptualization, three research questions (RQs) are investigated in this study:

**RQ 1**: During the course of a semester in which students are enrolled in a BCC, does change in their communication apprehension predict changes in their self-efficacy and willingness to communicate?

**RQ 2**: During the course of a semester in which students are enrolled in a BCC, does change in students’ self-efficacy predict changes in their willingness to communicate?

**RQ 3**: Are there any differences between the static (cross-sectional) relations among the three constructs and their dynamic (longitudinal) counterparts?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

A total of 705 (319 female) undergraduate students took part in the study. Participants were enrolled in a BCC (focusing primarily on public speaking) at a university in the US. Seventy-four percent of the parti-
Participants were first-year students with the remainder being sophomores, juniors, and seniors. About 56% of the respondents had data for all three waves, with an additional 30% having recorded data for two waves.

**Procedure**

After receiving approval from the university’s IRB, all students enrolled in the BCC in that particular semester were invited to take part in the study. The questionnaires were administered during class time in the first, eighth, and fifteenth week of the semester. This particular schedule of data collection was chosen so that participants had not performed any public speeches prior to the first wave of data collection, performed at least one before the second administration, and had done one more public speech before the last administration.

**Measures**

Participants’ self-reports were employed to measure their CA, SPCC, and WTC related to public speaking. To this end, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24B; McCroskey, 1986), Self Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988), and Willingness to Communicate (WTC; McCroskey, 1986) instruments were used. The PRCA-24B comprised 24 items; for this research, only the six items pertaining to public speaking were employed. The answers were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). Thus, the scores can range between 6 and 30, with higher scores indicating higher levels of
Table 1

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Reliabilities for Focal Variables at Times 1, 2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC_1</td>
<td>60.88</td>
<td>22.10</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTC_2</td>
<td>63.95</td>
<td>22.57</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTC_3</td>
<td>67.90</td>
<td>22.05</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCC_1</td>
<td>71.41</td>
<td>19.24</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCC_2</td>
<td>74.88</td>
<td>17.42</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCC_3</td>
<td>76.95</td>
<td>17.75</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA_1</td>
<td>16.14</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA_2</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA_3</td>
<td>15.32</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Reliabilities reported in this table are the α coefficient of internal consistency (adjusted using Spearman-Brown formula for the length of scale).

Public speaking related CA (McCroskey, 1986). The SPCC instrument comprised 12 items examining students’ perceptions of own ability to communicate effectively in various contexts. For this study, the three public speaking items were used. Participants’ answers on this scale were recorded on a scale ranging from 0 = completely incompetent to 100 = completely competent. The WTC instrument comprised 20 items. In this research the three public speaking items were employed. Answers were recorded on a scale ranging from 0 = never to 100 = always willing to initiate communication when completely free choice was available. As is illustrated in Table 1, all constructs employed, at all time points, have excellent reliabilities that exceed 0.80.
**Data Analytic Technique**

To answer the three RQs, multivariate latent growth modeling (LGM) was employed. LGM is a powerful and versatile general data analytic system for longitudinal data, which includes traditional techniques (e.g., paired t-tests, repeated measures ANOVA, repeated measures MANOVA) as particular cases (Voelkle, 2007). LGM has several advantages that recommend it over its traditional alternatives: it requires less restrictive assumptions, is flexible, and can be employed to assess a variety of hypotheses that cannot be investigated by means of traditional techniques (Byrne, 2012; Byrne, Lam, & Fielding, 2008; Curran & Muthen, 1999; Curran, Obeidat, & Losardo, 2010; Duncan & Duncan, 2009; Voelkle, 2007).

One of the distinctive features of LGM is that it enables the concomitant study of both average trends in the population and of how individual change patterns differ from these mean trends (Byrne, 2012; Chan, 1998; Curran, 2000; Ram & Grimm, 2007). This versatility of LGM is in stark contrast with the fact that traditional longitudinal techniques can inform only on average patterns of change and relegate variability between people to the error term (Hess, 2000; Hodis et al., 2010; Hodis & Hodis, 2012; Lenzenweger, Johnson, & Willett, 2004). As a result of these limitations, traditional repeated-measures analyses, such as ANOVA, MANOVA, and MANCOVA, “are increasingly becoming perceived as somewhat inadequate in that they prevent researchers from seeking answers to interesting and important questions bearing on such differences” (Byrne, 2012, p. 313). Excellent presentations of LGM detailing the advantages of employing the procedure, can be found in...
Bollen and Curran (2006) and Henry and Slater (2008). In this study, linear LGM (denoted in short linear growth model) is used.

To assess whether the proposed multivariate model (see Figure 1) offers a good description of the empirical data, several fit indices were employed: 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 and values between .05 and .08 to denote an acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

RESULTS

To estimate the parameters of the model, this study used full information maximum likelihood (FIML, Arbuckle, 1996). This estimation technique allows researchers to include in the analysis all the information provided by all respondents (i.e., does not require any data purging) and is considered to be “one of the preferred methods to allow generalizations of results to the population” (Benner & Graham, 2009, p. 363). Analyses were conducted with Mplus version 6.11 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2010).

Consistent with findings from extant research (Hodis et al., 2010; Hodis & Hodis, 2012), in this study the dynamic influences of CA on SPCC and WTC, as well as of SPCC on WTC are operationalized in a linear growth modeling framework. Herein, to ease the flow of presentation, WTC, respectively SPCC, and CA stand
for the public speaking components of their respective constructs. The three research questions of interest are investigated by analyzing the relationships among initial levels and rates of change of these three constructs. Together, these six latent factors define and describe static and dynamic relationships among CA, SPCC, and WTC related to public speaking.

The proposed multivariate linear growth model had an excellent fit to the data: $\chi^2(17, N = 705) = 13.49$, $p = .70$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00 and, thus, its parameters can be meaningfully interpreted. In any multivariate model of change, the most important parameters are the ones linking the growth factors (i.e., initial levels and rates of change in CA, SPCC, and WTC for this model). The interpretation of these parameters allows one to get valuable information on how various aspects of change in one construct are related to similar aspects of change in the other constructs.

At the beginning of the semester, initial levels of WTC and SPCC were positively associated (see Table 2 for a complete summary of these results; all parameters discussed subsequently are statistically significant at the .05 level). On average, a difference of one standard deviation (SD) in self-efficacy at Time 1 was associated with a difference of 0.28 SD units in the initial level of WTC, when controlling for CA (see Figure 2 for a graphical summary). Thus, students who had higher initial levels of self-efficacy (i.e., of SPCC) also began the semester with higher levels of WTC. In addition, initial levels of WTC were negatively associated with initial levels of CA. On average, an increase of one SD in the initial CA was associated with a decrease of 0.54 SD
units in initial WTC (controlling for SPCC), indicating that students who had lower apprehension at the beginning of the course also had higher WTC than more apprehensive students. In standardized terms, the effect of initial apprehension on initial willingness to communicate (controlling for self-efficacy at the beginning of the semester) is approximately twice as strong as the corresponding standardized effect of initial self-efficacy levels. This is an important finding, further underlined by the fact that variation in initial levels of self-efficacy and apprehension accounted for about 52% of the variability in initial levels of WTC ($R^2 = .52$).

Both initial self-efficacy and rate of change in self-efficacy exhibited positive associations with the WTC rate of change. All else being the same, one SD difference in initial SPCC levels (respectively rate of change) was associated with 0.61 (respectively 0.77) SD units difference in WTC rate of change (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Thus, students who at the beginning of the BCC had higher self-efficacy levels with respect to public speaking and/or exhibited faster increases in these levels during the semester also showed a more rapid increase in their WTC scores than students who had lower initial SPCC levels and/or slower increases in SPCC.

With respect to the influence of apprehension on the WTC rate of change, initial levels of CA were positively associated with the WTC rate of change. Specifically, one SD unit increase in CA intercept was associated with 0.53 SD units increase to WTC slope. This is an interesting finding that parallels the one obtained in univariate settings: Although at the cross-sectional level, CA and WTC are negatively correlated, the relationship between CA and change in WTC is positive.
Figure 2. Summary of Standardised Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Relations among Initial Levels and Rates of Change for CA, SPCC, and WTC. Ai = initial apprehension; Ci = initial self-efficacy; Wi = initial WTC; As = change in apprehension; CS = change in self-efficacy; WS = change in WTC.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Symbol</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Unstandardized (Standardized) Parameter Estimate (PE)</th>
<th>Standard Error (SE)</th>
<th>z ratio</th>
<th>Two-tailed p-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b_wi</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>RC of WTC TIS on CA TIS</td>
<td>-3.33 (-0.54)</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>-8.53</td>
</tr>
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<td>b_wi</td>
<td>ci</td>
<td>RC of WTC TIS on SPCC TIS</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>3.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>b_ws</td>
<td>ai</td>
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<td>2.40 (0.53)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b_ws</td>
<td>ci</td>
<td>RC of WTC TRC on SPCC TIS</td>
<td>0.51 (0.61)</td>
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<td>b_ws</td>
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<td>b_ws</td>
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<td>b_ci</td>
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<td>PV WTC TIS</td>
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<td>6.45</td>
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<td>$\sigma^2_{ws</td>
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<td>PV WTC TRC</td>
<td>123.09</td>
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<td>2.35</td>
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### Table 2 (continued)

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<th>Parameter Symbol</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<th>Two-tailed p-value</th>
<th>Unstandardized Estimate (PE)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>-3.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{\text{r}}^2$</td>
<td>PC WTC TIS and SPCC TRC</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{\text{r}}^2$</td>
<td>Covariance CA TIS and TRC</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: RC = regression coefficient; PV = partial variance after taking into account the linear effect of the predictor(s); PC = partial covariance after taking into account the linear effect of the predictor(s); TIS = true initial status; TRC = true rate of change.
(see Hodis et al., 2010). Thus, students who had lower initial levels of CA increased more slowly their WTC than their more apprehensive counterparts. Interestingly, the magnitude (but not the direction) of the relationships between initial apprehension, on the one hand, and initial WTC (respectively change in WTC) on the other, was about the same (standardized regression coefficients of -.54 and .53, respectively). The relationship between change in WTC and change in CA was not statistically significant, thus pointing out that knowledge of how students’ CA scores changed (decreased) during the given semester did not offer any information about the way their WTC scores increased throughout the same period. The four latent factors taken together (i.e., SPCC intercept and slope and CA intercept and slope) accounted for about 34% of variation in the WTC rate of change.

After taking into account the effect of predictors on WTC latent intercept and slope, the residual covariance between these factors was negative. This indicates that after accounting for the effects of the predictors, higher true WTC initial levels were associated with slower change in WTC. This negative covariance should not be taken to mean that students with high initial WTC levels experienced a decrease in these levels during the semester. On the contrary, it is quite likely that these students experienced an increase in WTC levels but did so at a slower rate than that of students who started the semester with lower WTC levels.

Fitting the model also revealed a negative relationship between initial levels of SPCC and CA. Specifically, an increase of one SD in the initial level of apprehension was associated with a decrease of 0.49 SD units in self-efficacy, indicating that students who were
more apprehensive at the beginning of the semester had also lower self-efficacy than students who were less apprehensive. Moreover, in terms of the relationship between the two rates of change, faster (i.e., more abrupt) decreases in apprehension were associated with larger increases in self-efficacy. No significant relationship was found between change in self-efficacy and initial apprehension. Furthermore, no significant relationship was recorded between initial levels of and subsequent decreases in apprehension. Thus, students’ apprehension level at the beginning of the semester was not systematically related to their subsequent change in CA.

Variability in initial apprehension levels accounted for about 24% of variation in initial self-efficacy ($R^2 = .24$); initial levels and rates of change in CA, taken together, accounted for about 14% of variation in self-efficacy rates of change ($R^2 = .14$). A comparison of these two $R^2$ values reveals that CA played a more important role in predicting initial levels of self-efficacy than it did in predicting rates of change in the same construct. More specifically, initial levels of CA alone predicted a higher percentage of variation in SPCC intercept than both true initial levels and rates of change together did in the SPCC slope. The residual covariance between initial levels and rates of change in SPCC was negative, showing that after the influence of predictors was taken into account, higher true SPCC initial levels were associated with lower true SPCC rates of change. This result is in line with the trends uncovered in the unconditional univariate case (see Hodis & Hodis, 2012).
In sum, fitting the multivariate growth model provided important information that helps answer the three RQs of the study. First, answering RQ1, change in CA predicted change in WTC but failed to account for change in self-efficacy beliefs. Second, providing an answer to RQ2, change in self-efficacy was a significant predictor of change in WTC. Third, in relation to RQ3, important differences were revealed when comparing static (cross-sectional) and dynamic (longitudinal) relations among the three constructs. Specifically, (a) initial CA was negatively related to initial WTC but positively related to change in WTC; (b) initial CA predicted significantly initial self-efficacy beliefs but not change in these beliefs; (c) although initial self-efficacy had positive relations with both initial level and change in WTC, the relations were more than 200% stronger for change in WTC; (d) although initial CA had very similar relations with initial self-efficacy and WTC, it predicted significantly change in WTC but not change in self-efficacy; and (e) the opposite was true in terms of rates of change, i.e., change in apprehension predicted change in self-efficacy but not change in WTC.

**DISCUSSION**

In this section, an in-depth discussion of the results is conducted. The implications of the findings for the BCC are highlighted throughout. In an attempt to situate these findings within the realm of extant communication research, we tried to draw parallels with relevant work. However, the extreme paucity of communication research focusing on change in these constructs in the specific context of public speaking made
this endeavor impossible. As a result, we were left with no other choice but to relate our findings to results that either pertain to the overall constructs (i.e., that incorporate public speaking, large meetings, small groups, and dyadic contexts) or are not explicit with regards to the attendant context(s).

The results of this study make a significant contribution to understanding the role of communicative self-efficacy, as the key transmission mechanism linking communication apprehension and willingness to communicate of undergraduate students enrolled in a BCC. In line with findings derived from univariate growth models (Hodis et al., 2010; Hodis & Hodis, 2012), the results pertaining to the multivariate model indicate that even after the effect of predictors was taken into consideration, for both self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in public speaking settings, students who began the semester with high (vs. low) levels of the given construct were likely to have exhibited slower (vs. more accentuated) increases during the semester. From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings point out that students who begin the BCC with relatively high levels of WTC and/or SPCC related to speaking in public can be expected to show a less marked improvement along these dimensions than their counterparts who have lower levels of SPCC and WTC.

With respect to the linkage between initial level and subsequent evolution, CA does not fit the pattern observed for WTC and SPCC, as the results indicate that there was no significant relationship between the level of apprehension at which one began the semester and the magnitude of the subsequent decrease in CA. This pivotal result underlines the fact that there is no con-
clusive evidence pointing out that highly apprehensive students who participate in a BCC remain (or even worse, become more) apprehensive. On the contrary, it shows that regardless of how apprehensive one is at the beginning of the semester, participation in the BCC can be associated with either increases or decreases in apprehension levels regarding public speaking. Thus, the result underlines both the opportunities and the responsibilities that need to accompany the employment of various strategies designed to reduce students’ apprehension. One such strategy was proposed by Witt and Behnke (2006) who suggested that it might be advantageous to rank public speaking assignments from least to most threatening. The benefits of this approach might be enhanced if students also take part in communication centers (or speech laboratories) (Nelson et al., 2012). Alternatively, grounded on the positive relationship found between public speaking related CA and discrepancy (a measure of the perceived difference between one’s imagined communication interaction and the real encounter; Honeycutt, Choi, & DeBerry, 2009), it is possible that cognitive modification can provide an efficient way to reduce CA related to public speaking compared to other alternatives (e.g., visualization and systematic desensitization; Honeycutt et al., 2009).

The lack of significant association between initial apprehension and subsequent change in apprehension is not in line with Rubin et al.’s (1997) work. Rubin and colleagues found that students who were highly apprehensive at Time 1 showed a more abrupt decrease in CA than their moderate or respectively low apprehensive counterparts. A possible explanation of the difference in findings stems from the fact that in Rubin et al.’s study,
students were classified as having high, moderate, and low levels of CA. This strategy is associated with loss of information (by converting a continuous variable into an ordinal one; see Butts & Ng, 2009; MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002) and could generate arbitrary classifications of cases having scores located in the vicinity of the cut-points defining the three categories.

The next aspect of this discussion integrates results pertaining to both cross-sectional and dynamic relations among the three constructs. To underline the implications of findings in a comprehensive manner, a graphical summary of these interrelations is provided in Figure 3. An examination of Figure 3 reveals that students' initial WTC levels were predicted by their initial levels of apprehension and self-efficacy. Specifically, the higher one's initial SPCC level and the lower one's initial CA, the higher the initial WTC was as well. These results are in line with the cross-sectional results in MacIntyre (1994) who found that SPCC had a positive influence on WTC, whereas CA had a negative influence on both SPCC and WTC. However, in departing from the results in the MacIntyre (1994) study (indicating that the effect of SPCC on WTC was much stronger than the corresponding effect of CA), this research found that the effect of initial apprehension on WTC was about twice as large as the effect of initial self-efficacy. In addition, findings from this study are also partly in line with results from MacIntyre et al. (1999) who replicated findings from MacIntyre (1994) with respect to the influence of CA on SPCC and of SPCC on WTC but did not find support for the negative effect of CA on WTC. One possible explanation of the differences between findings in this investigation and the results of the
Figure 3. Schematic Representation of the Summary of Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Relationships Among CA, SPCC, and WTC. PAW = positively associated with, i.e., **bolded** text at the base of the arrow corresponds to **bolded** text at the top of the arrow and **italic** text at the base of the arrow is associated with **italic** text at the top of the arrow. NAW = negatively associated with, i.e., **bolded** text, at the base of the arrow, and **italic** text at the base of the arrow corresponds to **bold** text at its top. For example, the PAW arrow between Lower/Higher Initial SPCC and Lower/Higher Initial WTC indicates that Lower Initial SPCC was associated with Lower Initial WTC and that Higher Initial SPCC was associated with Higher Initial WTC. The NAW arrow between Lower/Higher Initial CA and Lower/Higher Initial WTC indicates that Lower Initial CA was associated with Higher Initial WTC and that Higher Initial CA was associated with Lower Initial WTC.
Static and Dynamic Interplay

The aforementioned studies is that this work uses only the public speaking context of WTC, SPCC, and CA.

Initial levels of both self-efficacy and apprehension were found to be significant predictors of change in WTC. Specifically, the higher one’s initial SPCC and CA levels, the more rapid one’s increase in WTC was (see Figure 3). These findings underscore that communicative self-efficacy beliefs with which students enter the BCC are important predictors of both initial levels and changes in WTC. Thus, if self-reported WTC levels are indicative of actual WTC behavior in public speaking settings, these results offer support to McCroskey and McCroskey’s (1988) claim that the SPCC is an important factor that influences people’s actual communication behavior.

The finding showing that students who exhibited higher true initial CA levels increased their WTC faster than their somewhat less apprehensive counterparts is very interesting. An examination of Figure 3 provides important information that sheds more light on this effect: higher initial levels of apprehension were associated with lower initial levels of WTC and lower initial levels of WTC were associated with higher WTC rates of change. Thus, higher levels of apprehension were associated with higher rates of change (i.e., steeper increases in WTC) both directly and by means of their influence on WTC initial levels. These results indicate that it is possible for highly apprehensive students to overcome their apprehension regarding public speaking and become more willing to communicate in this context. Some promising paths toward this end might be to encourage students to make full use of resources available (e.g., speech center services, speech laboratories or...
communication centers; Dwyer & Davidson, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2002; Jones, Hunt, Simonds, Comadena, & Baldwin, 2004; Nelson et al., 2012), review recordings of their in-class speeches, or use written self-evaluations (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012).

Although how apprehensive students were at the beginning of the course was related to how much their WTC changed, this study found no significant relationship between change in CA and change in WTC. In other words, whether one’s apprehension score decreased, stayed relatively unchanged, or increased during the given semester had no bearing on how one’s WTC score changed in the same period of time. The result is reflected in Figure 3 by the absence of any link between change in CA and change in WTC. This conclusion differs from the one reached by MacIntyre (1994) who posited that “as a person becomes more anxious about communicating” (p. 138), her level of WTC “should decline” (p. 139).

On the other hand, change in students’ self-efficacy beliefs was positively related to change in their WTC levels, in that people experiencing a marked increase in SPCC were likely to also exhibit a more pronounced increase in WTC than individuals characterized by smaller improvements in SPCC. This finding has pivotal implications for instruction in BCC for it points out how important it is for someone teaching a public speaking course to design class activities and assignments with a dual focus: to broaden actual communication skills and to enhance students’ self-efficacy beliefs with regard to those very skills. If an instructor is successful in doing so, most likely she/he will be rewarded with rapid increases in students’ WTC as well.
As expected, at the beginning of the semester, initial self-efficacy and apprehension were negatively related; the higher one’s initial CA, the lower one’s initial SPCC was. This finding is in line with MacIntyre’s (1994) and MacIntyre et al.’s (1999) conclusions, and underlines that at entry in the BCC, participants who were highly apprehensive were also characterized by low levels of SPCC. From a communication instruction standpoint, this result strengthens the evidence pointing toward a cross-sectional link between high levels of apprehension and low levels of SPCC. Taking this knowledge into consideration, public speaking related tasks can be designed in a non-threatening manner that can also help build student self-efficacy beliefs in own skills (see Dwyer & Davidson, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2002; Nelson et al., 2012; Witt & Behnke, 2006 for possible startegies). However, it is important to note that the negative effects of heightened apprehension on initial self-efficacy did not persist throughout the semester, as indicated by the fact that students’ increase in self-efficacy beliefs was not related to how apprehensive they were at the beginning of the course. Interestingly, what did affect change in SPCC was change in CA: the slower one’s decrease in CA was, the slower her/his increase in SPCC was as well. This finding is similar to that reported in Rubin et al. (1997).

The results of this investigation underline several interesting implications regarding the development of (public speaking related) self-efficacy in BCC. First, it is likely that regardless of how apprehensive students are at the beginning of the course, it is possible to help them decrease their apprehension. Second, the level of communicative apprehension with which students enter the
BCC has no bearing on how much they can enhance their corresponding self-efficacy beliefs. On the contrary, it is change in apprehension that influences change in self-efficacy. This finding is in line with the point of view recently made by Sidelinger and colleagues (2011) with regards to the BCC: “ultimately, students who experience a reduction in their communication apprehension are also likely to experience an increase in their self-perceived communication competence” (p. 235). Thus, instruction in BCC can (and, as the results of this study show, sometimes does) have a positive impact on communicative self-efficacy beliefs both directly and by means of reducing CA. However, a cautionary note is in order here: Because a relatively low proportion of variability in rate of change in SPCC (about 14%) can be attributed to variability in CA, these results indicate that some other factors besides CA affect the evolution of self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, enhancing students’ self-efficacy with regards to public speaking in a BCC would require a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond reducing students’ levels of apprehension in the given context. One possibly useful strategy in this sense could take into account that mastery experiences have been shown to have strong and consistent effects on the development of people’s self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Thus, it is likely that if assignments in BCC expose students to gradually more challenging (but doable) tasks related to speaking in public, an increasing number of them could benefit from having meaningful and consistent mastery experiences in this domain. This strategy is in line with Beatty and Andriate (1985), who warn instructors that when the majority of the students have had little or no practice of
speaking in public, if they have a negative experience while performing their first speeches there is a heightened chance that they will avoid communication in similar future encounters. Another possibly fruitful approach could be to enhance student-to-student (classroom) connectedness in the BCC. This strategy may be able to contribute to reducing students’ CA related to public speaking and increase their SPCC and learning (Prisbell, Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009; Sidelinger et al., 2011).

From a pedagogical standpoint, findings from this work provide support for a teaching philosophy that does not treat constructs in isolation but attempts to use improvement in one to foster positive changes in the others. For example, as the results of this study demonstrate, by using strategies that are effective in accelerating the decline in students’ apprehension levels, educators can also help bring about a more accentuated increase in their communicative self-efficacy. Furthermore, as the rate of change in communicative self-efficacy was found to be positively related to WTC rate of change, it follows that, indirectly, by means of communicative self-efficacy, the same strategies could also be helpful in boosting the increase in students’ levels of WTC.

Limitations of the Present Study and Future Directions of Inquiry

First, having access to data collected at three time points restricted the investigation to linear models of growth and decline. Although the linear patterns of change that were studied received support from the empirical data, with four or more measurements it would
have been possible to test whether changes were continuous, or whether they stopped at some point and then stabilized or reversed.

Second, the model proposed in this study explained only partly variations in the given criteria. Thus, it is apparent that some additional constructs (besides CA and SPCC) need to be investigated in subsequent studies. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 2012; Scholer & Higgins, 2010, 2011), which is one of the most consequential psychological theories pertaining to the self (Polman, 2012), could be employed to provide potentially useful candidates for consideration. This theory contends that whether people self-regulate with respect to desired end-state and are characterized by an eager approach toward fulfilling aspirations (i.e., have a chronic promotion orientation; Higgins, 1997, 2012) or whether they self-regulate with respect to undesired end-state and approach the process of goal-pursuit in a vigilant manner (i.e., have a chronic prevention orientation) affects the way they choose and pursue goals, as well as how they interpret the outcomes of successful or unsuccessful goal pursuits (Higgins, 1997, 2012; Scholer & Higgins, 2010, 2011). Applications of the regulatory focus theory to communication research hold promising opportunities, as illustrated by recent investigations (see Fransen & ter Hoeven, 2011; Hong, 2012). For the specific context of public speaking within the BCC framework, it is possible that students who have a strong promotion orientation regard delivering successive public speeches as exciting opportunities to improve their performance in the task at hand and reach their goals (e.g., be able to deliver good speeches in front of diverse audiences). On the contrary, it is possible that
students who have a strong prevention orientation perceive giving a public speech an unavoidable “chance” to fail. These marked differences in internalizing the role of learning opportunities provided by BCC can go a long way toward exploring variations in students’ change in self-efficacy beliefs and willingness to communicate during the given semester. Further research would do well to study these aspects.

Other future research studies that have the potential to be informative for instruction in the BCC could analyze the time-related evolution of students’ WTC, SPCC, and CA scores pertaining to the other communication contexts (i.e., communication in dyads, small groups, and large groups). A comparison between findings from this research, associated with the public speaking context, and findings from the other contexts could shed some light on whether the beneficial effects of being enrolled in a BCC transfer across communication contexts.

In conclusion, this research offers an in-depth analysis of the cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships among CA, SPCC, and WTC in public speaking contexts framed by the BCC. By comparing and contrasting static and dynamic linkages, this study reveals important findings that were previously unavailable. These findings are relevant for both theory development and pedagogical practice and open new avenues for productive research centered on the BCC framework.

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Assessment of E-textbook Usage in a Large Public Speaking Program

Marlina M. Davidson
Karen Kangas Dwyer

The rising cost of textbooks and the move to a digital age are changing the textbook industry. The availability of more and more content in electronic formats along with the pressures to cut costs are driving many programs and institutions toward the adoption of electronic textbooks. The adoption of an electronic textbook package may be a logical choice for any basic communication course instructor. Consequently, assessing textbook usage and educational benefits of using electronic textbooks, also known as e-textbooks, can be especially pertinent to communication programs. This is especially important because many publishers are offering e-textbooks and accompanying electronic resources at equal or lower cost than their printed textbook counterparts.

It's believed that e-textbooks are set to become a dominating force in universities and college classrooms. Supporters of e-textbooks cite the advantages as everything from interactivity and electronic supplemental materials to widespread accessibility and portability (Murray & Perez, 2011). For basic course instructors, it's more than just these advantages that are important when deciding to adopt an e-textbook; assessing student learning and usability in the classroom are vital concerns.
The massive printed textbook is no longer the only option. The e-textbook continues to be a logical choice for academic publishers and instructors, but some students have not reported a preference for reading a textbook online (Woody, Daniel, Baker, 2010). As part of the yearly assessment process for a large public speaking program, this study examined student preferences for reading e-textbooks, preferences for e-textbook mobile applications, and the textbook reading habits of university students. The results of this study could build on previous e-textbooks research in higher education (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012) and could help communication programs and basic course instructors make decisions about adopting e-textbooks.

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND RATIONALE**

The innovation of electronic books and textbooks is changing the way we look at instruction in the classroom. E-book sales increased by 366% in 2011 (Guardian, 2012). According to a recent sales report from the Association of American Publishers, the adult e-book markets were up for 2013 by 36% to $1.06 billion, comprising nearly 20% of all sales (Greenfield, 2013a). It’s estimated that by the year 2015 higher/career education e-textbook sales in the United States will have reached the 26% mark and in 2017 e-textbooks will compose 44% of the United States textbook market (Reynolds, 2011).

Cost might be one of the primary reasons for the e-textbook revolution in higher education. The average price of a textbook increased approximately 185% between 1986 and 2005 (Young, 2010) and between 2007 and 2010, prices have increased an average of 7.5% per
year (Boroughs, 2010). According to the College Board’s annual survey of trends in college pricing, the national average for textbooks in 2012-2013 was estimated at approximately $1,200 per year at a public four-year college, depending on the discipline (www.collegeboard.com). E-textbooks are generally cheaper to produce than printed textbooks (Baumann, 2010) and one study found that the cost of textbooks in the e-book format was 20% to 50% lower than printed textbooks (Buczynski, 2006) although not all reports indicate a decrease in cost.

E-textbooks have been available for more than a decade but not until recently have universities and publishers started to explore the use of e-textbooks, moving from occasional e-textbook usage to mainstream adoption. Miller, Nutting, and Baker-Eveleth (2012) reported that there is a steady growth in the introduction of e-textbooks into education, particularly among students who are younger undergraduate students and those who are taking technically-oriented college courses. The Simba Information report, E-textbook in Higher Education (2010) predicts that the e-textbook market will grow at a rate of 49% through 2013 when e-texts will account for 11% of all textbooks sold. The report indicated the sudden increase in e-textbook sales is due to the growth of e-reader devices and e-book apps for smaller computing devices (e.g., tablet PCs, Apple’s iPad). When considering the cost of textbooks as well as the new textbook formats available, the transition to e-textbooks becomes a reasonable choice for any public speaking or basic course program.

According to the Oxford dictionary, an electronic book or e-book is “an electronic version of a printed book that can be read on a computer or handheld device de-
signed specifically for this purpose” (Oxford dictionary online, 2013) and Crestani, Landoni, and Melucci (2005) add that an e-book is the integration of a conventional printed book with additional useful features provided electronically. An e-textbook can then be defined as an e-book used for instructional or educational purposes. In its simplest form, an e-textbook is a digitalized copy of the printed text (Chesser, 2011). These e-texts function like the traditional book and navigate in a linear fashion, moving through pages sequentially and sometimes offering features such as bookmarking, searching, highlighting and note-taking. In the most complex form, e-textbooks can also offer applications that are designed to incorporate interactive features such as built-in dictionaries and pronunciation guides, embedded video-clips, embedded hyperlinks, interactive images, and animated graphics (Marczak, 2013).

Some textbook publishers are even offering course management software as well as e-book apps to support their electronic offerings. Other features include online quizzes, software that automatically grades assignments, and technology that allows students to submit assignments electronically and then allows instructors to give feedback using both video and audio recordings (Marczak, 2013). Some indicate these more collaborative and active features only offered with e-textbooks are enabling students to learn in a new way that is not possible with traditional printed textbooks (McFall, Dershem, & Davis, 2006).

Over the past decade several scholarly articles have been published on the use of e-books on campuses. However, much of the research has focused on the use of e-books in academic libraries only or in technology related
disciplines. A comprehensive examination of e-textbooks as a tool for learning does not exist. More recently there have been a few studies that move beyond libraries and into the classroom where there is still a discussion on how to assess the educational benefits of e-textbooks.

**E-textbooks in Academic Classrooms**

Universities and individual instructors are experimenting with e-textbook programs. For example, The University of Phoenix consolidated all course textbooks in an electronic library and students are charged $75 per semester to access any electronic textbook (Blumenstyk, 2008). Northwest Missouri State University ran a pilot program with 240 students who were loaned e-book reading devices and provided with electronic textbooks (Read, 2009). The University of Idaho has experimented with a system where teachers provide an electronic, custom textbook tailored to a specific course and charge for it with a course fee (Baker-Eveleth, Miller, & Tucker, 2011). In spite of the rapid growth and development of e-books and e-textbooks and claims that little research has been done, there is still evidence that the examination of e-textbooks in the college classroom has started.

McFall et al. (2006) examined the integration of an e-textbook into an upper level computer science course. Results showed that student perceptions were generally positive in terms of the usefulness of the e-textbook and specifically rated the collaborative features such as shared annotations as helpful. Students who spent more time reading the e-textbook performed better on the final exam. The instructor reported positive support of the e-textbook format and indicated that using the e-
textbook had “completely changed the way he taught the class” (McFall et al., 2006, p. 343).

Sheppard, Grace, and Koch (2008) examined grades and student perceptions in an introductory psychology course when students were given the choice to use an electronic version of the textbook on a CD or a printed textbook in the course. The researchers found that course grades did not differ between the two formats (Shepperd et al., 2008). Students using the e-textbook reported spending less time reading for class (only 2 hours compared to the 2.3 hours per week on average), that the text was easy to use but were unfavorable in their ratings of its convenience, and generally being neutral in their liking for the e-text but would not recommend it to a friend.

Advantages of E-textbooks. There are many reports of advantages to e-textbooks. E-textbooks allow an atmosphere where students can interact and engage with the material in a positive way. A study of undergraduate business law students found that all selected the e-textbook option because it was less expensive even though few had previous experience, and 85% of the class reported never previously using any electronic book (Nicholas & Lewis, 2009). Approximately 50% of students rated their e-textbook experience as positive or very positive and 50% rated the experience neutral or negative.

Another study queried students enrolled in a Systems Analysis course to provide feedback about their perceptions of the course e-textbook accessed via an iPad (Sloan, 2012). Students reported that the e-textbook made it easier for them to learn, and they preferred the e-textbook to a printed textbook. Students
found the iPad easy and enjoyable to use, specifically commenting that the most useful advantages included the portability, handiness, and light weightiness of the iPad. Final course grade point averages (GPAs) from the pilot study were compared to course grades of students who had taken the course the previous two semesters using a print textbook and the study found no significant difference in GPAs.

Some studies report that accessibility doesn’t seem to be affected by the fact that e-books and e-textbooks require the use of an e-reader device or computer (Davy, 2007). E-reading devices have become so popular that the manufacturers or distributors are encouraging potential readers to use e-books (Fowler & Baca, 2010). In 2012, reports showed an increasing number of college students who own e-readers and smaller computing devices, like tablets and mobile phones, that provide access to course material (DeSantis, 2012).

E-textbook advantages would seem to include portability, searchability, and readability as well as cost (Nicolas & Lewis, 2010). With e-textbooks, students no longer need to lug around large backpacks full of books but can use a laptop or electronic reading device that holds all of the textbooks they could need. E-textbooks make it easy to do a keyword search no matter how comprehensive the index. Some e-textbooks can also be highlighted, like a printed textbook, and often have comment boxes or annotation ability (Ravid, Kalman, & Rafaeli, 2008). E-textbooks are also easier to update and edit so when publishers find an error or need to make an update, they can do it quickly (Stewart, 2009). E-textbooks are also helpful for those with disabilities be-
cause e-textbooks can be enlarged and can easily be converted to audio format (Dillion, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, cost is becoming a large factor in transitioning to e-textbooks. Reports show that e-textbooks are generally cheaper to produce (Baumann, 2010) and some have reported that the cost of textbooks in the e-book format was lower than printed textbooks (Buczynski, 2006; Mulvihill, 2011).

Limitations of E-textbooks. Although there are many advantages of e-textbooks, not all studies of e-textbooks have been positive. One study found that only 18% of students preferred e-textbooks, while 67% preferred printed textbooks (Walton, 2007). Studies have found that e-textbooks are hard on the eyes, are not easy to read, and lack portability when they are tied to the computer's location (Walton, 2007, Dwyer & Davidson, 2012).

A study investigating the use of an e-textbook in a graduate course found that 75% of students would have preferred a printed textbook (Vernon, 2006). Students indicated that instead of reading directly from the website, they often resorted to reading from printed copies of the website content. The negative comments focused on physical discomfort while the positive comments included convenience and accessibility (Vernon, 2006).

In another study involving a college general psychology course, students reported greater satisfaction using printed textbooks regardless of gender, comfort level with computers, or prior e-book usage (Woody et al., 2010). However, the study showed no difference between student usage of e-textbooks or printed textbooks and attainment of learning outcomes.
Faculty Use of and Attitude toward E-Textbooks

Even with the documented use of e-textbooks in the classroom attracting faculty to use e-textbooks can be a challenge. One study found that 92% of university faculty preferred print textbooks (Walton, 2007). Although e-books are not new, e-textbook usage by instructors is and there continues to be a learning curve, especially for the rapidly aging faculty at universities.

Nicholas and Lewis (2010) found that 13% of faculty had used e-textbooks but 83% had no plans to use an e-textbook within the next year. The cost of a textbook is often a very small factor that faculty consider when choosing a textbook while previous research has found that this is the most overriding factor for students when rating a textbook (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012; Nicholas & Lewis, 2009). Nicholas and Lewis (2010) also found that over 50% of faculty reported the electronic resources available from publishers, like online self-testing, online study guides, and PowerPoint slides are not important or of least importance when considering a textbook for their course (Nicholas & Lewis, 2010).

Another study showed that faculty attitudes toward e-textbooks significantly affect students’ use of them (Miller et al., 2012). When faculty exhibit a positive attitude toward e-textbooks to their students, students may be more likely to see the benefits of e-textbooks.

Student Use of E-Textbooks

E-textbooks in the classroom are relatively new for faculty as well as for students. Considering how students will use and interact with e-textbooks is vital. Features such as e-book design-layouts and student
comfort with technology can influence students’ use of e-textbooks. Even the placement of e-textbook features such as illustrations has been found to impact learning (Levin & Mayer, 1993; Mayer, Steinhoff, Bower, & Mars, 1995) and student preference (Marek, Griggs, & Christopher, 1999).

E-textbooks enable students to interact with the content through varied methods and provide textual content enhanced with various learning tools, including audio and visual multimedia (Hatipoglu & Toseun, 2012). These tools can foster individualization in the learning process as they enable learners to make use of their preferred learning styles.

There is a significant difference between the e-textbook of the previous decade which was a PDF version of the printed textbook to the contemporary counterpart read on a smaller portable computing device and offering interactive learning features. Even with these technological advances students report browsing e-textbooks more often than printed text (Rho & Gedeon, 2000) and reading e-textbooks by key term searching rather than thorough reading (Nielsen, 2006). The possibility that e-textbooks impact learning is a consideration that all instructors must think about before adopting e-textbooks.

In a survey by the Pew Research Center of almost 3,000 Americans, there are four times more people reading e-books on a typical day in 2012 as compared to 2010 (Rainie, Zickhur, Purcell, & Brenner, 2012). With these rapidly growing numbers and textbook publishers offering communication textbooks in more than only printed formats, basic communication course instructors need to consider the possibilities and challenges of
Adopting an e-textbook. Only a few studies have in particular investigated the use of e-textbooks in the communication classroom, or specifically in the basic public speaking course (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012).

Dwyer and Davidson (2012) examined student preferences for reading and learning in a basic communication course that fulfilled the general education requirement. They found that neither reading the print textbook nor the e-textbook was a predictor of grade, but comfort in accessing an e-textbook online was associated with grade. Additional results found that 40% of students reported learning from the e-textbook even though they didn’t read it on a regular basis and tended to list several difficulties with reading an e-textbook. The findings suggest that students weren’t embracing e-textbooks yet and were relying on the printed books to attain course material, but they still preferred the lower cost of e-textbooks. The authors suggest that new technological advances will allow e-textbooks to catch up with students’ needs, and they recommend that future research focus on e-textbook usage in several college courses, e-textbook reading habits, student ownership of technology to read e-textbooks, and students’ preferences for e-textbooks.

**Background**

At a large Midwestern university, where oral communication assessment is mandated, the assessment process recently focused on e-textbook student usage and preferences. An e-textbook package had been adopted for the public speaking program due to the increasing costs of printed textbooks. The paper package, including textbook and custom workbook, increased to
Assessment of e-Textbook Usage

over $150 and many students mentioned that they could no longer afford the package and were trying to “get by” without buying it. A new e-textbook, a concise printed textbook outlining very similar public speaking course material, and a custom workbook package became available from a different publisher and could be purchased for approximately one-half the cost of the printed textbook package. The e-textbook package covered the same content and included similar materials as the expensive hard copy package. After careful consideration, the faculty at the large Midwestern University chose to adopt the e-textbook package.

Therefore, this study was designed to address the continuing call for e-textbook research by querying university students on their perceptions and usage of e-textbooks in a large multi-section public speaking course and to discover their preferences for reading applications (Dwyer and Davidson, 2012). The following research questions guided this assessment study:

RQ 1: Are students using e-textbooks in other classes across the university?

RQ 2: How do student preferences compare for using an e-textbook to a print textbook?

RQ 3: What advantages do students perceive for using an e-textbook and/or a print textbook?

RQ 4: What e-textbook reading devices and applications do students use and prefer?

RQ 5: How does previous experience with an e-book affect preference for using an e-textbook?

RQ 6: How often are students reading the course e-textbook versus the print textbook?
METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in this study were 598 undergraduate students (264 men, 317 women, 17 unknown) enrolled at a large Midwestern university. The participants were enrolled in 38 sections of the basic public speaking course, with a maximum enrollment of 26 students per section. Since the course fulfills an oral communication general education requirement, a wide variety of majors were represented and their ages ranged from 17 to 41 with a mean age of 21.3. Respondents also represented a cross-section of class rankings (349 freshmen, 125 sophomores, 82 juniors, 42 seniors, 18 unknown).

The course used a standard syllabus and the same-textbook package in all sections. The package included the e-textbook online code, a concise printed textbook that covered the same material as the e-textbook, but with fewer examples, charts and activities, plus the student workbook. As part of the course, all students were required to deliver at least four formal speeches, engage in classroom activities, and take two exams. Instructors included trained GTAs, adjuncts, and full-time faculty. All instructors were given the master syllabus, weekly lesson plans, class policies, and instructional training materials.

Procedures and Instrumentation

As part of this oral communication assessment of the e-textbook package, the public speaking course faculty created items for an online survey tool to answer the research questions. The survey consisted of three demographic items (e.g., age, year in college, sex) and 11
questions that covered 17 survey items designed to answer the research questions. Types of items included dichotomous questions (e.g., “Have you ever used an e-textbook in a previous course?” (1) Yes (2) No), multiple-choice questions (e.g., “Do you own or have access to read an e-textbook via the following.” Check all that apply. (1) Computer (2) iPad or other electronic tablet (3) iPod (4) iPhone or other phone with internet access (5) Kindle (6) Nook) and Likert-type scales (e.g., Please use the following scale to answer these questions. (1) Always (2) Frequently (3) Occasionally (4) Rarely (5) Never. “In general, I found the e-textbook to be useful.”)

The public speaking course director invited all public speaking course instructors to participate in the e-textbook assessment process. Participating instructors (21 out of 23, representing 38 sections) invited their students during the last month of a spring semester to complete an online course assessment survey that would help instructors make decisions about course materials. Some instructors offered extra credit points for completing the survey. Students were assured that the survey would be tabulated by an outside person who would inform each instructor of the students’ names who had completed the survey so each student could receive extra-credit points. The final results of the assessment study were reported to the public speaking course instructors at their monthly meeting and used in the assessment of textbook usage and decisions for future adoptions.
RESULTS

Research Question One asked if students are widely using e-textbooks in other classes across the university. Using the IBM SPSS-19 report summaries, results showed that the majority of students, over 73% (n = 423), had not used an e-textbook in a previous course while approximately 27% reported they had used an e-textbook in a previous course (n = 156).

Research Question Two asked how student preferences compare for using an e-textbook to a printed textbook. The results indicated that if students had a choice to purchase the textbook again, 77.8% (n = 441) would prefer a print version and 22.2% (n = 126) would prefer an e-textbook. When students were asked if an e-textbook option would ever affect their selection of a course, 35.1% (n = 195) indicated they would be more likely to take a particular class if it offered an e-textbook option while 64.9% (n = 360) reported they would be more likely to take a particular class if it offered only a print version of the textbook.

Research Question Three asked what students perceive as advantages for using an e-textbook and/or a printed textbook. Results showed that students consider the advantages of an e-textbook over a printed textbook to include cost (70.4%, n = 385), weight (62.0%, n = 339), ability to quickly find topics (45.3%, n = 248), and convenience (44.8%, n = 245). Students consider the advantages of a printed textbook over an e-textbook to include ability to highlight and take notes (73.2%, n = 412), ease of reading (71.8%, n = 404), ability to keep it as a reference book for future reference (60.7%, n = 342) and convenience (51.7%, n = 290).
Research Question Four asked what e-textbook reading applications students use and prefer. The results showed that students have access to read an e-book via a computer (96.8%, \( n = 550 \)), an iPad or other electronic tablet (8.8%, \( n = 50 \)), an iPod (31.9%, \( n = 181 \)), an iPhone or other mobile smart phone (27.1%, \( n = 154 \)), a Kindle (3.9%, \( n = 22 \)), and a Nook (1.9%, \( n = 11 \)). Students reported that they would prefer to read an e-textbook using the following: computer (86.9%, \( n = 471 \)), iPad or other portable electronic tablet (17.9%, \( n = 97 \)), iPod (18.1%, \( n = 98 \)), iPhone (20.5%, \( n = 111 \)), Kindle (11.3%, \( n = 61 \)), and Nook (4.8%, \( n = 26 \)).

When it comes to preferences, 39.9% (\( n = 232 \)) of students reported that they would have read the e-textbook using a mobile application format if it were available for the course, while 60.1% (\( n = 349 \)) said they would not read the textbook using a mobile application. For those that said "yes" to using a mobile application format, students were asked which mobile application format they would prefer and they indicated an Android, Blackberry, Droid, or other mobile smart phone (\( n = 60 \)), iPad or other portable electronic tablet (\( n = 41 \)), iPhone (\( n = 52 \)), iPod (\( n = 35 \)), and e-reader (i.e., Nook, Kindle, Sony eReader; \( n = 9 \)).

Research Question Five asked how previous experience with an e-book would affect preference for using an e-textbook. A one-way MANOVA was calculated to examine the effect of reading an e-book for any other reason on satisfaction with reading the e-textbook, usefulness of the e-textbook, recommendations for using an e-textbook to friends, and wishes other courses offered e-textbook options. A significant effect was found (Ho-
Assessment of e-Textbook Usage

telling’s $T(4,569) = .027, p < .01$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicted that previous e-book reading significantly affected being satisfied with reading the e-textbook ($F(1,572) = 6.07, p < .01$), perceived usefulness of the e-textbook ($F(1,572) = 6.65, p < .01$), recommendations for using an e-textbook to friends ($F(1,572) = 10.70, p < .01$), and wishes that other courses offered e-textbook ($F(1,572) = 14.43, p < .01$).

In addition, a one-way MANOVA was calculated to examine what the effect of reading an e-textbook in another course could have on student satisfaction with reading the e-textbook, usefulness of the e-textbook, recommendations for using an e-textbook to friends, and wishes that other courses offered e-textbook options. A significant effect was found (Hotelling’s $T(4,566) = .026, p < .01$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicted that previous e-textbook reading in another course significantly affected being satisfied with reading the e-textbook ($F(1,569) = 10.45, p < .01$), perceived usefulness of the e-textbook ($F(1,572) = 7.53, p < .01$), recommendations for using an e-textbook to friends ($F(1,572) = 10.98, p < .01$), and wishes that other courses offered e-textbook ($F(1,572) = 813.98, p < .01$).

Research Question Six asked how often students are reading the course e-textbook versus the printed textbook. The results showed that 59.4% of students are reading the e-textbook less than 1 hour per week ($n = 344$), 23.5% of students are reading the e-textbook one hour per week ($n = 136$), 9.7% of students are reading the e-textbook two hours per week ($n = 56$), and 7.4% of students are reading the e-textbook three or more hours per week ($n = 43$). Results also showed that 48.3% of students are reading the printed textbook less than one...
hour per week ($n = 278$), 30.0% of students are reading the printed textbook one hour per week ($n = 173$), 12.8% of students are reading the printed textbook two hour per week ($n = 74$), and 8.8% of students are reading the printed textbook three or more hour per week ($n = 51$). A paired samples t-test was calculated to compare the means for the amount of time spent reading the e-textbook ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.06$) and the amount of time spent reading the printed textbook ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.22$). Results showed a significant difference ($t(574), 5.288, p < .001$) between the two groups. Thus, students reported spending more time reading the printed textbook than reading the e-textbook, but the time for reading either one was only one hour or less than one hour per week.

**DISCUSSION**

This assessment study examined students’ perceptions of e-textbook usage in a large multi-section public speaking course that fulfills the university general education oral communication requirement. The ultimate goal of the research was to extend previous e-textbook research and help instructors make decisions about adopting e-textbook packages for their courses, as well as help them understand the challenges students may face in reading e-textbooks.

The findings from this study showed that the majority of students reported they have not used an e-textbook in previous courses. This seems to indicate that although there is a growth in the availability of textbooks in electronic formats, many professors are not offering their students the option to use e-textbooks. This
finding may suggest some professors are not comfortable using an e-textbook themselves or incorporating it into the course as previous research has reported (Nicholas & Lewis, 2010). They may fear students will come to them with technical problems they cannot answer and it could affect their ability to be successful in the course (Carlock & Perry, 2008). In another study of university faculty perceptions and electronic resources, one professor said she “would never suggest an e-book as a textbook for her large undergraduate class because ‘if it didn’t work out it would be mass chaos’” (Carlock & Perry, 2008, p. 250). We suggest that more faculty consider taking the next step and welcoming the new technology and supplemental electronic resources or at least giving students the choice of e-textbook or printed textbook as many publishers now make both available. If faculty are not using e-textbooks, students will not be able to reap the benefits from using them.

The majority of students further reported they preferred a printed version of the textbook and that the selection of an e-textbook for a class would alter their decision to take a class. In fact, most students said they would be more likely to take a course if a printed version of the textbook was offered. Again, these findings indicate the educational culture has not completely embraced e-textbook adoption yet. This may be coming, but until students and their instructors use e-textbooks in courses or e-books in general, they will prefer the comfortable printed textbooks they used in their previous educational experiences.

Students reported the advantages of an e-textbook included cost, weight, ability to quickly find topics, and convenience. On the other hand, students considered
the advantages of a printed textbook to include highlighting and taking notes, ease of reading, ability to keep the book for future reference, and convenience. It seems students still perceive e-textbooks to be too much of a challenge. Previous research found that the reason for not using e-books and/or e-textbooks was that they were hard to read and browse and they needed special equipment to use them (Chu, 2003; Levin-Clark, 2006). In this study, only 22.2% of the students reported wanting to use electronic textbooks. With the growing popularity of laptops, e-readers, and smart phones (Mulvihill, 2011) preferences for using e-textbooks will change. Most students have a computer and now at least one-third of students have some kind of portable tablet computer, which is double the percentage from only one year ago (Greenfield, 2013b). There are indications that e-textbooks are looking more useful and as technology progresses and continues to become more available, e-textbooks will become more convenient and accessible for students.

This study further found that student access to mobile devices enabling students to read their e-textbooks from anywhere was still rather limited at the time. Students tend to have cell phones and iPods but less than 15% of students in this study reported having the capability to access an e-textbook on an electronic tablet or e-reader device, such as an iPad, Kindle, or Nook. On the other hand, at least 71% of students who had access to mobile devices reported they would prefer to read the e-textbook on them and 20% reported they would prefer to read the e-textbook on their cell phone if that format was available. It should be noted that since this study was conducted there has been a steady growth in the
widespread use of mobile devices (Mulvihill, 2011). The ability for students to access e-textbooks on mobile devices and other portable electronic devices is dependent on publishers developing electronic/mobile applications that include the same tools and resources that are already available to students on traditional computers. Recent reports show that publishers have already begun addressing this need and are now offering these additional features to their consumers (Mulvihill, 2011). The next question is whether students will actually access e-textbooks on these mobile devices.

This study shows, the more that a student has used an e-book or e-textbook, the more likely they are to find it useful. It seems that the disadvantages students perceive with using e-textbooks are related to low familiarity with the e-textbook format and the tools they offer. As students are introduced to e-textbooks, albeit ever so slowly, they may likely become more satisfied with using them. E-textbooks becoming more accessible and offering more capabilities like interactive resources may help e-textbooks tip the scales and make them the more preferred format. According to a study from the Book Industry Study Group, which surveyed a nationally representative sample of college students during fall 2012 for its Student Attitudes Toward Content in Higher Education, 14% of students are using the supplemental interactive resources provided by publishers, also called integrated learning systems (ILS), and include online learning platforms for course materials, study groups, and other interactive features (Greenfield, 2013b). Students reported that ILS helps them improve their grades more than both printed textbooks and e-textbooks. Options seem to be the key. The more institu-
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When instructors assign readings, they should explain why the readings are important and how they will be used in future assignments, such as upcoming presentations (Hobson, 2004; Nilson, 2003). When instructors want to motivate students to use their e-textbooks,
they could assign electronic quizzes and interactive activities based on the e-textbook material. E-textbooks, with their new technology tools foster reflections, journaling and quiz-taking over the readings by making them more assessable to students at the click of a finger. Instructors should take special care to assign these activities to make sure the students are exposed to using the e-technologies.

**Recommendations**

One of the goals for using the e-textbook is to move to the place where student materials are assessable, helpful, and affordable. Students seem to want greater efficiency in studying—they want help with absorbing more material in the least amount of time. At present the e-textbooks are attractive to students because they are less expensive. However, students do not want to spend hours reading at their computers or laptops. It is likely that when electronic textbooks become more available through mobile smart phones, electronic tablets, and e-readers, students will favor them over printed books. Also, there may be an adjustment time for students to get used to reading with technology—beyond using it for Facebook, Twitter, email, etc. They will likely slide into reading e-textbooks when the e-formats offer the amenities of printed textbooks. For now, the present findings suggest that basic speech course instructors and directors should consider their students and their preferences, as well as options available, in the adoption of electronic textbooks. The best option might be to offer both print textbooks and e-textbooks for students with different learning styles.
Some publishers are even offering packages where students can purchase a print copy of the textbook and receive access to the e-textbook, resources, and e-tools as well. This would enable students to benefit from both formats.

We suggest that faculty consider adopting e-textbooks in their classrooms and becoming more familiar with the tools and resources available so they can integrate them into their courses. If students are being asked to read e-textbooks and use all of the available resources/e-tools, but faculty are not helping to make it a successful experience, students will not see or reap the benefits.

When it comes to textbook selection, basic speech course directors will want to foster a selection not only based upon student preference but also upon their faculty’s willingness to incorporate the e-textbook into the classroom experience. Basic course directors should consider offering workshops for their instructors, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants that provide opportunities for them to learn how to use and take advantage of the benefits of e-textbooks with the e-tools and resources.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study does have some limitations. For example, the data was collected from one large multi-section public speaking course at one large Midwestern university so more research needs to be collected in order to make generalizations. In addition, the survey instrument in this study represented an attempt at assessing e-textbook usage in a basic public speaking course. As is the case with most assessment efforts, survey questions of-
ten need to be refined, edited, and expanded. Future studies might inquire as to what electronic resources students are using with the e-textbook and what motivates them to read the e-textbook. Also, future research should address not only what mobile devices students are using to access e-textbooks but if students who have access to mobile smart phones and other portable electronic devices are actually using them to read e-textbook.

In conclusion, the results from this study were especially useful to instructors at the university where the assessment data was collected. All public speaking instructors were presented with the results of this study, and instructors recommended that the program continue to use the e-textbook package with a full print textbook, giving students more options. Students can now choose to use the e-textbook or the printed textbook, depending on their preferences, and instructors can specifically assign the e-textbook chapter quizzes and other ancillaries to encourage e-textbook usage for everyone at the Midwestern university.

Public speaking course instructors concluded that e-textbooks are the future and the future is now. When students experience being able to highlight, take notes, and avoid eye strain with such enhanced technology, they will likely learn to appreciate using e-textbooks even more.

Instructors need to help keep the costs of materials down for financially strapped students. As new e-textbook formats emerge, they may help with cutting costs and increasing motivation for students with diverse learning preferences. Faculties need to find ways to grow with the changes in technology and learn
from interactive e-textbook benefits. E-textbook technologies may positively impact the readership of our next generation of students who are familiar with newer technologies and are willing to give up carrying heavy books and backpacks.

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**APPENDIX A**

1. Have you ever read an e-book for any other reason than for this class? (1) Yes (2) No

2. Have you ever used an e-textbook in a previous course? (1) Yes (2) No

3. If you could have read the e-textbook in a mobile application format (e.g., iPhone, iPad, etc.), would you have used it for this e-textbook in this course? (1) Yes (2) No If yes, which mobile application format would you prefer?

4. Do you own or have access to read an e-textbook via the following. (Consider that an app is another available option.) Check all that apply. (1) Computer (2) iPad or other electronic tablet (3) iPod (4) iPhone or other phone with internet access (5) Kindle (6) Nook

5. I would prefer to read an e-textbook via the following. (Consider that an app is another available option.) Check all that apply. (1) Computer (2) iPad or other electronic tablet (3) iPod (4) iPhone or other phone with internet access (5) Kindle (6) Nook

6. Approximately, how much time EACH WEEK do you spend on the following? (1) less than one hour per week (2) 1 hour per week (3) 2 hours per week, 3 hours per week (4) 4 hours per week, 5 hours
per week (5) 6 hours per week (6) 7 to 10 hours per week (7) more than 10 hours per week
a. Reading the e-textbook for your speech course?
b. Reading the (concise) paper textbook?

7. Please use the following scale to answer these questions. Always (2) Frequently (3) Occasionally (4) Rarely (5) Never
a. In general, I found the e-textbook to be useful.
b. I am satisfied with my experience of reading the e-textbook.
c. I would recommend using an e-textbook for a class to other a friends or fellow students.
d. I wish other courses offered the e-textbook options.

8. If you had a choice to purchase the textbook again, would you purchase a paper textbook (print) or electronic version (e-textbook)? (1) Paper Version (print) (2) Electronic Version (e-textbook)

9. What do you consider advantages of an e-textbook over a paper (print) textbook? Check all that apply. (1) Cost (2) Ease of reading (3) Weight (4) Convenience (5) Ability to highlight and take notes (6) Ability to quickly find topics (7) Keep it as a reference book for future use

10. What do you consider advantages of a paper (print) textbook? Check all that apply: (1) Cost (2) Ease of reading (3) Weight (4) Convenience (5) Ability to highlight and take notes (6) Ability to quickly find topics (7) Keep it as a reference book for future use

11. Would an e-textbook option ever affect your selection of a course? (i.e., would you ever be more inclined to take a particular class if it offered an e-textbook
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option)? (1) I would be more likely to take a particular class or section if it offered an e-textbook option (2) I would be more likely to take a particular class or section if it offered only a paper (print) version of the textbook

12. Gender—What is your gender? (1) Male (2) Female

13. Age—What is your age? (1) 17 or younger (2) 18 years (3) 19 years (4) 20 years (5) 21 years (6) 22 years (7) 23 years (8) 24 years (9) 25 years (10) 26-30 years (11) 31-35 years (12) 36-40 years (13) 41 years or older

14. Education—Please select your year in college. (1) College Freshman (2) College Sophomore (3) College Junior (4) College Senior (5) College Graduate
Assessing Student Public Speaking Competence in the Hybrid Basic Communication Course

Kristen LeBlanc Farris
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Public speaking remains one of the most desirable and necessary skills for college graduates to possess (Morreale & Pearson, 2008; Stevens, 2005). However, executives and Human Resource Directors report that college graduates continue to join organizations with underdeveloped communication skills including the inability to effectively give a public presentation (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Marchant, 1999). Research also suggests that the majority of the adult population experience significant levels of anxiety while speaking in the public arena (Ayres & Hopf, 1990). In order to effectively address the value of public speaking for student employability, one of the primary goals of many communication departments is to provide students with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively organize and deliver a public presentation (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010). Unfortunately, a method to accurately assess public speaking skills has long been debated by both educators and scholars (Morreale, et al., 2010; Schreiber, Paul, & Shibley, 2012; Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006; Morreale, Brooks, Berko, & Cooke, 1994), especially when courses differ in the amount of public speaking opportunities offered. For example, many uni-
Universities and colleges require students to enroll in a basic communication course as part of their general education, but the substance of these courses greatly varies. According to research by Morreale et al. (2010), for some programs the basic course in communication is a class in public speaking (50.4%); for other programs, the required class is a hybrid (36.3%) one that covers the foundations of communication (e.g., interpersonal, small group, and organizational) and includes a section on public speaking.

With differential training and speaking opportunities, the primary concern is the ability to identify reliable, valid, and standardized instruments that assess the critical competencies of public speaking in any basic course format (Morreale et al., 2010; Morreale et al., 2006; Schreiber et al., 2012; Morreale et al., 1994; Quintanthy, 1990; Rubin, 1982). The goal of the current study, therefore, is to examine assessment tools that have been created to examine student learning and application of public speaking skills in a hybrid version of the basic communication course. This is especially important as public speaking courses are becoming less popular (Morreale et al., 2010). Thus, creating a public speaking assessment instrument that analyzes whether college graduates have the necessary presentational skills for life in the “real world” is vital for informing communication departments and institutions of higher education.

**Literature Review**

Assessment of student learning outcomes remains an integral process in higher education and helps to en-
sure that students successfully achieve course competencies such as public speaking skills (Morreale & Backlund, 2007). More importantly, educators and researchers argue that assessment guarantees the survival of the basic communication course (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004) and highlights the communication discipline’s distinct role within academia (Backlund & Arneson, 2000). The primary goal of assessment within the basic communication course “is to provide evidence that the instruction received will increase students’ knowledge, improve students’ behaviors, and change students’ attitudes toward course content” (LeBlanc, Vela, & Houser, 2011, p. 66). Thus, assessment enables educators to witness the transition students make in terms of achieving learning outcomes (such as presentational competency) during a semester and to “know if we are actually doing what we intend to do in the classroom and in our educational programs” (Backlund & Arneson, 2000, p. 88). With this in mind, the primary goal of the current study is to assess the change in student public speaking behaviors after receiving public speaking training as a component of the hybrid format of the basic communication course. In addition, it is important to examine the validity and reliability of assessment instruments developed to determine students’ public speaking competence.

Public Speaking Assessment

Assessment in the public speaking arena has long been debated among communication researchers. In fact, some scholars suggest this process began with Aristotelian models of public speaking around 300 B.C. (Cooper, 1932). More recently, this debate has centered
around the discussion of communication competence, including how to operationalize the construct, whether competence is trait or state-like, and whether the focus should be on appropriateness or effectiveness (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1993). For these reasons, many argue that identifying a valid standardized instrument that can reliably assess communication competence is impractical (Backlund & Morreale, 1994). Thus, at the 1990 Speech Communication Association conference on Assessment of Oral Communication skills, participants argued communication competence should be assessed within specific contexts (e.g., public speaking; National Communication Association, n.d.). This discussion spurred the identification of specific criteria by which speaking competency can be judged. The Competent Speaker instrument, which is widely used in communication classes across the United States, was derived from these criteria (Morreale, 1990; Morreale, 1994; National Communication Association, n.d.).

The Competent Speaker instrument, endorsed by the National Communication Association (NCA), is widely considered useful for assessing public speaking in the classroom (National Communication Association, 1998). Despite support of this instrument from NCA-sanctioned guidelines regarding competent speaking, relatively few studies have examined or assessed the benefits and usefulness of this form. Additionally, instructors from many institutions continue to develop their own instruments to assess public speaking competence in the classroom (Talkington & Boileau, 2007). In Morreale and colleagues’ (2006) study on the state of the basic communication course across the nation, 69% of
instructors indicated that they develop their own assessment instruments for measuring students’ communication competence. This is problematic in that many of these instruments are not examined for reliability and validity, and may be indicative of why most basic course administrators continue to identify course consistency/standardization and assessment as the two highest ranking problems facing the basic communication course (Morreale et al., 2010). Thus, the current study aims to fill this void in determining the reliability and validity of public speaking grading rubrics (for informative and persuasive speaking assignments) that are intended to accommodate the hybrid format of the basic course.

As previously mentioned, approximately 36% of two-year colleges and four-year universities currently offer a hybrid version of their primary basic communication course (Morreale et al., 2010). As public speaking is only taught in one of the three units offered in this orientation of the basic course, the Competent Speaker instrument may be too advanced and detailed. For example, the Competent Speaker form scores a student’s ability to both organize (50% of the score) and deliver (50% of the score) a presentation (Morreale, 1990). Students taking a public speaking-focused basic course would certainly benefit from being assessed with this instrument. However, students enrolled in hybrid orientations of the basic communication course generally only present one or two speeches (Morreale et al., 2010) and typically receive basic classroom instruction on public speaking elements. Furthermore, only one-third of the course focuses on acquiring high levels of public speaking competency, thus students are unlikely to develop the same
With this in mind, a primary purpose of the current study is to compare the course grading rubrics at a major Southwestern university with the Competent Speaker form to determine concurrent validity. Although two different grading rubrics were utilized (Informative and Persuasive), the framework for assessing competent speaking skills is the same for both instruments. Comparing the valid and reliable Competent Speaker instrument to the public speaking assessment forms would enhance the usefulness of the assessment forms (being tested in the current study) in the context of introductory hybrid communication courses (Babbie, 2011). In addition, the instrument may serve as a guide for other hybrid basic communication courses. Thus, the following research question is posited:

RQ 1: Are student grades on informative and persuasive grading rubrics related to scores on the Competent Speaker instrument?

**Predictors of Public Speaking Competence**

In addition to the focus on public speaking assessment, researchers and educators alike have focused on identifying predictors of college students’ competence of public speaking skills (Hansen & Hansen, n.d.; Marchant, 1999; Morreale et al., 2010). Previous research suggests positive predictors such as practicing in front of an audience (Smith & Frymier, 2006), grade point average, number of rehearsals (Menzel & Carrell, 1994), previous public speaking experience (Pearson & Child, 2008; Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990), state com-
munication apprehension (Menzel & Carrell, 1994), and biological sex (Pearson, Carmon, Child, & Semlak, 2008) all influence student grades on public speaking assignments. Other literature in oral competency highlights the role of communication apprehension in the public speaking process and suggests high levels of communication apprehension negatively impact student public speaking scores (Ayres, 1988, 1992; Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990; Beatty, Balfantz, & Kuwabara, 1989; McCroskey, 1977, 1982). Basic communication courses, especially those with a greater emphasis on public speaking, rely on behavioral training, public speaking demonstrations, and performance feedback to decrease student communication apprehension and improve confidence and competence (Robinson, 1997). The hybrid format, on the other hand, offers basic instruction in the elements of effective public speaking and little, if any, skills training of public speaking competencies.

In addition to instruction in public speaking, the amount and type of student practice prior to the presentation have been identified as an important influence on public speaking competence (Pearson, Child, Herakova, Semlak, & Angelos, 2008). Along with this, course engagement, or amount of time spent working on course-related tasks, and writing competency are significantly related to student speech grades (Pearson et al., 2008). Thus, higher scores on student speeches stem from preparation prior to the actual delivery of the speech in the classroom. More specifically, students who practice in front of an audience are more likely to receive higher evaluations than those who practice without an audience present (Smith & Frymier, 2006). This highlights
the corrective feedback function an audience provides during a practice session. Book (1985) argues feedback serves three functions: to provide audience reaction, to inform the speaker of areas for public speaking improvement, and to encourage the speaker in areas of strength. This provides further evidence that practicing—especially in front of an audience—can be a positive influence on students’ public speaking skills.

An emergent theme from the research to date, suggests that practicing speeches and being prepared influence student speech scores. Thus, if instructors hope to enhance students’ learning and promote real-life application, this is an area to stress. Students who are provided with actual public speaking skills training and provided corrective feedback from professional trainers would likely achieve higher scores than those who do not receive training. Although educators and researchers have argued the importance of using corporate skills training in the higher education classroom (Kolb, 1994), a gap in the basic communication course regarding the training that occurs prior to assessment of student speaking skills seems evident. It also stands to reason that this skills training in a hybrid course that focuses on communication skills in a variety of contexts, would be much lower.

The literature in training and development supports the assumption that training positively influences the acquisition of presentational skills (Heyes & Stuart, 1996; Seibold, Kudsi, & Rude, 1993). In fact, individuals attending corporate public speaking training sessions rated themselves more effectively after receiving training. Not only did self-assessments improve as a result of skills training, but colleagues’ assessments of others’
public speaking skills significantly improved as well (Seibold et al., 1993). Though a very different context, the benefits of supplemental skills training is evident. Furthermore, in a pre-post test study design, communication experts rated individuals higher in public speaking competency after attending skills training (Carell, 2009). In addition to psychomotor or behavioral changes, studies have also identified positive affective changes following skills training. Specifically, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and confidence in ability to complete the job description all significantly improved after receiving communication skills training (Heyes & Stuart, 1996).

The previously mentioned studies primarily focused on training within courses with the sole focus of enhancing public speaking skills. What is unknown, however, is whether these same results may be attained within a hybrid course where the focus on public speaking and training is less predominant. With this in mind, a second purpose of the current study is to extend the research in communication assessment to include an examination of student public speaking skills before and after skills training in a hybrid format of the basic communication course. As these courses generally have decreased opportunities for student practice-time, comparing student results when supplemental training is and is not offered would be particularly informative for programs offering this format. Thus, a second research question was identified:

RQ2: Do public speaking scores for students who receive supplemental public speaking skills training, differ significantly from students who only receive classroom instruction?
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METHOD

Participants

Two speeches in a basic communication course at a large, Southwestern university were delivered by 128 students during an six-week summer session. From this group, 28 students self-selected to attend a supplemental training workshop following their first speech (informative) and, therefore, were designated as the experimental group. From the remaining 100 students, 35 were randomly selected (every 2nd speaker selected from the alphabetized list) to have their speeches assessed as the control group.

Procedures

In order to test the research questions a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest research design was utilized. An experimental group and control group were created to determine whether students who received supplemental training in the eight competencies of The Competent Speaker (Morreale, 1994) assessment instrument would improve and earn significantly higher competency scores and class speech scores than students only receiving classroom instruction. Students in the hybrid basic communication course delivered two speeches during the last two weeks of the six-week summer term: Informative and Problem-Solution (persuasive). In order to determine the training effects on competent speaking scores, all student speeches were recorded by their instructors and videos transferred to the researchers conducting the study. As this study also sought to assess the validity of the assessment rubrics in the Hybrid course, classroom instructors provided a
list of students’ final grades on both speeches to compare to scores on the Competent Speaker—an NCA sanctioned instrument.

In order to determine if control and experimental group differences in communication apprehension existed prior to the study, all students in the course were given the PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982). Following the completion of their first speech (informative), instructors announced that a one-hour workshop designed to help them become more competent speakers would be offered for two extra credit points. Those who chose not to participate were offered additional opportunities to earn extra credit. Of the 128 students enrolled in the six class sections, 28 signed up to participate in the workshop and, hence, created the experimental group. Thirty-five students’ speeches of the remaining 100 were randomly assigned to the control group.

**Training workshop.** A graduate teaching assistant and basic course instructor in the communication studies department created a script and power point presentation for the supplemental public speaking workshop that carefully outlined each of the eight competencies of the Competent Speaker Instrument (Morreale, 1990). The content of the power point script (See Appendix A) for the presentation was carefully analyzed by the researchers in the study to assure the eight competencies were covered equally. Prior to the training, students signed consent forms detailing the purpose of the study.

The eight competencies on the Competent Speaker Form consist of two to four sub-competencies (See Appendix B). Basic coding of the words in the script was conducted by the researchers and it was determined that each competency was presented and supported in
three ways: a) the competency was defined, b) an example of each competency and sub-competency was provided, c) and an activity or discussion to allow students to practice and connect the competency and sub-competencies was conducted. An example of these three methods of support for the workshop discussion of Competency 1—*Choose and narrow a topic* and Sub-Competency 1a and 1b—*Time constraints and your audience* is as follows:

a) Define Competency 1: Choose and narrow a topic—When you select the topic of your speech, you must always consider your audience, what their interests are, what component of your topic applies to them, and how much of this information you have time for.

b) Example of Sub-Competency 1a: Time constraints—Give an example of a speech going too long. Ask them what happens if the speech runs over time (they get bored, lose interest). Ask them what happens when a speech runs too short (you may leave feeling confused, the point of the speech may be lost). Remind them of the limitations of their speech (5-7 minutes).

c) Example of Sub-Competency 1b: Audience—this is important because if you lose your audience there is no point in delivering the speech. The audience for our upcoming speech is college students (mostly traditional but some nontraditional). Talk about using the audience adaptation plan to enhance audience interest in the speech—dialogue with them about how to do this effectively.

c) Activity: Narrowing Topics for Your Audience—After talking about these topics, introduce a short activity where students take their own speech
topics and with partners, share their topic and work on developing narrower sub-topics that interest their partners.

**Instruments**

All students completed the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, 1982) scale. Students were asked to complete this measure a week before their presentation to ensure that results were not skewed by their impending performance. The PRCA-24 is a self-report instrument intended to assess the apprehension an individual may feel in various communication contexts (McCroskey, 1982). Total scores can range from 24-120 with higher totals indicating more apprehensive communicators. Scores below 51 represent individuals with very low communication apprehension (CA). Scores between 51 and 80 represent individuals with moderate CA, and scores over 80 represent individuals with high CA. Aside from a total score, individual scores may be computed to represent an individual's level of apprehension in four separate communication contexts: groups, meetings, interpersonal dyads, and in the public speaking setting.

The Competent Speaker Form (Morreale, 1994) was utilized by the assessment team to evaluate the experimental ($N=28$) and control ($N=35$) groups for both informative and problem-solution speeches. Consisting of eight total competencies, the CSF contains two overarching dimensions for assessing communication competence: planning the oral presentation and delivering the oral presentation. With the eight competencies, the instrument allows evaluators to assess the speaker's ability to (1) choose and narrow a topic appropriate for the
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audience and occasion; (2) communicate the thesis/central idea in an appropriate manner; (3) provide supporting material based on the audience and occasion; (4) use an organization pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, and purpose; (5) use language appropriate to the audience, occasion, and purpose; (6) use vocal variety in rate, pitch, and intensity to heighten and maintain interest; (7) use pronunciation, grammar, and articulation appropriate to the designated audience; and, (8) use physical behaviors that support the verbal message. In the current study, five Likert responses were created for each competency with one representing strongly disagree, two representing disagree, three representing uncertainty, four representing agree, and five representing strongly agree. Possible total scores range from eight to 40, with higher numbers signifying higher levels of oral communication competence. In addition, total scores can be evaluated based on quartiles. Scores ranging from eight to 15 reflect low oral communication competence; 16 to 23 reflect moderately low oral communication competence; 24 to 31 reflect moderately high oral communication competence; and, 32 to 40 reflect high oral communication competence.

Concurrent Validity. In order to determine validity of the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment forms used in the current study, students’ scores on the CSF (Morreale, 1990) and the two instruments listed above were compared. With the same public speaking competencies being measured in both the informative and persuasive rubrics, these two forms were created by the Basic Course Director (Houser, 2011) and classroom instructors received previous training in utilizing these forms and obtaining inter
rater reliability with other instructors. Both the Informative (See Appendix C) and Persuasive Presentation (See Appendix D) grading rubrics include the following sub-scales: a) Introduction, b) Body, c) Conclusion, and d) Delivery. The first three dimensions on both instruments measure students’ ability to effectively develop and organize presentation content, while the fourth dimension assesses nonverbal elements of delivery. Scores on both the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Forms range from 0-50, with higher numbers reflecting higher levels of public speaking competency. The introduction and conclusion dimensions are each worth 12 points of the students’ overall score on both forms. The body is worth 16 points of the students’ overall score, while the delivery dimension is worth 10 points of the overall presentation grade for both assessment instruments.

**Interrater reliability.** Morreale (1994) provides specific instructions for achieving inter-rater reliability when using the CSF with an assessment team of two or more. In the current study, the two primary researchers first reviewed and discussed the specifications Morreale provides under each competency to ensure initial agreement on the components being assessed within each competency. Upon individually reviewing and assessing two practice speeches via videotape, the researchers compared their scores to determine potential differences. The practice assessment, along with a thorough discussion of discrepancies, proved extremely successful in achieving interrater reliability for the study. Interrater reliabilities using the Kappa statistic were significant for both sample speeches: speech one Kappa = .85 (p < 0.001); speech two Kappa = .95 (p < 0.001).


RESULTS

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify whether a relationship exists between students’ scores on public speaking assessment forms (grading rubrics used in the classroom by instructors to assess informative and persuasive speaking ability) and students’ scores on the Competent Speaker Form. Prior to conducting the correlation analysis, z-scores were computed for the following: 1) raw scores on the public speaking grades for the informative presentation (time one), 2) raw scores on the Competent Speaker Form scores for the informative presentation (time one), 3) raw scores on the public speaking grades for the persuasive presentation (time two), and 4) raw scores on the Competent Speaker Form scores for the persuasive presentation (time two).

The correlation for the first assessment form (used to assess students’ informative speaking skills) and the Competent Speaker Form, was significant, \( r(63) = .60, p < .01 \). This result suggests a moderately strong, positive relationship between the two assessment forms. The relationship between the second assessment form (used to assess students’ persuasive speaking skills) and the Competent Speaker Form was also significant, \( r(63) = .59, p < .01 \). This result also suggests a moderately strong, positive relationship between the two assessment forms.

Before addressing RQ2, the research team had to confirm there were no differences between students in the control (untrained) and experimental (trained) groups prior to the training. The initial \( t \)-test examined differences in mean scores between the control and ex-
experimental groups (untrained and trained, respectively) at time one (prior to the training session). No significant difference was found between the groups, $t(61) = -1.16, p > .05$. The mean of the untrained group ($M = 29.06, SD = 5.49$) was not significantly different than the mean of the trained group ($M = 27.89, SD = 6.01$). The second $t$-test examined the difference in mean scores for communication apprehension between the control ($M = 2.78$) and experimental groups ($M = 2.68$). No significant difference was found between the two groups, $t(56) = -0.45, p > .05$.

To answer RQ2, an independent samples $t$-test and two paired samples $t$-tests were conducted to determine whether students who attended the supplemental public speaking skills training scored higher than students who only received classroom instruction. The independent samples $t$-test examined the differences in mean scores between the control and experimental groups (untrained and trained, respectively) at time two (after the training). No significant difference was found between the groups, $t(61) = .60, p > .05$. The mean of the untrained group ($M = 31.09, SD = 4.87$) was not significantly different than the mean of the trained group ($M = 31.82, SD = 4.89$).

The first paired samples $t$-test examined the difference in mean scores of the control group (untrained) at time one (after the informative speech) and time two (after the persuasive speech). The pretest score, 29.06 ($SD = 5.49$) and the mean on the posttest, 31.09 ($SD = 4.87$), revealed a significant increase from time one to time two, $t(35) = 2.44, p < .001$.

The second paired samples $t$-test examined the difference in mean scores of the experimental group
(trained) at time one (before training) and time two (after training). The mean on the pretest, 27.89 \( (SD = 6.01) \), and the mean on the posttest, 31.82 \( (SD = 4.89) \), revealed a significant increase from time one to time two, \( t(28) = 4.10, p < .001 \).

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the current study was to examine and validate the assessment instruments used to evaluate student public speaking competence in the hybrid format of the basic communication course. Results suggest concurrent validity of the two assessment instruments used to measure students’ public speaking competency for the informative and persuasive presentations. Thus, students who earn a high score on the Competent Speaker form are also likely to receive a high score on the Informative Presentation Assessment Form and the Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form in the hybrid course. This finding demonstrates the importance of evaluating assessment instruments utilized within communication programs and the entire discipline to determine if objectives are being measured and realized. Although there are established and standardized assessment instruments such as the Competent Speaker form (Morreale, 1990), anecdotal evidence as well as research in the communication literature reveals many institutions continue to develop their own instruments to assess public speaking competency (Morreale et al., 2006; Talkington & Boileau, 2007). It would be highly informative to know how many programs examine these instruments to determine whether they are reliable and valid. Other communication courses (as
well as courses with a public speaking emphasis) might follow a similar process to examine instruments created in-house.

In the current study, both informative and persuasive public speaking assessment instruments may be useful within other basic communication courses offering the hybrid orientation. Specifically, the directors of the basic course in the current study reason that many hybrid basic communication courses may not use the Competent Speaker Form, due to the extensive focus on the elements of delivery. Fifty percent of the score on the Competent Speaker Form is allotted to nonverbal delivery (Morreale, 1990). In hybrid versions of the basic course (those that focus on various contexts of communication), the Competent Speaker Form may be too advanced or specific. Therefore, the instruments examined in the current study may be more effective for hybrid courses or those less focused on public speaking and various public speaking contexts. In fact, both informative and persuasive assessment forms featured in the current study devote 20 percent of the students’ overall presentation scores to the nonverbal elements of delivery (Author, 2011). The difference in the weighting of delivery between the two assessment tools (Competent Speaker Form and grading rubrics examined in this study) likely explains the weaker correlations. Although the correlation between the grading rubrics and the Competent Speaker Form were deemed strong, the difference in the weighting on delivery elements aids in this interpretation.

In addition to validating the two assessment instruments used to assess public speaking competency, a secondary goal of the study was to examine the transi-
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tion of student public speaking skills before and after receiving supplemental skills training. Students in the typical hybrid basic communication course only receive classroom instruction on basic organizational and delivery skills. Results revealed that both groups (trained and untrained) improved their scores from time one to time two. This supports previous literature that recognizes the important role public speaking experience plays in student public speaking grades (Pearson et al., 2008; Smith & Frymier, 2006). It was curious, though, that with supplemental public speaking training, the experimental group did not score significantly higher on the second speech. This may be explained by the particular semester/term examined in the current study—a six-week summer session. As two weeks only are devoted to both informative and persuasive speeches, it is possible students had less time, in comparison to a regular long-semester, to absorb the skills promoted during the training workshop.

However, there is some evidence that training is beneficial regardless of assimilation time. If we take a closer look at the mean scores for the experimental and control groups, the mean score of the trained group ($M = 27.89$) was initially two points lower than the mean score of the untrained group ($M = 29.06$). At time two, the mean score of the trained group ($M = 31.82$) slightly surpassed the mean score of the untrained group ($M = 31.09$). Though not significant, it is important to note that the trained group experienced a greater increase in competency than the untrained group. This finding is somewhat surprising considering previous literature has consistently demonstrated that previous public speaking experience and instruction would enhance stu-
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Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Limitations and Recommendations. The current study provides valuable information regarding the assessment of student public speaking competence. However, the results should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. First, and most importantly, the students in the current study were assessed by two different instructors. For classroom presentations, students were graded and assessed by trained instructors using the basic course Informative Presentation Assessment Form and the Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form. The instructors videotaped student speeches during classroom presentations and then provided the videos to the research team. The authors of the study watched and assessed the students using the Competent Speaker Form. In future studies, the re-
search team should rate the student speeches on both instruments in order to limit the variability in assessing student public speaking competency.

Another limitation of the study may be in the selection process for the participants. Students self-selected to attend the training session from two separate (large-lecture) sections of the basic course. This limitation allowed for “a greater change of bias to exist in the results” (Wrench et al., 2008, p. 288) and could mean that more proactive students would self-select in order to help increase their presentation scores. Future research in this area should use probability sampling techniques to identify both the control and experimental groups to increase the generalizability of the results. It is important to consider these limitations when interpreting the findings of the current study.

Finally, the obvious limitations of a short-semester should have been considered. It was initially thought that students receiving training would be impacted regardless of the time allowed to absorb the information and practice using it. To verify the current findings, it would be helpful to conduct this study during a regular long-semester. Perhaps if students have more time to practice the skills offered in the training session, scores would differ significantly.

**Implications.** The results of the current study reveal that both the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Forms utilized in the current study are viable options for use in the basic communication course. Specifically, the form will be useful in hybrid versions of the basic course. Furthermore, institutions creating instruments for assessment of student public speaking skills should engage in a similar process of
validating forms using the NCA sanctioned Competent Speaker Form.

Additionally, the results regarding the influence of skills training on student public speaking competency are significant not only to the basic communication course, but to the instructional communication discipline as a whole. Performance-based assessment has long been viewed as a measure of teaching effectiveness (Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel, 1995). Furthermore, educators are often held accountable for their students’ ability to achieve learning objectives. Future research examining the impact of skills training on public speaking scores/competency should focus on providing a longer training session or multiple training sessions to students. In the current study, the students in the training group may have improved more dramatically had there been multiple training sessions for them to attend. This would have enabled them to emphasize each of the components of public speaking competency more heavily.

Lastly, these results are important to consider for programs that offer communication labs or those contemplating the creation of a communication lab or center. As Helsel and Hogg (2006) discuss, oral communication labs can serve an important function in the assessment and evaluation of student public speaking skills. In addition to this, a communication lab could benefit communication departments and possibly the university; some programs are beginning to offer laboratory skills training to campus staff and faculty. If a communication lab is available, it is recommended that students (as a required part of the course or as extra credit) in all courses requiring/teaching public speaking, be asked to visit the communication lab for training. Re-
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Results of the current study suggest that the instruction in the classroom as well as the training and public speaking experience students gain throughout the course are responsible for improving scores. It is likely then, that students enrolled in public-speaking focused basic communication courses would display higher competency scores. Therefore, students enrolled in a hybrid, basic communication course would benefit from extra opportunities to practice public speaking skills in front of trained professionals. Future research should continue to examine how communication labs and skill-based training in public speaking could improve students’ communication competency.

As public speaking will most likely continue to be a sought-after skill by employers and human resource directors, institutions of higher education (and communication departments specifically) will continue to be charged with the goal of providing students with these skill sets. An integral component of this assessment process will to continue to examine the various assessment instruments for their validity and applicability to “real world” skills. With this in mind, educators must continue to explore various methods and tools of public speaking assessment in higher education.

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APPENDIX A

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION NOTES FOR COMPETENT SPEAKER TRAINING WORKSHOP

Introductory Slide—Enhancing Public Speaking

- Welcome to the Public Speaking Workshop!

Approximately 10 minutes before the workshop begins, have this PowerPoint presentation up and running on this introductory slide. Greet students as they walk in, and hand them a copy of the PowerPoint slides (printed 3 to a page with space on the right hand side for notes) and invite them to have a seat where they like. My goal during this “pre-workshop” time is to welcome the students and help them to feel comfortable. Since they were pulled from only 2 different classes, many of the students will know each other.

When it is time for the workshop to begin, call the students to attention by announcing that we are about to begin. Start by introducing myself, including my name and my position at Texas State (stand-alone instructor). Because I visited Jill’s classes several times (to introduce the study, to have them sign up for it and take the survey, and to run the camera during her informative speeches), I expect that the students will already be familiar with me.

Continue the introductions by asking students to just go around the table and introduce themselves by their first and last name. This will help me to become more familiar with the students.

After the brief introductions are complete, remind the students what the purpose of the workshop is. Tell them: even if they did well on their informative speech, they still may have areas in which to improve, since even the most competent speakers sometimes have weak areas. Say that I hope they will find this workshop helpful. Ask for their help in making it run smoothly by participating in any activities. Inform them that,
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by the time they are done today, they will have a jumpstart on their outlines, and they should feel more comfortable with their delivery. Say that we will begin by reviewing today’s agenda.

**Slide 2—Preview**

- Choosing and Narrowing a Topic
- Communicating the Specific Purpose
- Using Supporting Material
- Organizing Your Speech
- Incorporating Effective Language
- Maintaining Vocal Variety
- Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar
- Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors

Tell them there are eight main areas where a speaker can be judged as “competent”—think of them as criteria for speaking well. There are four “content” criteria and four “delivery” criteria. Briefly review the eight competencies (i.e. just go down the list and mention each line). Tell them there are slides for each of these and that we will spend an approximately equal time on each one so that they can enhance their speech.

**Slide 3—Choosing and Narrowing a Topic**

- Purpose of the speech
- Time constraints
- Audience

Tell them that step one is to choose a topic. When you select the topic of your speech, there are several important things to consider. Making the right choices will increase audience engagement.

General purpose—Ask them to list different possible purposes (to inform, to entertain, to persuade). Ask them to ID the purpose of the upcoming speech (to persuade)
Time constraints—Give an example of a speech going too long. Ask them what happens if the speech runs over time (they get bored, lose interest). Ask them what happens when a speech runs too short (you may leave feeling confused, the point of the speech may be lost). Remind them of the limitations for their speech (5-7 minutes).

Audience—this is important because, if you lose your audience, there is no point in delivering the speech. The audience for our upcoming speech is: (college students; mostly traditional but some untraditional). Talk about using the audience adaptation plan to enhance audience interest in the speech—dialogue with them about how to do this effectively.

After talking about these topics, introduce a short activity:

By this time, the students will have already chosen a speech topic and had it approved by their instructor. I will request ahead of time that they bring their speech topic to this workshop with them so that we can work with it. Ask them to pair up, introduce themselves to their partner, and share their topic and suggested subtopics with each other. Ask them to consider their subtopics and if they seem broad and narrow enough. Ask them to consider whether or not the speech will fit into the allotted time constraints. Ask them to consider ways to tailor the speech to the audience. Have them list two ways they can improve their topic (examples: narrowing or broadening the subtopics, ways to appeal to audience, strategies of what to cut/add if they are short/long on time). The students will have three minutes to discuss these topics in pairs. After three minutes have elapsed, go around the table and have each student share one thing he/she might do to improve their topic. Encourage the students to write down anything that they might be able to use and had not thought of.

***During ALL activities during this seminar in which I have them work with one another, I will be walking around the room, talking to the students about what their task is, answering questions, and helping them with any problems***
Tell them, now that we’ve chosen our topic, we need to move on to how we will communicate our ideas to the audience.

**Slide 4—Communicating the Specific Purpose**

- Clarifying your specific purpose
- Introducing your topic in the Introduction
- Summarizing your topic in the Conclusion

Tell them: think of this like a thesis statement from English class—what do you want your audience to TAKE AWAY?

Tell them: Your specific purpose should be broad enough to cover everything you want your audience to “take away”, but also specific enough for your audience to understand EXACTLY what you want to tell them.

One of the ways that we make this work for persuasive speeches is to include a “propositional statement”. This previews your SPECIFIC problem(s) and SPECIFIC solution(s). It is very similar to the “Initial Preview” for your informative speeches.

Not only is it important to have a clear specific purpose in mind, it is important to introduce it in the beginning of the speech (tell them what you’re going to tell them) and then review it at the end of the speech (tell them what you’ve told them).

Keep the points in the same order that you will talk about them—ask them why this is important (answer: because this helps the audience to organize the speech and keep the content straight in their minds).

Bring up the issue: before they even get to the propositional statement, they’ve already covered the attention getter, the relevance statement, and the credibility statement—so what are some ways that you can make sure the audience knows what you’re talking about from the very beginning? (possible answers should center around making sure that you clearly tie in the attention getter with the speech topic, make sure that
you use the relevance/credibility statements to introduce the speech topic as well).

Slide 5—Using Supporting Material

- Keep material relevant to your subtopics
- Keep material credible
- Possible types of supporting material
- Verbally acknowledging your supporting material

Tell them: it is ALWAYS important to have relevant supporting material. Why? (answers: it backs up what you are saying). It’s like making a case in a court of law—if the lawyers bring up unrelated material, it does nothing to enhance the case and may actually hurt the case.

Why is it important to use credible sources instead of just Wikipedia and other such sources? (answer: it makes YOU seem more credible).

Talk about potential types of supporting material. Talk about “good” (effective) evidence versus “bad” (ineffective) evidence. Have them list types (answers: books, magazines, journal articles, newspapers, videos, interviews, etc). Ask them: By a show of hands, how many used a “non-library” search engine (like google, yahoo) to help you conduct research? (pause to take a count—it is likely that most, if not all, will raise their hand). Ask them: if it is just a webpage, how do you know it’s credible? (answer: if they can prove that an expert, or some “expert organization”, wrote the website).

Verbally acknowledging supporting material: Was it hard to remember how to do this? Did you see any students in your own class citing incorrectly? (For example, did anyone credit the evidence to someone, but give no indication of who that person was?) How should you properly cite sources?

Exercise: pass out note cards which have names of authors, article titles, and/or organizations on them. Ask them to pair up with their partners from earlier. With their partners, they are to “properly” cite the source that was given...
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to them—they may make up where the authors are from and what evidence the sources offered. For example, a student may have “Janet Smith” on their note card. They might turn to the person next to them and say, “according to Janet Smith, CEO of Awesome Toy Enterprises, Inc., 23% of all children under age four currently own a Tickle Me Elmo doll.” The point is to get them practicing this idea aloud, since many students find it difficult to do while speaking. Allow 3 minutes for this exercise; have them trade note cards as they finish each one.

Slide 6—Organizing Your Speech

• Organizational pattern
• Introduction
• Body
• Conclusion
• Transitions

Talk about the three parts necessary for any speech—introduction, body, conclusion

Discuss what goes into each part:

Introduction—Attention getter, relevance statement, credibility, propositional statement—Tell them that all of these things should go into ANY speech—think about the Informative speeches where we had the same things. Even though this is a different type of speech, your audience still needs all of these things in the introduction. Sometimes they are inherently clearer than other times (for example, the President does not need to work hard on “credibility” statements when he gives the State of the Union address—as President, he is already credible enough to speak on this subject). It depends on how familiar you and your audience are with one another.

Body—appropriate supporting material—remind them that we just covered this point.

Conclusion—You need to summarize what you’ve said. Remember what we talked about in terms of communicating the specific purpose—you need this information in your con-
clusion as well. You want to be very clear and explicit here—within the persuasive speeches, you restate the specific problem(s) and the specific solution(s). You also need to have a “call to action”—some statement that motivates your audience to do something or take away something from the speech. Last, you should have a memorable closing statement—summarize the speech in some memorable way. Perhaps tell a short story, give a quote, or end with a statistic.

Transitions—it is important to “signpost”—to tell the audience where you’ve been and where you are going. This also helps them to keep the information clear in their minds. Don’t get too creative with the wording of your transitions, especially if you are speaking to an audience who does not know much about the topic. Rewording the transition may confuse your audience.

Activity: Ask them to pair up again. With their partners, they are to brainstorm and write down ideas for parts of the introduction and conclusion as follows: (1) the attention getter, (2) the relevance statement, (3) the credibility statement, (4) the transition to the first body paragraph, (5) the call to action, and (6) the memorable closing. Give them 5 minutes to complete this exercise (if 5 minutes is not sufficient, either extend the time by one more minute, or cut the activity off—I will decide based on how far they are able to get, and also based on if I think one more minute will allow them to finish up. Regardless, they should at least get through the introduction pieces they are asked to compose).

Slide 7—Incorporating Effective Language

• Clear, vivid language
• Avoiding offensive language
• Speaking in a conversational style

Using clear, vivid language—Think adjectives! Group activity: Introduce some common words that come up within speeches and have them call out ways to enhance those words.
Example: “She felt sick.” Example: “The solution is a good one.” Do 3-4 of these short examples as a group.

Avoiding offensive language—make sure that you take special care not to offend anyone in the room. Potential areas for concern are: racism, sexism. You have to be careful—even if you are in that group, you may still offend. Example: an African-American student was doing a problem/solution speech on racism in America. Her problem was that it still exists, and her solution explained ways to combat it. She wanted to start out her speech with a racist joke to illustrate the idea that it is still a problem today. Even though her intentions were good, she had to change the joke because it was offensive.

Speaking in a conversational style:

Tell them—make sure you avoid jargon. Define jargon (language specific to a particular field, that may be unfamiliar to others). Ask them: when will this be especially important? (answer: if you have a topic that your audience does not know much about, or is highly specialized).

Talk about the balance between reading from cards (too scripted) and being too relaxed (could come off as unprofessional).

**Slide 8—Maintaining Vocal Variety**

- Vary your vocal pitch
- Make sure your words are well-paced
- Make sure your audience can hear you

Vocal Pitch—Think about Ben Stein. We’ve all seen this commercial (Clear Eyes): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcH-3d-BZn4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcH-3d-BZn4) (time: 0:15). Ask: Does this drive you crazy?

Partner Activity: pair up. Pass out notecards that have several (6-7) emotional statements on them. (Example: My day yesterday was amazing.) Have the students practice reading the statements aloud to one another, over-exaggerating the vocalics in each statement. Allow 2 minutes for this short exer-
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cise. Talk about: What can you take away from this exercise? Will it help you when rehearsing your speech? Can you be TOO enthusiastic?

Make sure your words are well-paced—You have the tendency to rush through things when you are nervous, so practice and make a point of slowing down if you need to. Make sure you keep this consistent throughout your speech.

Volume—stress that you don’t want to be too loud, OR too quiet. If you are too quiet, your audience will not be able to understand you, and if you are too loud, they will stop listening because they will become annoyed. Example: Gilbert Gottfried.

http://www.comedycentral.com/videos/index.jhtml?title=gilbert-gottfried-pt.-1&videoId=179741—Show only the first 30 seconds of this because it gets inappropriate—but it illustrates his tendency to yell EVERYTHING.

Slide 9—Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar

• Learn to pronounce and articulate all the words in your speech
• Use correct grammar
• Cut down on filler words

Pronunciation and articulation—you have to practice your speech so that you will know exactly how to pronounce the words. If you do not know, consult the internet—you can find dictionary websites that will pronounce the word for you. Example: video clip of Asian woman singing Mariah Carey song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNQLmHKmiE (time—1:14) Talk about the clip—What did the mispronunciation do to her credibility? (answer: killed it—people laughed at her, and now she has made it to failblog.org).

Grammar rules—It is important to know the correct grammatical rules for what you are trying to say. Remember: you are the expert in this subject, and if your language does not show it, you will lose credibility.
Filler words—Think back to class when you did the exercise with impromptu speeches and filler words. What are some of the most common vocal disfluencies? (um, uh, like). Example: Miley Cyrus clip from Regis and Kelly: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A3_0LnW85s Talk about this clip and what Miley could have done better. Ask: what should you do instead? (Pause rather than insert these words).

**Slide 10—Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors**

- Dress appropriately
- Use good eye contact
- Use deliberate body movements
- Use appropriate facial expressions

Dress appropriately—Discuss: different occasions require different styles of dress. What does your instructor want for this speech? (I have been told that Jill does not REQUIRE them to dress up, but “strongly encourages” it.)

Eye contact—What are ways that eye contact can be inappropriate? (answers: using none, scanning the room, staring at one person too long, looking at objects instead of people).

Body movements—This encompasses gestures, and movement of the entire body. Show: Ricky Bobby clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqkhkHICHk (time: 1:00). Discuss: What SHOULD you do with your hands?

Facial expressions—Make sure that your facial expressions match up with what you are saying. News reporters are great at this—they have to report on a lot of serious subjects, so you will see them do this face (demonstrate—raised eyebrows, mouth set, leaned slightly forward). Ask: how can you alter this based on your own topic? Should you anticipate being able to control facial expressions? (Answer: this is probably too difficult to do)—SO: How do we get this to be better? PRACTICE!! Nonverbal behavior should come naturally, and if it does not, it’s because we are thinking about it and not thinking.
about other things. The more comfortable you are with your speech, the better off you will be.

Slide 11—Summary

• Choosing and Narrowing a Topic
• Communicating the Specific Purpose
• Using Supporting Material
• Organizing Your Speech
• Incorporating Effective Language
• Maintaining Vocal Variety
• Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar
• Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors

Briefly remind them what we covered—list the eight competencies again. Stress that I hope they have taken something away from this workshop and encourage them to think about ways they can incorporate this information into their own lives any time they are asked to deliver a public speech.

Slide 12—Any Questions?

• Thank you for your attention!!
• Have a GREAT day!

Thank them for their attention and dismiss them.

APPENDIX B

The following describes in more detail the goals for each competency:

Planning the Oral Presentation—the speaker...

1. Chooses and narrows a topic so that it is appropriate for the audience and occasion.
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• The topic or theme is chosen based on the needs and interest of the audience.
• The topic or theme can be discussed in the time allotted for the oral presentation.

2. Communicates the thesis/central idea in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion.
   • There is one sentence (thesis/central idea) that essentially communicates to the audience “what the oral presentation is about.”
   • This idea will be introduced in the beginning of the presentation and summarized in the conclusion.

3. Provides appropriate supporting material based on the audience and occasion.
   • The information provided in the body of the oral presentation supports the thesis/central idea (see #2) and does not stray into other central ideas.
   • The material in the body of the oral presentation serves to clarify, prove, provide examples, share research findings, provide opinions, etc., that all relate to the thesis/central idea.
   • Research and/or other sources used in the oral presentation is verbally acknowledged.

4. Uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion and purpose.
   • There is a clear introduction, body and conclusion in the oral presentation.
   • Introduction—opening words, thesis/central idea, preview of supporting points to be discussed in the body, why topic is of interest or need to audience
   • Body—main supporting points are logically ordered and discussed one at a time
   • Conclusion—summary of thesis/central idea, closing words
   • Transitions are used that allow the listeners to follow the organization of the oral presentation.
These transitions are found from the introduction to the body, between main points in the body, and from the body to the conclusion.

**Delivering the Oral Presentation—the speaker...**

5. Uses language appropriate to the audience, occasion and purpose.
   - The language used is clear, vivid, memorable and non-offensive.
   - A conversational style of speech is ideally used (as opposed to a written style of speech).

6. Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch and intensity to heighten and maintain interest.
   - The voice varies and changes as it relates to the information in the oral presentation.
   - The student speaks so that he/she is heard and understood.

7. Uses pronunciation, grammar and articulation appropriate to the designated audience.
   - All words are properly pronounced.
   - Grammatical rules of the language are obeyed.
   - The student has a minimum of distracting “verbal junk” such as uh, like, y’know, etc.

8. Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message.
   - The dress and appearance are appropriate for the occasion.
   - Eye contact with the audience is maintained as much as possible.
   - Body movements are deliberate and non-distracting.
   - The face and body reflect the mood or emotional tone of the words.
APPENDIX C

INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: ________________________ Total Score:_____/50
Topic: ________________________ Total Time: _____

___ Introduction (12 Points)
_____ Gained audience attention
_____ Made topic relevant to audience
_____ Established credibility
_____ Stated central idea clearly
_____ Stated initial preview of 3 main ideas clearly
_____ Transition to 1st body topic

___ Body (16 Points)
_____ Included 3 main points
_____ Supported 3 main points with evidence
_____ Included transitions in the body between main points
_____ Organized well: topical. spatial. chronological
_____ Cited at least 3 credible sources (one in each body paragraph)
_____ Established relevance Within body of speech

___ Conclusion (12 Points)
_____ Provided transition from body to conclusion
_____ Summarized central idea
_____ Provided final Summary
_____ Provided closure to the speech

___ Delivery (10 Points)
_____ Used vocal variety and enthusiasm
_____ Used appropriate articulation/pronunciation
_____ Used minimal vocal disfluencies
_____ Used proper speaking rate
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____ Established eye contact with audience (no reading)
____ Used appropriate gestures and bodily movement
____ Used note cards

____ Met Time Limits (up to -5)

APPENDIX D
PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: _________________________ Total Score_______ / 50
Topic: _________________________ Time: ___________

____ Introduction (12 points)
_____ Gained attention
_____ Made topic relevant to audience
_____ Established credibility
_____ Indicated propositional statement clearly with problem/solution
_____ Included transition to first point

____ Body (16 points)
_____ Presented problem(s) clearly
_____ Provided evidence of problem(s)
_____ Demonstrated relevance of problem(s) with evidence
_____ Presented solution(s) clearly
_____ Proved solution(s) will address problem with evidence
_____ Used descriptive language to evoke audience emotions
_____ Used precise and clear language
_____ Included transitions in the body between main points
_____ Cited at least 3 credible sources within problem and solution (1 source in each body paragraph)
Conclusion (12 points)

- Provided transition from body to conclusion
- Reviewed problem-solution propositional statement
- Motivated the audience to thought/action
- Provided memorable closure to speech

Delivery (10 points)

- Used vocal variety and enthusiasm
- Used appropriate articulation/pronunciation
- Used minimal vocal disfluencies
- Used proper speaking rate
- Established eye contact with audience (no reading)
- Used appropriate gestures and body movement
- Used note cards

Met Time Limits (up to -5)
A New Hybrid: Students’ Extensions of Integrated Communication Content

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Again and again, surveys of employers reiterate the idea that communication skills are not only key to employees’ success, but also a skill set with which recent college students need additional help (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2010). At the top of most of these lists are communication skills: writing, speaking, interpersonal, and teamwork. Despite the necessity of these skills, institutions do not have one set protocol for offering courses to enhance these skills (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010). With increased intersections among modes of communication, this institution altered the general education curriculum to offer students an experience that more closely aligned with the reality of communicating in multiple modalities. In order to better understand the effects of such a change, this paper addresses one aspect of a broader assessment project. Specifically, this paper provides an analysis of students’ perspectives on what skills they gained from the integrated communication class.

Literature Review

What constitutes the “basic communication course” can vary greatly from institution to institution. Systematic surveys of the basic communication course use the...
definition of “that communication course either required or recommended for a significant number of undergraduates; that course which the department has, or would recommend, as a requirement for all or most undergraduates” (Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999, p. 3). Typically, these courses are identified as either focused on public speaking or taking the form of a “hybrid,” in which students learn about public speaking, interpersonal, and small group communication. Some institutions require a different course, such as small group communication, and some students are given a choice among several options. Ongoing research on the basic course indicates shifts in the focus of courses nationally. Morreale et al. (2010) found that public speaking was a less prevalent orientation than it had been in nearly 40 years. In that study, roughly half of the communication programs surveyed had public speaking as the dominant basic course. Two-year schools were more likely to require a hybrid course than were four-year institutions. However, many schools (60.5%) required a basic communication course for general education; other institutions required basic communication courses for specific majors.

The details of the classes also vary greatly. For example, nearly half (43.4%) of schools require between 1 and 4 speeches, while 34.9% require four speeches (Morreale et al., 2010). Just over half of the respondents require between one and four written assignments, which may include self-reflection and written outlines. For four-year schools, 20.7% reported having a combined writing and speaking class. There is great variety in the reading level of the texts used in the basic course; as many as half of the textbooks commonly used in the ba-
sic course are above first-year college level (Schneider & Walter-Reed, 2009).

Scholars have identified trends within research on courses such as the basic communication course. Hunt, Novak, Semlak, and Meyer (2005) synthesized the first 15 years of the Basic Course Annual and identified several trends in research. Studies published in this venue focused on teaching strategies, characteristics of teachers and students, status of the basic course, textbooks, and assessment. Among Hunt et al.’s recommendations for future research were several ideas regarding assessment (based on Sprague, 2002). Most pertinent here are the question of what authentic assessments can play a role in the basic course and how the pedagogy and curriculum of a basic course can influence students’ learning. The idea of assessment is reiterated by other scholars (e.g., Allen, 2002) and is commonly used within programs as a means of improving assignments (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010).

The importance of assessing the basic course is underscored by the perception that such courses are beneficial to students. A basic communication course is generally perceived to be fundamental to a well-rounded education (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). Morreale, Osborn, and Pearson (2000) argued that the benefits of having a communication course as part of higher education include the opportunity to develop the whole person, to increase global citizenship, and success in career. One positive outcome of basic courses may be enhanced listening abilities. In fact, Johnson and Long (2007) found that while students taking a basic course perceived their skills to be better at the end of the course, performance-based tests showed no significant gains.
Although results are, at times, mixed, basic communication courses do have positive impacts on students. For example, Allen (2002) found that students taking basic courses increased in communication competence, decreased in apprehension, and increased in willingness to communicate. These results are reinforced elsewhere (e.g., Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Veerman, Andreiessen & Kanselaar, 2002; Rose, Rancer, & Crannel, 1993). Furthermore, Ford and Wolvin found that students perceived the impact of communication courses as reaching into academic, work, and social areas of their lives.

In all, extant scholarship shows diversity in the way that institutions configure basic communication courses, but all courses aim to meet their stated learning outcomes. These outcomes may be primarily cognitive (e.g., students will be able to identify…) or performative (e.g., gauging students’ public speaking skills against a set rubric). However, the outcomes may also include elements of affect, which can include students’ attitudes toward the instructor, the course content, or themselves in relation to the course. It is the affective components of the learning in a basic course that are the primary focus in this study, as viewed through the lens of self-efficacy.

**Theoretical Framework**

Although self-efficacy was a central component of Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory, he isolated the concept for further study (Bandura, 1977, 1989). On self-efficacy, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) noted that “among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than...
people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their level of functioning and environmental demands” (p. 1206). Self-efficacy theory is parsimonious in that it is comprised of two main concepts. The central concepts are labeled efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies.

First, efficacy beliefs are behavioral and cognitive abilities an individual believes they possess, and the determination that these abilities can be successfully employed to reach goals or complete tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1982). These beliefs influence an individual’s choice of environments, affect toward environments, affect toward others, and determine challenges that they willingly seek, accept, and overcome (Bandura, 1982). An individual’s belief system is organized and evaluated according to three dimensions including magnitude, strength and generality. **Magnitude** considers the difficulty of the behavior, **strength** is an individual’s confidence in performing the behavior, and **generality** refers to the likelihood of the behavior being successfully performed across contexts (Bandura, 1977). Those who are high in self-efficacy, when compared to those who are low in self-efficacy, consider most tasks to be manageable, feel confident, and perceive their behaviors as useful across contexts.

Second, outcome expectancies are the results that one anticipates experiencing as a result of enacting chosen behaviors (Bandura, 1977). The importance placed on the outcome influences the individual’s choice to strive to reach that outcome. Bandura (1993) characterized outcome expectancies as a cognitive motivator for enacting, or not enacting, behaviors. Positive outcome expectancies encourage the efficacious individual
to proceed, while negative outcome expectancies inhibit an individual and decrease their likelihood of success.

These two central concepts, efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies, are formed and continuously evolve through four types of experiences, which Bandura (1977, 1989) delineated. First, performance experiences are the actual past experiences of an individual that either ended successfully or in failure, leading to the support or diminishment of the individual’s efficacy beliefs. Second, vicarious experiences are the actions that an individual witnesses another enact to reach an outcome, similar to modeling. Through this experience the individual determines if he/she can enact the same behaviors and achieve the same outcomes. This type of experience is especially influential if the individual perceives similarities between themselves and the modeler. Third, verbal persuasion refers to the individual hearing advice and encouragement from another. Individuals can be persuaded to believe they have the behavioral competence to reach a desired outcome. Fourth, positive and negative physiological states affect efficacy beliefs. It is important to note that previous performance experiences have the strongest influence on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Maddux, 1995).

**Self-Efficacy and the New Hybrid**

In a variety of contexts, those who are high in self-efficacy are different than those who are low in self-efficacy. Specifically, they think, feel, and act differently (Bandura, 1989). The efficacy beliefs of students facilitate a host of positive outcomes including higher academic achievement (e.g., Alfasi, 2003), increased goal-setting and actual goal attainment (e.g., Zimmerman,
Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), good attendance (e.g., Collins & Bissell, 2002), higher motivation (e.g., Schunk, 1991), more successful adaptation to college (e.g., Zhang, 2004), and proactive career relevant decision making (e.g., Abdalla, 1995; Ancis & Phillips, 1996), among others. Collins and Bissell (2002) acknowledged that self-efficacy is not the only predictor of achievement but argued that it is one of the best. Zimmerman et al. (1992) argued that because self-efficacy is so influential in student outcomes, schools and instructors alike should structure the academic environment so that skills are taught and efficacy is enhanced.

Following Zimmerman et al.'s (1992) argument, we used self-efficacy theory as a guiding framework for the reconceptualization how basic communication courses would be taught. Self-efficacy should be considered a situational and contextualized construct (Bandura, 1977; Imants & De Brabander, 1996; Ross & Bruce, 2007). Therefore, an individual possesses various types of efficacy to deal with all facets of their human life and all challenges they may encounter. Given the context specific nature of self-efficacy, several types of efficacy were targeted in this newly conceptualized two-course sequence. Specifically, courses described in this paper were designed to enhance the situational efficacy (e.g., interpersonal, intercultural, writing, speaking, and visual skills) of students using classroom strategies that incorporate performance experience (e.g., skills practice), vicarious experience (e.g., peer review and critique), verbal persuasion (e.g., instructor and peer support), and affect (e.g., decreasing anxiety). The two-course sequence will now be described including specific
content, strategies, and assignments expected to improve student communication efficacy.

**Overview of the Two Course Composition and Communication Sequence**

The courses that arose from scholarship on the basic course and research that highlights the importance of affect were part of a larger university change to a new general education curriculum. The general education requirement is comprised of two courses that integrate written, oral, and visual communication. The first course Composition and Communication 1 (CC1) is typically taken by first year, first semester students (primarily in the fall semester). It is expected that students will then take Composition and Communication 2 (CC2) in the second semester of their first year on campus (primarily in the spring). Both courses are required of students and they must be taken in sequence. The two courses are closely related in the skills that they teach and in allowing students to apply the foundations of communication beyond what would occur in just one course. The two courses also replaced all previous requirements for a communication course (which could be one of a number of options such as public speaking or interpersonal) and a composition requirement. Because the various modes of communication were intertwined throughout the courses, the courses could build their skills and understanding over a longer period of time.

**CC1**

The first course in the sequence is focused on the foundations of producing skilled communication in writ-
ing, speaking, and visual with particular emphasis in interpersonal communication, informative communication (across communication channels), and intercultural communication. The course is comprised of four units and two major projects; each major project has an essay and speech component. Major Project One (MP1) is an individual project where students use photos from their own life to explore their self-concept and the origins of that self-concept. This self-exploration is explored in an essay where students are expected to digitally alter their chosen photos to highlight portions of their identity. Next, students reformulate that self-concept essay by shifting focus to the ways in which their self-concept and identity influences perceptions of others around them. Major Project Two (MP2) is a partner project where students conduct community research on a group that they are not a part of to explore the identity of that group, cultural communication differences, and to build empathy for diverse groups. The student explores this community in depth through an essay, and then creates an informative speech for the classroom, using visuals they collect or create during the research process. In the following paragraphs, each unit will be outlined and described as it relates to the major projects.

Unit One is labeled interpersonal communication and focuses on basic interpersonal communication concepts including self-concept, perceptions, identity, empathy, listening, and self-disclosure. Further, students learn about interpersonal skills that will help them while working in a partnership including ethical critiques and responding and conflict management. This unit is relevant to the content of Major Project One.
(MP1) by teaching the students about self-concept, the origin of identity, and how others perceive their self-concept or identity. This unit is relevant to MP2 because it focuses on the process partners will employ as they work together to explore a community and empathize with the cultural differences that emerge.

Unit Two is labeled written communication and focuses on the writing process (i.e., brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing, publishing). It is during this unit that students will first begin to draft their essays for MP1, and refine their writing skills for MP2. As part of the brainstorming phase, the students explore different techniques for topic selection and narrowing that also apply throughout the rest of the semester. Part of the revising and polishing stages include intense peer review to engage in effective interpersonal communication with peers and the instructor. Further, these writing process phases are relevant to speech construction, organization, and revision, preparing students for Unit Three.

Unit Three is labeled oral communication and focuses on communication anxiety, audience analysis, organization, verbal delivery, nonverbal delivery, and the use of presentational aids. This unit helps to prepare for the speech component of MP1, and to refine their presentation skills for MP2. Similar to Unit Two, students have additional opportunities to practice their interpersonal communication skills with one another and the instructor. It is important to note that Units Two and Three are reciprocal in that the information contained in each unit informs the communication students are expected to engage in through all channels (i.e., written, oral, and visual). For example, although audience analy-
sis is placed in Unit Three, the students gain an understanding of how audience analysis is important when creating written, oral, or visual work.

Finally, Unit Four is labeled intercultural communication. In this unit, the content focuses on understanding other cultures and communities and their communication differences and how to effectively and ethically examine another community as someone who is not a member. Students learn skills in participant observation, interviewing, addressing assumptions and stereotypes, and ways in which to think about themselves as a part of a larger and diverse society. During this unit, students are expected to synthesize the skills they have learned throughout the semester to work with a partner on producing communication using the new skills provided in Unit Four (culture, primary research) to produce MP2.

**CC2**

The second course in the sequence is focused on increasing information literacy as consumers of communication (not just producers), argumentation and persuasion, group communication, and challenges students to produce messages using digital and technological resources. The course is comprised of four units and one major project. Whereas students learn about a community and how to convey information in MP2 during the first course, the students in CC2 are required to work in a group for the entire semester, choose a controversial topic in the local community to explore, take a stance on the chosen topic, and present persuasive information to the class about that controversy. In the following para-
graphs, each unit will be described as it relates to the expectations for the major project.

Unit One is labeled group communication and focuses on the basic roles, dynamics, and processes that take place in small group settings. The small group communication skills build on the interpersonal skills learned in CC1 and extend them to understanding communication in teams. This unit is strategically positioned early in the semester to prepare students to work in the same group for the entire semester of CC2.

Unit Two is labeled rhetoric, argumentation, and persuasive appeals and focuses on how students can construct and support effective arguments and persuasive messages. This material is relevant throughout each step of the major project. First, students, as producers, write a position paper on a controversial topic demonstrating persuasion and argumentation. Second, students, as consumers, conduct a rhetorical analysis to examine the rhetorical practices in an artifact related to their group’s controversial issue. Third, students present a persuasive symposium speech on their issue to the class. Finally, students reformulate the persuasive messages about the controversy into a digital project with greater emphasis on visual persuasion and influence.

Unit Three is labeled group presentations and focuses on advanced organization, presentational aids, and delivery skills as they are altered by presenting as a coherent group instead of an individual speaker. During this unit, students have the opportunity to integrate both the group communication skills and the persuasion and argumentation skills to write an outline, construct a presentational aid, practice presentation skills, and
Finally, Unit Four is labeled digital and visual communication and allows students to focus the knowledge they have gained from both CC1 and CC2 to develop an advanced digital and visual project to present and support an argument that must be made public. This final part of the major project is the ultimate test of the skills required of an effective communicator (e.g., audience analysis, purpose analysis, invention, revision, publishing).

Because of the dramatic changes to curricula undertaken with the introduction of these courses, assessment has been an integral part of gauging student outcomes and adjusting content and instruction. The administrators and faculty involved in the courses work to close the assessment loop so that assessment results can feed back into further improving the courses. The results reported here are specifically focused on answering the questions:

RQ1: How do students perceive the concepts taught in these courses in relation to their communication efficacy?

RQ2: What affective changes do students perceive that they experienced in relation to the concepts taught?

**Methods**

The data analyzed here are part of ongoing assessment of the CC1 and CC2 courses at this flagship, land-grant institution. Students from all sections of CC1 and CC2 complete a pretest and posttest assignment, for
which they receive course credit based on completion. Students are also asked for informed consent for their work to be used for assessment purposes. Pretest and posttest assignment data is then pulled for the consented students, as are their essays and recorded speeches. All sections are taught in classrooms equipped with lecture capture software, a camera, and microphone so that all speeches are recorded and then made available to students via a secure connection for self-critique. All sections also require students to submit work through the university’s course management system and the faculty members working on assessment are able to access the submitted work (namely essays and recorded speeches) of consenting students after the semester ends. During the semester, instructors do not know which students consented and do not have access to the pretest and posttest data. The researchers also did not have access to students’ grades on any of the assignments.

The courses are required of all students across the university, providing a cross-section of the student population. For the study reported here, we used data from one fall semester, capturing data at the end of the semester. This particular semester was only the second time that each course had been offered, meaning that only a small number of students were eligible for CC2 because of completing CC1 or testing out of the course due to test (e.g., ACT) scores or AP credit.

**DATA COLLECTION**

The portion of assessment data used here came from the posttest assignment, which included measures such
as communication apprehension and cognitive measures. Students also responded to questions about the specific major projects1 they had completed and concepts they had learned (see Table 1 for these questions). Students were asked how strongly they agreed with a statement about a value of the concepts taught (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) and then were asked to explain their response. Because of the differing content in CC1 and CC2, students were given different questions based on the course they were completing (e.g., CC1 students would rate interpersonal communication, while CC2 students would rate group communication). Other questions (reported elsewhere) were more focused on skills.

For this analysis, we culled students’ answers to these questions about the value of the assignments. From CC1, we had 794 responses; from CC2, we had 273 responses.11 This difference in response rates is to be expected because more students take CC1 in the fall than take CC2 and this data set was collected in the fall semester. See Table 2 for details on the demographics of the student respondents. We calculated descriptive statistics for the quantitative items to provide a foundation for students’ perspectives in answering RQ1.

For the bulk of the analysis, we used the students’ explanations regarding their quantitative answers. We maintained all segments that dealt with anything students gained from the courses, dropping all general comments (e.g., “I really liked this project.”) and comments about the class that were unrelated to the research questions. Comments that had multiple parts were split into their components. For example, if a student said “I learned all about how to better communi-
Table 1

Statements Given to Students, with Associated Course Unit, Number of Respondents, Means, and Standard Deviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Course Unit</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning about interpersonal communication concepts has helped me outside of this class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>4.83 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about intercultural communication concepts has helped me outside of this class.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>4.82 (1.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The projects in this course helped me understand how to be an effective team member.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.79 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning small group communication concepts will help me beyond this class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.96 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rhetorical analysis project helped me become a more critical consumer of the messages I see every day.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.25 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The digital remix project helped me learn to construct and critique visual messages as a form of communication.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>5.57 (1.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 For this table, n represents the total number of valid responses to the statement on the scale of 1-7 (strongly disagree—strongly agree). Students who responded to the numerical question may or may not have entered valid responses for the qualitative data.
Table 2

Demographics of Students Who Responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CC1</th>
<th>CC2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>17 or younger</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 or older</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Students who identified as “other” included international exchange students, students returning for a second degree, and post-baccalaureate students.

cate within a group. I also learned more about how to best communicate with people from other cultures.” These two statements would then be divided into two separate coding segments. Because students responded to multiple open-ended questions, segments are not unique to students. In the end, the data set consisted of 1,570 segments.

Data Analysis

The first research question was answered through an analysis of descriptive statistics related to students’
level of agreement with the statements about how the assignments affected them. The second research question was answered using students’ responses to the open-ended questions that followed the statements.

The analysis for RQ2 began with constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to derive a coding scheme. Ultimately, the researchers derived a coding scheme that required each segment of data to be coded on three aspects: affective, context, and arena. Under the affective stage of coding, each segment was placed into one of seven categories of affective changes (see Table 3). The affective changes tapped into the portions of students’ comments that dealt with how the assignments influenced their thinking and attitudes. Second, each segment was coded for context. The contextual coding was intended to identify which context of communication (e.g., interpersonal, groups; see Table 3) was most salient. For both affective and contextual coding—a final category “not specified”—was used to account for the broader nature of some comments. Finally, segments were coded as to the arena of their lives where students saw the connection: academic life, work life (including future work), or everyday life.

After initial consultation with other communication experts on the clarity and validity of the coding scheme, the two researchers independently coded a sample of the data, representing approximately 10% of the data. The reliability of the two coders was evaluated using Cohen’s kappa for each stage of the coding. Kappa scores were each at an acceptable score (affective: 0.75;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Attitudinal Comments and Associated Contexts of Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heiheded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

* et al.: Basic Communication Course Annual Vol. 25

* A New Hybrid
Figure 1. Distribution of responses by CC1 students.
**Expanded Knowledge.** The most prevalent category was “expanded knowledge,” accounting for 19.17% of the data. Students identified numerous areas in which they gained knowledge. For example, students reported that they gained knowledge that was helpful for the class:
They have helped me construct my paper and speeches. For example, they have given me ideas about audience, audience knowledge, etc.

Additionally, students also saw the merits in the course in terms of learning about “different cultures and how that can effect [sic] your speech.” Along with these types of comments, students also reported that they learned “about rhetoric and really understanding what goes into it.” The expanded knowledge spread across all of the contexts of communication, but was most prevalent in regards to mediated communication and intercultural communication.

**Collaborative Skills.** Students also felt they had gained valuable collaborative skills (18.22%). Not surprisingly, the majority of these segments were related to the group context:

I plan on becoming a teacher, so learning to work in small group will prepare me for working with other teachers, and/or parents.

For some of the students, learning to work in a group was a new experience as indicated by the following two students:

I learned how to work with people I had never met before in a group setting. This class taught me skills that made it possible to communicate my ideas in a group setting and work better with others.

I had no previous experience with group projects until taking this course. Now I am comfortable with group tasks and can get along well in group situations.

A small number of comments related to collaborative skills were not specified in terms of contexts, with only
two other contexts related to collaboration: interpersonal and mediated. For example, one student made the connection between small groups and interpersonal communication: “I'm in a very one-on-one industry and small group communication is essential.”

**Openness/Acceptance.** An expanded worldview and openness to diversity was another common theme in students’ comments, making up 14.08% of the data. Many of these comments were related to intercultural/diverse contexts. However, some students also indicated that they were more open in interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts, as demonstrated in the following three comments:

- This has showed me that even if someone is a part of another culture we are still the same in a way.
- There are a lot more people here and a lot more different kinds of people here than that which I have grown up with, so I am sure it's helped in some aspects somehow.
- I've learned not to let misconceptions guide my life and to step out of my comfort zone to talk to those not in the same communities as me.

These comments demonstrate what students gained in terms of being open and understanding of diversity—not just intercultural communication contexts. Comments about openness are exemplified by the student who said that a project “allowed me to understand other peoples' points of view.”

**Heightened Awareness.** Across all of the contexts of communication students indicated, they also indicated a heightened awareness (11.27%). For some students, this awareness was about being exposed to ideas...
or diversity that had not previously been salient to the student.

Many people are unaware of the messages that are being sent out into the world by the media and through analyzing the information in class I'm able to see beyond the obvious and I feel that it will benefit not only myself, but everyone else as well.

There are so many different groups and it was cool hearing about how the stereotypes aren't true.

The heightened awareness was typically about expanding students’ experiences and world view, which was particularly important given that the majority of these students were first-year students. The awareness was not only limited to others. For example, one student placed the awareness in the intrapersonal realm: “These concepts have allowed me better to think rationally about myself as far as skills that I have.”

**Increased Confidence.** Students reported feeling more confident in themselves and their abilities as a result of the work in the courses (10.32%). Not surprisingly, some of these gains in confidence were tied specifically to speaking, but students also saw broader implications:

The speeches and interaction in this class helped me improve my interpersonal communication skills which carried on into other areas of my life.

This concept has really helped me with my social skills and meeting new people. I am not from [this state] so I was forced to break out of my shell and meet people. I used these skills!
The confidence felt by students spread across all contexts of communication, but was most concentrated in public speaking and interpersonal communication.

Critical Examination. Increased abilities to critically examine messages was a positive outcome for many students, representing 9.17% of the data. For many students, this critical examination was in relation to mediated messages (e.g., advertising), as demonstrated in the following four comments:

- It made me think of how to analyze what I see rather than just looking at it.
- It taught me how to interpret an image and break it down piece by piece to really know what it is saying.
- I strongly agree to this question because the rhetorical analysis really showed me what is being done to persuade an audience at a deeper level.
- I really look at stats a different way no matter where I’m seeing them because I want to know if these are true stats or if someone has put a spin on them to get a point across.

Occasionally, students also indicated an increased ability to critically examine messages in relation to visual and written communication.

Not Specified. The remaining comments (17.77%) did not specify an attitudinal change. Often, these comments were broad statements and did not include any indication of what—if any—change had happened. For example, one student wrote:

Communication classes can actually be used outside of the classroom as compared to some classes that you’ll never put into effect in a real world situation.
Another student’s response was that “Everyone can work on their [sic] communication skills. Especially people who need to work on communication I think this subject can be very helpful.” The student’s comment indicates that there was something to be gained from the course but it wasn’t clear what the student saw as the primary context in which a gain occurred.

**Arena**. In identifying the arena of life in which students made connections, coding only looked at explicit statements. Furthermore, if a student identified multiple contexts (e.g., both work and school), that segment was coded for “everyday life,” which served as the broadest category. In all, students reported 232 connections to their academic lives, 108 connections to their current or future work life, and 1,229 connections to everyday life.

For example, one student in CC1 demonstrated how the interpersonal communication concepts she learned helped her deal with her roommate:

> I took the interpersonal communication concepts that I learned in class and tried to use them to the best of my ability when I had to confront my roommate or my boyfriend about certain things. I am more aware now of how I come off to people when either confronting them or arguing with them.

In terms of academic connections, students made connections to current course work and future coursework, extending both within and beyond the class. Three comments from students exemplified the academic connections:
Majority of the projects done in this course were group projects, therefore you had to learn how to be an effective team member and get along with a group.

It will help me if I were to be put into another group in another class, or if I'm doing a project alone, I know how to divide things up and work on those separately to make the project better as a whole.

I feel like everything that was offered in this course helped me with my speaking skills. And I need good speaking skills for the major I am going after.

Students were also able to project into their future work life, whether or not students had a particular major in mind, as demonstrated by the following three comments:

As an interior design major, I will have to work as a group member for the majority of my career, so the skills I learned in this course will aid me in this.

Many jobs, even ones where you don't have to work in groups, are looking for people with "people skills" who know how to work with other people.

Most of the career options I have looked at place a heavy emphasis on working well with others. What I have learned in this course can be nothing but valuable to me in the future.

Students also saw broader connections to everyday life:

This project gave me a new outlook on the way we see things everyday and I have learned to be very cautious of the things I view.

This project was the first time I had dealt with something of that kind. It was a very enlightening experience and at projects end, very fun. Since completing
this project I do feel that I am more critical of the messages I am exposed to and give more thought before making decisions.

Before I entered this course I knew how to interact with people. But the interpersonal concept taught me how to properly interact with others.

These three comments represent the breadth of the applications that students were able to make with the courses. The majority of the comments were tied to everyday life.

**DISCUSSION**

Curricular changes are ideally undertaken for the good of students. In relation to these changes, success can be measured in terms of cognitive learning (e.g., answers to a test; Bloom, 1956), behavioral learning (e.g., giving a speech or completing a math problems; Harrow, 1972), or affective learning (e.g., attitudes toward the content; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1973). In order to fully understand the scope and depth of students’ perceptions of learning in the revised courses described here, the assessment team has taken a multi-pronged approach. The focus here is on the affective learning, which is framed in terms of self-efficacy. Specifically, the goal was to examine the impact of the curriculum on students’ attitudes. Students generally felt that the course projects and units had a positive impact on their abilities and attitudes, with extensions beyond the classroom.

When examining the data here, it becomes clear that students can take away a variety of applications from the same project. For the same set of assignments, stu-
dents gained collaborative skills, knowledge, and confidence, among other attitudes. Furthermore, students were able to see how completing a particular project related across multiple contexts of their lives. There is value in having a diversity of assignments to help students see what they can—and do—gain from the courses; in fact, self-efficacy and affect are closely tied (Bandura, 1982).

Like many basic communication courses (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010), the learning outcomes for these courses revolved heavily around students’ abilities to speak and write. However, in students’ responses, only a small number of public speaking and writing comments were made (together, less than 5% of the comments). Of course, the questions students answered were not specifically about those parts of the classes but students clearly identified their improvements as being about something more than public speaking and writing essays. Given the reality that professional writing and speaking may not conform to the types of assignments given in the classroom (e.g., Dannels, 2002), there is merit to understanding that the assignments provide more than just writing and speaking skills. The results raise the question of how much the goal of the courses should be about those very specific and narrow skills and how much should be moving beyond academic writing and speaking. Furthermore, once students leave these courses, they will be expected to communicate in more sophisticated ways in upper-division courses, which bring to the table their own sets of expectations.

The students’ perceptions that these integrated communication skills are beneficial in everyday life, including academic, work, and personal arenas, speaks to
the importance of hybrid courses being included in general education curricula. Moreover, their perceived importance of the skills echo those reported by employers (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Particularly when communication-centered courses are a general education requirement, the value of the courses are a concern. Research demonstrates, for example, that when students see communication instruction as an add-on or irrelevant, it becomes a lower priority for students (Dannels, Anson, Bullard, & Peretti, 2003). Students appear to be making the connections between the assignments they complete in CC1 and CC2 to other contexts, which is a step in the right direction.

In terms of self-efficacy, the courses both explicitly and implicitly integrated the different strategies for improving self-efficacy. Specifically, students had performance experiences, vicarious experiences, experienced verbal persuasion, and enhanced affect during the assignment sequences in both courses—all influences on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Students did self-report an increase in perceptions of their self-efficacy as evidenced by those who reported feeling more comfortable, confident, knowledgeable, prepared, and skilled to enact the communication strategies they have learned in academic, personal, and professional realms. The student comments addressed both positive efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies. Of particular prevalence in this study was students’ efficacy belief generality, or the belief that their integrated communication skills would transfer across contexts (Bandura). Although efficacy and affect are both perceptions that students hold, both have been associated with positive academic outcomes and cognitive learning (e.g., Zimmerman et al., 1992).
Thus, the students in these courses could be expected to have positive outcomes such as learning and skills.

Another important implication of the assessment results reported here revolves around the two-course sequence implemented at this institution. Generally, other institutions require one basic course and often this course can be taken at any time during the student’s college career. This two-course sequence strongly encourages students to take two courses in subsequent semesters; students are required to take both courses, with the exception of students being able to test out of the first course due to equivalent credit. While students reported generally high affect for the content and the assignments in CC1, students reported greater affect for CC2. These results could be explained in a number of ways. First, students who are in their first semester of college are likely facing transitional issues, both academically and socially, that can alter their perceptions of college courses and the skills they are learning. The students who have persisted into the second semester are likely those who had more positive experiences during the first semester and who have adjusted to college life more effectively. Second, the higher affect ratings toward the second integrated communication course may be a result of the foundational communication skills the students gained, practiced, and refined before the second course. In other words, students may feel more efficacious in enacting the communication skills during CC2 because they already had exposure to the material covered in CC1, whether they took the course or bypassed it due to an equivalent course taken elsewhere. Although these explanations are speculative, the results raise questions about the potential value of
requiring a two-course sequence instead of one course. Additionally, the connections made in the classes between multiple modes of communication may further reinforce the value of the two-course sequence where students build on knowledge and explore different modes of communication.

For assessment, this project reinforces the need to remember that while the stated learning outcomes are going to be a focal point of the assessment, it can also be meaningful to see beyond those learning outcomes, which may result in expanded outcomes or simply in a broader perspective on what can be gained by students in a course. Learning, like communication, is a process and the goals and outcomes of that process are not always readily apparent. If one goal of basic communication course research is to better understand different course configurations (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010), this study points to promising results from a multi-pronged approach to studying an integrated course.

The research here—like all assessment—is not without its limitations. First, the data here was collected from one semester of students while the course was still relatively new, meaning that the curriculum was not fully vetted. However, the data used here did feed back into the curriculum to make necessary adjustments. Secondly, the data comes from one time in one semester and does not allow for tracking of students; future data from these courses will allow us to make more of these longitudinal assessments. Thirdly, students completed the assessment outside of class (as part of an assignment) and some students did not respond to all questions; there may be inherent bias in the results. Finally, these results are not comprehensive in explaining what
happens within the courses and where there may be variety based on individual instructors or other factors such as the personality dynamics of classmates. However, the results here do demonstrate interesting trends that show a positive affect toward learning communication skills in an integrated manner.

CONCLUSIONS

In this new hybrid basic communication course, students saw the assignments and units as positive influences on their academic, work, and every day lives. In this way, the courses seem to provide a boost to students’ self-efficacy beliefs, generality, and perceived outcomes. Although scholars know that basic communication courses are an important part of curricula and have many benefits for students, employer surveys highlight the importance of multiple modalities of communication (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2010) for students’ success. As the first step toward assessing the benefits—and potential drawbacks—to providing integrated communication instruction over two semesters, this research provides an encouraging nod to the benefits of this new hybrid.

REFERENCES


Alfasi, M. (2003). Promoting the will and skill of students at academic risk: An evaluation of an instructional design geared to foster achievement, self-effi-
A New Hybrid


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1 Due to this institution’s administrative configuration, the teaching of CC1 and CC2 is divided between faculty in a communication college and faculty in a composition division, housed in the arts and sciences college. Approximately 40% of the seats for the courses are allotted to the communication college. The data here reflects only those students taught within the communication college, as there were variations in the assignments between the two colleges.

2 When compared to the number of students enrolled in the courses after the final day to add a course, the response rate for CC1 was 59.97%; response rate for CC2 was 55.26%. However, students may have dropped the courses (either officially or unofficially), so these response rates may be artificially low. Furthermore, these numbers represent the number of students who completed the posttest and consented for their work to be used.

3 It is important to note that due to university regulations, some students bypassed CC1 because of Advanced Placement testing, ACT verbal scores, or similar courses (primarily writing) taken elsewhere that served as an equivalent transfer. In this particular sample, only 5.5% of the CC2 students had taken CC1 under the curriculum described here. That proportion varies by semester.
Facing with Non-nativeness while Teaching: Enacting Voices of International Teaching Assistants of Basic Communication Courses

Arata Miyazaki
Kaori Yamada

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining the quality of basic courses offered at universities in the United States is critical for both undergraduate students to develop fundamental skills and knowledge of the subject matter and for course directors and administrators to manage the workload of full-time faculty members in the department. The use of so-called graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), or simply, teaching assistants (TAs), is a commonly shared strategy to balance such an administrative management issue in higher education. Meanwhile, graduate programs in America attract students from all over the world. Gomez and Pearson (1990) once noted, more than two decades ago, that the United States had become “the graduate school for the world” (p. 58). Eventually, a growing number of international students attending graduate programs in the U.S. have led to the increasing presence of international teaching assistants (ITAs) who engage in teaching duties as non-native English speakers (Twale, Shannon, & Moore, 1997). This trend is observed across disciplines, and basic courses in speech communication and communication studies are no exception (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990).
Though teaching as GTAs while pursuing their degree is such a challenging experience for all graduate students, the situation becomes more intense for ITAs. English is the medium for teaching and communication with students in and outside the classroom. Despite the level of their intellectual knowledge on the subject matter, however, language performance of ITAs often hinders them from effectively conducting their teaching duties. Undergraduate students with limited exposure to the varieties of English (or of Englishes) also struggle with learning due primarily to language barriers, resulting in their complaints about the ITAs’ lack of English competency and fluency. This is well illustrated in Bailey’s (1983; 1984) discussions about the “foreign TA problem,” which is still well applied to the current situation even three decades after her initial writing.

This paper presents the authors’ “voices” as ITAs concerning this issue in the context of basic communication education. We have engaged in a sufficient amount of teaching experience in public speaking courses as ITAs at American universities. It is our contention that our co-constructed narrative demonstrates how an ITA’s non-native identity, or what we call “non-nativeness” in relation to languages employed becomes highly nuanced while teaching American, native, English speaking students how to better their communicative performance. Different from the cases of the math, engineering, or science classes as in Bailey’s (1983; 1984) discussion about the foreign TA problem, our co-constructed narrative contributes to a better understanding of the connection between language and identity of ITAs in the basic communication education context. Not only is it important to address the efficacy of the use of ITAs for basic
communication courses, this language and identity issue deserves further investigation considering the power of English around the world (Crystal, 2003).

To elucidate the key notion of non-nativeness that affects the performance of ITAs, this paper first presents literature concerning native/non-native issues in the ESL (English as a Second Language) context. Although our focus is not on ESL, this provides a framework for the discussion between language and identity within an education context and helps us situate our discussion within the net of related inquiry. Discussions about undergraduate students’ perceptions about non-native English speaking instructors will also be examined in order to explicate the dynamics of such classroom situations. Based on the literature review, we propose our research question for the issue at hand. Then, we detail the co-constructed narrative method for enacting our voices as ITAs. The analysis of our narratives, namely, our narrative co-construction follows in the subsequent section by taking a dialogical approach to present our shared reality, or narrative truth of ITAs’ non-nativeness of public speaking. We argue that non-nativeness is displayed, developed, and negotiated through interactions with both native and other non-native speakers. Thus, non-nativeness is not monolithic but is highly relational and multilayered. Based on our narrative co-construction of ITAs of public speaking, we suggest two practical proposals to better the situation for all groups of people involved in basic communication education.
Identity is constructed and negotiated through social interactions and any form of communicative conducts with other individuals in society (Blumer, 1969). Park (2007) claims that non-nativeness, or non-native speaker identity appears in a form of “doing being [a non-native speaker] in the course of interaction[s]” (p. 340) with other native speakers. Especially, non-nativeness is critical in cultures where English accounts for a significant portion of education. Thus, the American higher education environments can be seen as the crucible of relationships and interactions between native and non-native English speakers, which provides an effective lens to examine the connection between language and identity.

The special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* in 1997 is devoted particularly to the discussions by TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) scholars about *Language and Identity*. Here, the “language” refers specifically to “English” spoken and employed by various so-called non-native speakers. In an opening note for this special issue, Norton (1997) raises a question about the “relationship among language, identity, and the ownership of English” and asks “whether English belongs to native speakers of English, to speakers of standard English, to White people, or to all of those who speak it, irrespective of their linguistic and sociocultural histories” (p. 422). Responding to the theme, discussions presented in this special issue critically examine the problematic assumptions associated with the inscribed labels of “native” and “non-native.”
Being “non-native” means to be always inferior to native speakers, to be incomplete, and to be insufficient (Amin, 1997). As the suffix non indicates, non-native speakers of English often struggle to achieve goals that can hardly, if not impossibly, be achieved. This has intensified a dichotomy between these labels and resulted in an extremely idealized idea of nativeness (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997). Considering the diversity of English spoken by different races or ethnic groups, as well as the complexity of the issue of language and identity, Nero (1997) claims that some speakers of English should be labeled as neither native nor non-native. However, even when individuals are fluent enough in a language to conduct themselves, it often depends on how individuals are labeled by their language(s) that socially define(s) their social identity in relation to language affiliation; namely, nativeness or non-nativeness.

Such a non-nativeness issue particularly stands out when non-native speakers play a role of an instructor who is assumed to hold an authoritative status, seasoned knowledge of the subject matter, and more importantly, highly skilled command of both linguistic and technical languages they employ for teaching. Attempting to address the foreign TA problem (Bailey, 1983; 1984), a number of research has examined the ways to better the situation through testing and evaluating ITAs’ language performance (Halleck & Moder, 1995; Yule & Hoffman, 1990), providing institutional support to enhance their English (Gorsuch, 2011), addressing language barriers between ITAs and native speaking students (Plakans, 1997; Rubin, 1992; Tyler, 1992), and acknowledging the advantages of ITAs as a
role model of a successful “learner” (Medgyes, 1992; Tang, 1997).

Along with the discussions about the strategies to help ITAs improve their English, it is critical to acknowledge how students’ perceptions affect the dynamics of the classroom significantly, regardless of the level of confidence and competence the ITAs believe themselves to hold about the subject. For instance, Butler’s (2007) study reveals that the actual nativeness of the teacher is not necessarily the primary factor that affects students’ learning outcomes, while students’ perceived nativeness, or a lack thereof, indeed influences their evaluation of the credibility of an instructor. Likewise, Gomez and Pearson (1990) examined the perceptions of American undergraduate students enrolled in public speaking courses about credibility and homophily of TAs with different nationalities. They found that the participants regard American TAs as being more “homophilous” and approachable than ITAs to them. When gender comes into play, male ITAs tend to be regarded as the least homophilous to American students. This, however, again, is not necessarily correlated with their actual learning performance in class. Such stigmatic perceptions on ITAs deserve further investigation, considering the results of Buerkel-Rothfuss and Fink’s (1993) study that suggest students in speech classes even rate GTAs higher than tenured-track faculty members for some attributes such as friendliness, closeness, and accessibility.

Butler’s (2007) and Gomez and Pearson’s (1990) studies are highly instructive in addressing the issue of language and identity of ITAs in the context of basic communication education. Different from science-ori-
mented fields, basic communication courses deal with students’ everyday life subjects such as, to name a very few, self and identity, interpersonal and intercultural communication, and public speaking. Especially, public speaking has become one of the most demanded basic communication courses in order to help students prepare for their future employment (Verderber, 1991). Winsor, Curtis, and Stephens (1997) conclude, the same as their previous research about the aspects of students expected for their successful job search (Curtis, Winsor, & Stephens, 1989), that “the skills most valued in the contemporary job-entry market are communication skills” (p. 177; see also Peterson, 1997). Considering the nature of public speaking classes that emphasizes the development of students’ communicative performance, the context of public speaking courses provides a very unique scope to examine how non-nativeness of ITAs is always challenged and negotiated in and outside the classroom environment.

For our discussion about the non-nativeness of ITAs of public speaking courses, we propose the following research question: “How do ITAs of public speaking courses manage to survive in the English speaking institution, while negotiating their non-nativeness in relation to others?” To address this research question, we will employ the co-constructed narrative approach to examine our ITA experiences of public speaking. The next section details this method as well as the narrators of the study.
Method

Unmediated Co-constructed Narrative Method

Narrating oneself is a powerful form of meaning- and sense-making in which we, as human beings, engage (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives are developed for various reasons and purposes (Plummer, 2008). Some narratives are recounted reflexively, rendering meanings to our life experiences (Hinchman & Hinchman, 2001) and, eventually, to a sense of self and our identity construction (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Regardless of the form they take, narratives are reflections of subjective interpretations of the past and ongoing events and feelings we experience in the course of our everyday life. Thus, the exploration of narratives provides us with narrative truth, which is different from the scientific, positivistic notions of Truth or reality. Narrative truth is highly contextual and personal, and different narratives yield multiple narrative truths that still have significant impacts on one’s self and construction of identity (Chase, 2008; Plummer, 2008).

Narratives can be constructed collectively with someone who shares a similar life experience. For the current project, we employ the method of unmediated co-constructed narrative proposed by Ellis and Berger (2001). This is one of the narrative co-construction methods whereby two researchers who share a particular experience develop personal narratives individually and then integrate them into one story with a shared reality. This particular method is unmediated in that two researchers work together as researcher-participants without having someone else guide them for narrative co-construction (Ellis, 2004). Thus, the research-
ers’ own experience, as well as their relationship becomes a subject of study, and the researchers themselves are researchers of their own life. Ellis and Berger (2001) emphasize that the use of the unmediated co-constructed narrative approach is to share the complex emotions individuals go through in critical life events “so that readers might experience our experience—actually feel it—and consider how they might feel or have felt in similar situations” (p. 863). Unmediated narrative co-construction is such a self-reflexive approach so that, in narrating personal experiences collectively, Ellis and Berger claim that narrators of a story guide readers to connect “emotions to the cultures in which they arise” (p. 863).

The unmediated co-constructed narrative method was originally employed for exploring the issues between romantic partners who share some critical incidents for their relationship, such as their unexpected pregnancy and the decision about abortion (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Berger, 2001). As demonstrated in Toyosaki and Pensoneau’s (2005) study about the interpersonal cultural analysis of their friendship, however, the co-constructed narrative method is also “useful for partners in any sort of meaningful, interpersonal, intercultural relationship” (p. 59). With the applied approach and by localizing their research “by valuing [their] own friendship as a subject of study” (p. 54), Toyosaki and Pensoneau examine how friendship between two individuals from different cultures have been nurtured beyond the traditional understands of the intercultural encounter.

We consider the unmediated co-constructed narrative appropriate for the current project since we have long been engaging in co-construction of our narratives...
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as ITAs of public speaking courses in the American graduate programs. Also, following Toyosaki and Pensoneau’s (2005) extended approach to this method, we consider that critical events, or epiphanies can be experienced and shared as long as we agree that we go through similar experiences on the same issue. In sharing and co-constructing narratives, our relationship becomes more meaningful and jointly-authored (Ellis, Adam, & Bochner, 2011, para. 23), and we eventually “participate in each other’s existence” (Bochner & Ellis, 1995, p. 205). We argue that our relationship, or companionship sharing unique ITA experiences of public speaking at different graduate programs works as a subject of study and provides rich descriptions of and a new perspective toward identity construction of non-native speakers.

Narrative Co-construction

Following the unmediated co-constructed narrative approach, we first revisited our interactions prior to the initiation of the current project. In so doing, we referred back to our own personal narratives that we had developed during the course of our ITA experience, such as diaries, personal notes, and emails to close friends and the ones exchanged between us. We find Toyosaki and Pensoneau’s (2005) brief summary of the step-by-step narrative co-construction procedures (Bochner & Ellis, 1995; Ellis & Berger, 2001) useful and appropriate for our project (p. 59). In narrative co-construction, we 1) first identified an epiphany in which we were so involved that we had “no way to make sense of the experience at first” (Toyosaki & Pensoneau, 2005, p. 59), 2) “independently constructed a detailed chronology of the
emotions, events, decisions, and coping strategies that had taken place” (Ellis & Berger, 2001, p. 863), 3) constructed a narrative individually based on the chronology, 4) exchanged and read each other’s versions of the epiphany, and 5) wrote our jointly co-constructed narrative. A final story is our co-constructed narrative about non-nativeness of ITAs of public speaking, which illustrates the process we went through “to access our feelings and resolve [the] epiphany for ourselves” (Ellis, 2004, p. 77).

Our discussion is based on our subjective interpretations and explorations of our own experiences, and it involves distress and emotionally evoking stories. However, it is not our intention to elicit sympathy from readers. As Ellis, Adam, and Bochner (2011) clarified, the key is to “use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders” (para. 9). It is our contention that our entire ITA experience is more like survival, and that obtaining a social role as an instructor of the introductory public speaking course was a critical turning point, that is, an epiphany that made us rethink our non-nativeness.

“Participants”: Narrators of the Study

One of virtues of narrative co-construction is to invite readers to the world within narratives so that they may realize that such a story “could be about anybody” (Ellis, 2004, p. 77) who comes across similar emotionally provoking life incidents and experience. In order them to focus on our narrative truth of the experience, not on ourselves (Ellis, 2004), we employ pseudonyms for our names: Masaharu for a male’s voice and Sayaka for a
female’s voice. We are both Japanese who were born and raised in Japan, speaking Japanese as a mother tongue and English as a second, learned language.

After finishing the undergraduate program with an English major in Japan, we came to the United States, at different years, to further pursue our mutual academic interest, communication studies. Masaharu enrolled in a master’s program in 2004 and continued to work on his doctoral degree at the same school since 2006. Sayaka started her master’s degree at her university in 2008 and then enrolled in a different school for her doctoral degree in 2010. In our master’s programs, we solely studied as graduate students without engaging in any teaching duties. Like many other international students, we occasionally had small talks over the phone or online about school in order to cope with the difficulties and various kinds of stress we experienced in the course of our scholarly pursuits.

After we proceeded to a doctoral program, we received a teaching assignment as GTAs (in the real situation, we are also considered as and called GTAs, not ITAs) for introductory public speaking courses. Although we were assigned as GTAs, Masaharu started teaching as a stand-alone instructor who took the full responsibility for the courses he taught, such as conducting lectures, grading assignments, and holding office hours like faculty members do. Sayaka worked for the instructor as a TA for the first two semesters, and then started teaching as a stand-alone instructor. Though at different years, we both started teaching around in the middle of our 20s. While feeling so excited about obtaining a valuable teaching opportunity, we were so frightened to teach American undergraduate
students public speaking in English as non-native speakers, anticipating an enormous number of complaints from students about our language performance and credibility.

Once Sayaka received her assignment in 2010, she and Masaharu came to spend more time sharing the difficulties of being an instructor for a speech class as non-native English speakers. With his three-year teaching experience on the same subject by that time, Masaharu often provided Sayaka with some advice, while recalling his own first-year teaching experiences where he also suffered from tremendous emotional burdens to face his students as an instructor. Even though we were not in close vicinity to each other, we talked relatively frequently thanks to information communication technologies. Such regular interactions often worked therapeutically and helped us survive in a program by sharing experiences and supporting each other to release tensions from study and teaching, and more importantly, from being non-native. Since then, we started to exchange ideas about and feelings toward how we would engage and face non-nativeness for our survival as ITAs. The next section, Analysis, presents our co-constructed narrative by taking a dialogical approach to show our analysis of the individual narratives, which addresses our research question: “How do ITAs of public speaking courses manage to survive in the English speaking institution, while negotiating their non-nativeness in relation to others?” The Discussion will follow our co-constructed narrative, and we suggest two practical proposals for the issue at hand.
**ANALYSIS**

*Masaharu:* Writing own chronology and narrative of our ITA experience was really therapeutic. And reading each other’s versions really helped us identify that the teaching assignment for public speaking courses was actually a turning point for our understandings of non-nativeness.

*Sayaka:* Yes indeed. Developing narratives about our ITA experience gave us a way to see our non-nativeness from different angles, which would never have been done independently at the beginning of the assignments. I found that our non-nativeness is highly relational. Working as an ITA provided me with more chances to interact with other TAs, both American and international graduate students. Solely focusing on my own study, I had more international friends than American friends in my master’s program. I considered myself an international student at that time, simply because of the social cohort with which I associated myself. Now that I have more American friends and colleagues than international friends thanks to the teaching assignment, I have become comfortable with labeling myself as a graduate student. This creates a sense of belonging, diluting the sense of inferiority of non-nativeness associated with being an international student. Such a labeling act is quite powerful no matter if it is done by your own will or being imposed by someone else.

*Masaharu:* The same is true for me. Making American, native, English speaking friends was a serious issue for me at the beginning of my scholarly pursuit in the U.S., assuming that having many native speaking friends would help me succeed in the program as well as
develop my English. Before my teaching assignment, however, there was not as much of a chance for me to socialize with other American students as I would have liked. Interactions with other international—most often, Asian—friends were fun and important. With a feeling of guilt, and to be honest, however, I never felt satisfied with my entire graduate program experience at that time, nor did I see any improvements in my language performance. Having only other non-native English speaking friends reinforced my idea about own non-nativeness in a negative way. Then, the assignment first brought some peripheral changes to my school life. I felt that I had received a “place” for myself in a program, both physically and relationally. Having been assigned a desk in the office, I could officially stay in a place where other graduate students always engaged in everyday interactions. This expanded my relational boundaries, allowing me to stay in a relational network of other GTAs, namely, native speakers. This is what I initially felt lacking from my graduate program experiences, as well as in my American life. The teaching assignment changed this situation significantly, and I felt like I was beginning to obtain membership in the community. As Myers (1998) points out, peer socialization was a critical means for assuring comfort in a GTA community and helped me establish a sense of belonging.

Sayaka: I can see how vital it was to feel a sense of belonging, or to obtain membership for our survival in a graduate program. Emphasizing the importance of membership from the other members of a new community to establish one’s positionality, Stone (1962) claims “identity is intrinsically associated with all the joining
and departures of social life. To have an identity is to join with some and depart from others, to enter and leave social relations at once” (p. 94). The mentoring program provided by my department was a huge help in this regard, which assigned me a third year American doctoral student as a mentor who had had two years of teaching experience on the same course. As Buerkel-Rothfuss, Fink, and Amaro (1994) suggest, mentorship is an effective means for helping new TAs cope with teaching responsibilities. Having a mentor who was always willing to listen to me meant a lot to me. I really appreciated that I had someone I could talk to, whenever I needed to, especially in my first year of teaching in conjunction with the start of a new doctoral program. Also, the mentor treated all of her mentees equally, which made me feel assured that I was at the same level as other American GTAs who also struggled with their survival of the first year in the doctoral program. I came to share the difficulties and coping strategies for teaching with my office mates, and it became reciprocal. Through such conversations with other GTAs, I gradually realized that my language performance, or non-nativeness was not detrimental to my teaching ability.

Masaharu: Our program did not have a mentoring program, so I did not get as much of a chance to ask for help as I would have liked. However, I do remember how I felt when we first started sharing our struggles of teaching after you received an assignment. And I believe that this is when our companionship started to grow significantly. By that time, I had had three years teaching experience and developed a bit more confidence than at the beginning of my assignment. I did not have much opportunity to share the hardships of being an
ITA of a public speaking course with someone who was also in the same situation as me. So, conversations with you were cathartic for me. It was a big surprise for me to know that you had also been going through a lot of emotional difficulties from teaching at that time. Of course, I never assumed that you would be a perfect person, but knowing you as a very intelligent and successful student prior to the graduate program, it was somewhat reassuring to know even you would think teaching was that challenging. And I appreciated the fact that you disclosed such personal, emotional burdens to me. Having a quasi-mentoring experience as a mentor for you, in a way, allowed me to think back my own first-year teaching experience in a reflexive way.

Sayaka: I appreciate you saying I was a successful student, but I myself did not feel that way. I went through a huge anxiety about being a teacher of public speaking as a non-native speaker of English. It was nice to have a mentor like you who had experienced similar struggles. I was the only ITA who was teaching public speaking in my program, and all the other TAs were Americans. The department had three ITAs other than me, but all of them were teaching another course, business communication. Although the mentorship program, support from the course director, and conversations with other TAs helped me a lot, I had no one in my department who could understand the difficulties of being non-native while teaching public speaking. Through listening to the hardships you had experienced in your first year of teaching, I could feel I was not the only one who struggled. Knowing you as a “good teacher” who had been awarded by your department, I could believe that
non-nativeness would not necessarily hinder my teaching performance as much as I had thought.

Masaharu: What we commonly share about our teaching experience is our fear of being vulnerable in front of students because of our non-nativeness. Obviously, teaching public speaking as ITAs was not easy at all, not only because of the subject matter but also because the amount of our previous teaching experience was somewhat limited. Especially, in my case, this assignment was the very start of my entire teaching career. So, my first teaching experience was to teach American students public speaking as a stand-alone instructor in, of course, English. I felt depressed and frustrated almost every time I finished teaching. Sometimes, it was because of my students who were irresponsible or did not submit assignments in a timely manner. Most often, however, it was because of my performance as an instructor and my English skills. It was also challenging to not show any weakness or vulnerability in front of students as an instructor, which, I believe, intensified the psychological pressure I felt. All things combined, I could barely enjoy teaching at the beginning of my teaching career.

Sayaka: I am glad to hear you say that because I experienced similar hardships for becoming and performing a credible instructor in front of students. Though I had had one year TA experience for a professor of the same course, teaching American students as a stand-alone instructor sounded, and in fact was very challenging to me. My anxiety about speaking English in front of American students was very high on the first day of teaching. I felt pressured to fulfill my role as a teacher, knowing that if my students could not under-
I stood what I said, it would provoke confusion and interrupt their learning. I was also concerned that poor control over English would lower my credibility as a teacher. Especially because I was teaching public speaking, I understood that my speaking skill would become an essential criterion in this regard.

*Masaharu:* Exactly. We know that we cannot hide our non-nativeness once we open our mouth, nor can we avoid being judged by our appearance. International students, especially those from Asia, tend to look much younger than we actually are in America. Both of us have the same experience where people, including students, got surprised to know our age. This can be a compliment in other situations, but not in the ITA teaching context. Looking young means to look less credible, experienced, and “teacher-like.”

*Sayaka:* Admittedly, though sadly, gender was also an obstacle for coping with non-nativeness as an instructor. Did you come across any instance where your gender prevented you from establishing your credibility and closeness to students as Gomez and Pearson’s (1990) research indicated, in which male ITAs of public speaking were rated as being the least close to American students?

*Masaharu:* Fortunately, I do not recall any situation where my gender as being a male ITA really kept me from building a rapport with student. Though I can only tell from limited knowledge, at least any of the comments on student evaluations did not mention my gender as a criterion of their judgment.

*Sayaka:* In my case, that scenario was a bit different. In a meeting with a course director and other TAs, the director’s story caught my attention because he said...
that students would tend to challenge female TAs, including international, Asian TAs, which made me really concerned. Actually, I have had two American female students who took an aggressive attitude toward me, upset about the grades they had earned. I know all novice TAs could have such an experience, but I felt the story would have been different if I was a man, an American, or much older. Since then, I became more aware of how I would present myself in the classroom. As I could not change my biological sex, nationality, or age, the thing I could do was to dress professionally. I tried hard to face an imposed stereotypical image of an Asian young woman as being powerless and vulnerable.

Masaharu: Like your story shows, what makes teaching difficult for ITAs is the fact that we have to stay in a physical spot of being constantly watched and evaluated by others. And I think our non-nativeness was really challenged in such a teaching situation. It is somewhat ironic because we teach students how to manage communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1977) for their speeches in our class, and it is always the same for ITAs coping with fears of being evaluated by students. As Cooley (1902) puts it, we think about ourselves based on how we believe or imagine other people would think of us. Some of those evaluations from others, or reflected appraisals (Cooley, 1902) will be internalized, reinforcing how we think about ourselves. The opportunities to receive feedback from students were somewhat limited. Though the comments provided in student evaluations were helpful in understanding where we were at as instructors, not many students in fact wrote detailed comments on our performance, nor did they take that opportunity as a place of communication.
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Sayaka: True. Fortunately, I felt relieved when I received the first student evaluations because most of them were positive and supportive. I did find some students point out the language barriers in their learning. There was only one in 60 by the second semester who mentioned my language performance. The course director encouraged me and other TAs that there would always be some students who would like an instructor and some who would dislike an instructor in every class, no matter what. I did not receive any complaints on my performance in the next semester, but I had a hard time to let the one negative feedback go because English was a skill to which I had devoted a huge amount of time.

Masaharu: There is no way we can be completely freed from our non-nativeness. It is displayed through our language performance, appearance, and negotiated through our interactions. However, I feel like our struggles, to some extent, have paid off when we realized that becoming instructors of public speaking was indeed the moment when our attitudes toward English and non-nativeness changed. I found that our non-nativeness is not monolithic but is multilayered, as well as relational like you said. The more time I spent in front of students as an instructor in class, the more comfortable it became for me to hold conversations with other TAs, and professors as a non-native English speaker. The degrees of our non-nativeness vary depending on the situations and individuals we engage in language performance. When in class as an instructor, I felt pressured to not make small, silly mistakes in English and to maintain my “in-
structor face,” even though I was aware that it would never be possible for me to speak perfect or native-like English. Because of the fears of making myself more vulnerable in front of students, I tended to wear only an instructor face and refrain from telling students about my background as a Japanese and an international graduate student. One day, one of my students mentioned in the evaluation that they would be interested in knowing more about my personal background. I did not necessarily feel reluctant to disclose my personal side. I would have rather wanted to. But, it was because of my fears of disclosing my non-nativeness that kept me from sharing personal aspects of myself with students in class. The outside classroom communication with friends and faculty members then became a place where I could be freed from an authoritative, instructor face and explored English with little hesitation.

Sayaka: My ITA experience also had the same effects on me. I also became less concerned about English when talking with professors or other TAs because I had much more pressure to speak clearly and accurately in the classroom as an instructor. In conversations with peers and professors, speaking in English was no longer for the sake of improving English but for communication. English eventually became the secondary priority, nearly always, in such interactions. Not only did our additional role as an instructor give us a chance to develop more relational ties, but it also helped us change our mindset as an English speaker. This has also affected the way I think about my scholarly life. Doing research is my favorite part of being in the graduate program. I love to go to the university library and dig into a ton of resources. When conducting research and writing
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...scholarly papers, the focus is placed on my arguments, not on my English per se. I know I can spend enough time later to polish my English to make my arguments more compelling and scholarly. When I attend a conference, I usually do not feel inferior to other native English speaking students and scholars. My paper was competitively accepted, and that fact makes me feel confident that I have an idea from which scholars in the field would benefit. Knowing that the quality of my discussion receives more attention than the accuracy of my English, I felt competitive and sufficient as a scholar. English, or non-nativeness was no longer at the top of the “to-worry list” in my scholarly life.

**Masaharu:** And we both have experienced this from the other side, by listening to English spoken by other non-native speakers. We often came across the situations where other non-native students or scholars made overly self-depreciating excuses regarding their English and then made a solid, compelling discussion. We were paying more attention to their arguments, not primarily to their English, and found such excuses completely unnecessary, or even inappropriate. And we found this was also true for other native speakers who paid more attention to the content, not to English fluency. This made us decide not to use a common phrase that non-native speakers often introduce at the beginning of their presentation or in a casual conversation: “I’m sorry. English is not my first language so please bear with my English and any grammatical errors.”

**Sayaka:** Having realized such critical moments happened in our lives respectively but now shared in our companionship, we can feel sure that the issue of language and identity and of non-nativeness of ITAs should
be understood beyond the boundaries of the classroom situation. The most reassuring aspect our companionship reveals is that we can say with confidence that there are occasions and relationships where we can be less concerned about our non-nativeness and English can be a secondary priority. Our ITA experience was critical in that it has made us realize non-nativeness is not monolithic, but is relational and multilayered. In order to survive such an emotionally burdensome graduate program in the U.S., along with teaching duties of public speaking, we have come to accept non-nativeness in our own definitions, not based on its stigmatic labeling.

**DISCUSSION**

*Intersection across Two Narratives*

As Park (2007) states, our social non-native identity is developed and negotiated by *doing* non-nativeness through interactions with other native speakers, and we claim, with other non-native speakers also. English is a vital means for every aspect of survival during our degree pursuit, and the way we understand our engagement with non-nativeness has changed since we received a teaching assignment for public speaking courses. Through co-constructing narratives of our experience as ITAs, we could identify an epiphany that had happened within our relationship at different times and locations, but is now shared in our companionship. Had we not obtained a teaching role, we would in fact never have realized how multilayered and highly relational non-nativeness was in conjunction with other social roles, such as a graduate student and a novice scholar.
Thus, non-nativeness is displayed and negotiated differently through interactions with other native as well as non-native speakers in our personal, scholarly, and teaching situations. This is how we understand the shared reality or narrative truth of non-nativeness of ITAs of the public speaking courses at the American universities.

Our discussion about non-nativeness explicated an epiphany where both of us had realized that non-nativeness was not monolithic, but relational and multi-layered. Such realization does not necessarily “solve” the difficulties and hardships ITAs encounter in their teaching. Rather, it helps ITAs see their positionality in the English speaking environment in a new way, changing their perceptions about and attitude toward language performance and non-nativeness. Importantly, such self-reflection is quite hard to achieve when ITAs are so preoccupied and overwhelmed with their teaching as well as scholarly responsibilities. Acknowledging so in fact provided us with room for reassurance that non-nativeness displayed and performed in every sphere of our life is intertwined with our overall non-nativeness as an English speaker.

For instance, we used to believe that the quality of English would determine our overall evaluations from others, such as professors and other scholars. This, to some extent, is still true as long as we challenge ourselves in the English-oriented academic world. Yet, there are occasions where English can be a secondary priority. As a graduate student and a novice scholar, fluency of English does not necessarily interfere with us constructing critical arguments and discussions. Effective communicative performance (i.e., delivery and or-
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ganization of the idea) often compensates for a lack of linguistic performance (i.e., English per se). We came to realize that our non-nativeness did not stand out in those occasions as much as it did in performing our roles as ITAs.

The hardships of doing ITAs derive from the fact that such an authoritative social role intensifies the expectations for being perfect and authentic, or in other words, “being less non-native.” Moreover, experiencing emotional burdens of non-nativeness from teaching affects our performance significantly as a graduate student which is supposed to take precedence over teaching. A dilemma for prioritization grows bigger, however, when we as ITAs are told “Research first, teaching second.” In reality, we suffer from teaching the most, and consequently, from not being able to conduct our scholarly performance well because of teaching. Thus, unless non-nativeness is embraced with the idea that it is multilayered and relational, ITAs suffer from the “lose-lose” situation because of their teaching duties. This is not the best situation for the department which the ITAs belong to either, because the teaching assistant opportunity is meant to support graduate students’ scholarly achievements for their degree pursuit, rather than discouraging them from growing as a scholar and a human being.

What our co-constructed narrative suggests in this regard is that there still remains room for improving the basic communication ITA situation for all groups involved in this issue. Struggles of ITAs with their non-nativeness do not only occur inside the classroom, in front of students, but non-nativeness is also negotiated through ITAs’ personal socialization with other indi-
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individuals in a graduate program who may or may not be a native speaker of English. Coping with non-nativeness in ITAs’ personal lives will, in turn, help them rethink about their non-nativeness displayed in the teaching, classroom situation. Their “graduate student life” where ITAs originally believed to be the place of agony and hardships can turn out to become an emancipation for them to feel less pressured to test out and train their language performance through casual conversations with peers. Interactions with faculty members also work as ventilation since ITAs need not to worry about maintaining an authoritative persona.

As illustrated here, non-nativeness is displayed in different degrees and forms depending on the situations ITAs interact with others. Knowing there are physical and relational spaces in which ITAs can return to confirm a sense of belonging outside their “teaching” world would significantly help them feel reassured about their positionality. The interplay of varied degrees of non-nativeness in turn shapes a new contour of their identity as ITAs, as well as non-native English speakers.

Since narrative truth is not meant for generalization, our discussion is not something universally applied to all ITA situations or their survival in a graduate program. However, we believe that our discussion has revealed the aspects of ITAs that might have not yet been thoroughly recognized by the following three groups of people involved in basic communication education: other ITAs of public speaking or any relevant courses, native English speaking GTAs, and course directors. Our co-constructed narrative showed how every one of individuals in those groups can actually get involved in ITA’s survival as well as identity construction through
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small everyday interactions. The influences of those interactions may or may not be significant. Knowing the power of such communication and acknowledging that non-nativeness is highly relational and multilayered, however, their involvement in ITA’s teaching experience should better the entire situation for basic communication education.

Practical Implications

There are two practical implications for the basic communication education as a whole in relation to the issue of ITAs. First, on the TA side, holding orientations and training sessions and providing manuals (Lowman & Mathie, 1993) for newly assigned TAs are common strategies to prepare them for their teaching endeavor. Along with a mentoring program, introducing more voices of ITAs during such a preparation process will benefit not only new ITAs but also native speaking GTAs in that it will make their teaching environment more communal. Also, we believe that it is important to hold such sharing opportunities, or what can be called the “enacting voice sessions” periodically. ITAs tend to associate any emotionally challenged teaching moments with their non-nativeness, while native speaking GTAs also usually share very similar, if not the same, experience with their students. Sharing stories and enacting voices can help both GTAs and ITAs get involved in each other’s teaching experience and avoid unnecessary ill will towards students. Such sessions will also provide a course director with opportunities to grasp the TA situation for the program as a whole.

Second, on the student side, addressing this non-nativeness issue as a lived learning opportunity in public
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speaking classes, or in any relevant introductory courses will help undergraduate students grow as a responsible member of a new collegiate culture. One of the major and critical components of public speaking education is to encourage and educate students to embrace cultural diversity and develop respect and tolerance for differences. The discussion about non-nativeness and the ITA issue are perfect examples of what students can relate to in the context of their college life. Along with the basic courses of communication, they are enrolled in the introductory level courses of different subjects taught by TAs with different backgrounds. It is understandable that students, especially those fresh out of high school struggle with English spoken by anyone from outside of their comfort zone and make complaints about ITAs. As LaWare (2004) argues, we need to consider the public speaking classroom as a public space where both students and an instructor engage themselves fully to understand the world and to make the marginalized voices heard and embraced. It is also important to acknowledge that public speaking education is still deeply rooted in the Western tradition, says Powell (1996), where “our courses often teach students that there is but one correct way to communicate” (p. 197).

The incorporation of the discussions about non-nativeness and ITAs into public speaking invites students to think critically about cultural diversity they come across in their everyday context.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our co-constructed narrative detailed the epiphany of our companionship as ITAs and its effects on our en-
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gagement with our own non-nativeness. We also suggested two practical proposals to better the learning community for the all people involved. We believe that our experience is highly unique in discussing the issue about non-nativeness of ITAs in the basic communication education context, specifically in that of public speaking. However, we see two limitations that need to be carefully considered in order to further develop good understandings of the issue at hand: One is the diversity of ITAs, and the other is the teaching context of ITAs or narrators themselves.

First, we acknowledge the fact that backgrounds of ITAs vary highly from student to student. As Bailey (1984) noted in her discussion about the foreign TA problem, the definitions of “foreign” or “international” students in the American graduate programs are complicated and even unclear. For instance, some international students, such as those from Canada attending an American university may not necessarily consider themselves non-native speakers of English. It is very likely that the language barriers may not be as much of an issue for such international students as it is for Asian-born ITAs. Thus, the degree of confusion among undergraduate students may depend on how “foreign” English sounds to the students, regardless of the actual background of the speaker. Also, since international graduate students are pursuing their degree abroad, their living condition varies greatly. It is widely observed that some of them live with their family where one of, or both of spouses engage in their degree pursuit. Such students may face additional hardships of balancing their personal and scholarly lives. Even among Asian students, those of particular nationalities such as
Chinese and Indian tend to have large communities inside and outside of their school life, in which they can receive various kinds of support for their life. We also acknowledge that there are groups of ITAs, especially in science-fields, whose title is not necessarily “student” but “researcher.” Thus, the discussion presented here needs to be understood that it is a story of two ITAs pursuing a doctoral degree in communication, who were born and raised in Japan and spoke English as a completely second, learned language.

Second, our experiences as ITAs of public speaking can be considered very similar because of its rarity in the American graduate program context and we succeeded in developing and maintaining our companionship despite the geographic separation. Yet, the future research will benefit more if two ITAs attending the same graduate program who teach public speaking courses work on narrative co-construction about non-nativeness. This will provide more detailed, even quite subtle aspects of ITAs, other than age or gender as discussed in our co-constructed narrative that may significantly affect their survival process and identity construction. Also, our programs did share differences such as a mentoring program and the number of semesters by which we were assigned as a stand-alone instructor. As illustrated in our co-constructed narrative, Sayaka benefitted from having a mentor program at her department and a quasi-mentorship with Masaharu whose nationality indeed affected how she handled her situation afterwards. Listening to voices of ITAs from the same department working on the same course may provide more insights into their companionship and ideas about non-nativeness.
This study examined the critical connection between language and identity and addressed the issue of non-nativeness of ITAs. The primary goal of our discussion is to enact our voices as ITAs of public speaking so that all groups of people involved in basic communication education would benefit. For this, we proposed two ideas. One is to hold “enacting voice sessions” for TAs and a course director to have a place to share their voices. The other one is to introduce the discussion about non-nativeness of ITAs into the public speaking classroom context. The issue of non-nativeness needs to be embraced by all the people involved, rather than trying to “solve” it as a problem. It is our hope that our voices help the effective learning community grow further where students and instructors embrace diversity of individuals and move toward the same goal, communication education.

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Effect of Goal-setting and Self-generated Feedback on Student Speechmaking

Luke LeFebvre

For nearly half a century, video has been utilized in the introductory course as an instructional technological tool to aid students in skill development. Video documentation easily allows for a preserved and accurate rendering of a performance for the recipient. The feedback recipient is essential to any communicative message, in that she or he selects, interprets, and responds to the feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Fedor, 1991; Herold & Fedor, 1998; Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Taylor, Fisher, & Ilgen, 1984). Video feedback is intended to improve student-speaking performance for subsequent speaking occasions. However, the integration of video technologies for the purpose of performance improvement in public speaking appears to have been premature or, at least, not clearly understood in its application. A recent meta-analytic review (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), outside the discipline of communication, of the extensive literature on feedback demonstrates inconsistent associations with improved performance. Within the communication education literature, feedback is commonly referenced as an essential component of the communication process, but receives little attention and remains underdeveloped (Quigly & Nyquist, 1992; Smith & King, 2004). Communication goals also remain relatively unexplored in the communication education literature, especially as to
how goals and feedback interrelate and affect performance improvement. Realization of how feedback and goals interact could provide valuable insight into how video feedback is used in the introductory course.

Despite the lack of attention, video feedback has become a permanent feature among instructional strategies of the introductory course (Bourhis & Allen, 1998). Verbal and nonverbal elements of the lived experience are easily captured on video. While the purpose of video feedback is clear to the instructor, the value of student-speakers’ use of video technology as a feedback mechanism is unclear (Book, 1985; Ogilvie & Haslett, 1985). Research does not indicate how students process video feedback, how student goals impact the interpretation of video feedback, or how video feedback impacts subsequent public speaking performances. Instructors assume video feedback will improve speaking performance; unfortunately, a lack of research means instructors’ assumptions may be unfounded. Additionally, the investment made in these costly video technologies may be economically unwise for communication departments. This study has applicability for instructors, basic course directors, and administrators in terms of developing introductory course programs that make purposeful and effective use of video feedback.

The current study uses an analysis of variance to examine the grade improvement between students in differing treatment conditions using goal setting and video feedback. The purpose of this research is to investigate how feedback and goals interact to play a critical role in speaking skill development for students enrolled in the introductory course.
VIDEO AND THE INTRODUCTORY COURSE

The first technology, audio recordings, preceded the use of video technology in the introductory course. Nystrom and Leaf (1939), in their foundational study, found that merely listening to one’s audio recording effected no improvement in subsequent speaking performance. As technology advanced, the accessibility to technology feedback systems followed suit. Videotaping was the next logical extension of audiotape recordings for student self-assessment. Use of video in the introductory course became prominent in the 1970s and continued into the 1980s. Research examined video’s impact on student perception and skill development (Bradley, 1970; Dieker, Crane, & Brown, 1971; Miles, 1981; Mulac, 1974) and effective uses of video records of student speeches (Hirshfeld, 1968; McCroskey & Lashbrook, 1970; Porter & King, 1972). Eventually, Bourhis and Allen (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of these and other related studies concluding “the use of videotaped feedback results in greater skill acquisition” (p. 259). Unfortunately, this video research has primarily focused on the technological impact toward students, including student affect for technology, use of multiple mediums of technology to provide feedback, and technology’s impact on speech anxiety. During the same year as the Bourhis and Allen (1998) meta-analysis, Hinton and Kramer (1998) conducted research examining the impact of self-directed videotape feedback on student’s self-reported levels of communication competence and apprehension. The study concluded that students’ self-directed viewing of videotapes had a small, significant impact on students’ self-perceptions of their speaking
performances. Further, students responded favorably toward the use of video feedback. Over 75% of students indicated that they believed video helped them see potential areas for improvement in their speaking presentations. The focus of these studies on technology is important but overlooks how students interpret feedback video to impact task performance.

Currently, video-recordings of student speeches continue to play a critical role in the introductory course for evaluation purposes and/or student self-observation (Morreale et al., 2006). Student self-observation allows for an observer perspective for the student and is assumed to provide a “valuable perspective from which to recognize their individual skills and to work on skill development” (Quigley & Nyquist, 1992, p. 326). Therefore, instructors of the introductory course report they “record one to three of their graded assignments for student playback” (Morreale et al., 2006, p. 432). This form of delayed unstructured video feedback has not resulted in student performance improvement on subsequent speaking occasions (see Hung & Rosenthal, 1981; Quigley & Nyquist, 1992; Rothstein & Arnold, 1976; Waggoner & Scheid, 1989). Perhaps, even more importantly, research has not extensively examined how students interpret video feedback of their speaking performance and if the feedback self-generated by an individual is accurate and helpful for improved future speech presentations. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1A: Students who use any form of video to produce self-generated feedback or implement a goal setting exercise or a combination of these activities will demonstrate greater grade improve-
ment on their second speech than those students who use unstructured video replay.

**FEEDBACK**

Feedback is a process consisting of deliberate communicative comments containing both descriptive and evaluative information intended to inform the recipient regarding established performance criteria (Behnke & King, 1984; Book, 1985; Booth-Butterfield, 1989; Clement & Frandsen, 1976; Mory, 2003; Smith & King, 2004). In a broader sense, feedback allows for a comparison of actual performance with some set standard of performance (Johnson & Johnson, 1993). The discrepancies between student performance and the set-standard are called *feedback standard gaps* (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Feedback standard gaps form a divergence of perception between what occurred in reality and what the speaker believes occurred during the speaking performance. Simply, people are not good at reporting about their own communication behavior (Bernard, Killworth, & Sailer, 1979; Sypher & Sypher, 1984). Perceptual convergence of communicative behavior in a public speaking context is important for both student understanding and skill development. In essence, for a student to become a self-regulated learner it is essential he or she become aware of his or her behavior. Video feedback has the potential to function as a tool to minimize and/or eliminate discrepancies between perceived and actual behavior.
Video Feedback

Video documentation. Video of student speaking performance in the classroom is raw footage. These raw footage documents are “video records of practice” (see LeFevre, 2004). Video records of practice consist of authentic footage of student-speakers in actual classroom settings performing their speaking presentations. It is authentic from the perspective that the presentation is filmed as it naturally occurs (LeFevre, 2004). Authentic perspectives captured by camera and converted to video provide the student an opportunity to view oneself in action, thus making one’s own practice accessible to oneself (Rosebery & Warren, 1998).

“Video” in this study refers to digital footage allowing for rapid access, which can be viewed by computer (see Marx, Blumenfeld, & Krajcik, 1988; van den Berg, 2001). Digital video and videotapes provide virtually the same content (Dupagne, Stacks, & Giroux, 2007); however, digital video can be controlled from a personal computer and displayed on a computer monitor from nearly any location and allows for multiple viewings from any point of the recording by simply clicking on the desired temporal section of the timeframe reference. Furthermore, the video can be stored and retrieved, played and replayed, and is not susceptible to time-lapse (Lemke, 2007). This type of video documentation, as an instructional technological tool, has remained relatively unexplored in the communication discipline to date.

The potential of video feedback. Video has the potential to capture real time data, both visual and aural, which is thick, rich, and detailed in description and representation (Eckart & Gibson, 1993; Farber & Nira, 1990; Tochon, 2007; Wetzel, Radtke, & Stern,
1994). Both aural and visual senses are simultaneously stimulated by video. Video functions as a pictorial witness—similar to that of a mirror (Tochon, 2007). Nonverbal communication captured by the camera’s lens is made available for viewing and analysis. This combination of sensory information allows video to be more effective than either verbal or written feedback.

Video feedback can prompt mental processes for evaluating information, comparing actions, and formatting or rebuilding of actions for the future (Brandl, 1995). Therefore, video feedback is helpful for student identification of incongruities in perceived self-efficacy (Scherer, Chang, Meredith, & Battistella, 2003). Perceived self-efficacy is the discrepancy between the behavior a student thinks he or she is performing and the behavior that he or she actually performs (i.e., feedback standard gaps) (Gage & Polatajko, 1994). Furthermore, feedback provided by video is characteristic and attribute neutral, and relatively factual and incontrovertible (Kopelman, 1986), so source credibility is not an issue. Video concurrently portrays the nuances and the complexities of a speechmaking presentation.

**Self-observation**

Self-observation refers to how an individual deliberately focuses his or her attention to a specific aspect(s) of behavior (Mace, Belfiore, & Shea, 1989). Bandura (1986) attests that self-observation serves an important self-regulatory function by providing information to people about what they do and how they are doing it, which is then used for goal-setting and evaluative progress. Self-observation is most effective when addressing specific situations where the communicative behav-
ior occurs (Schunk, 1991). The self-observed information has the potential to function as an agent for adaptation of incongruities or reinforcement of congruent behaviors. The process of self-observation is aided, as Mace, Belfiore, and Shea (1989) maintain, by the use of video because without video one’s recollections of the performance may not accurately reflect what actually occurred. Therefore, video provides a platform for self-observation that must be interpreted through self-assessment and self-judgment based on the standards of performance to generate feedback by the observer.

**Self-generated Feedback**

Once the presentation has been captured on video the student views the presentation individually outside the classroom. This form of individual speaking performance assessment is called *self-generated feedback*. Self-generated feedback is created when individuals view video of their own communication event(s) and are “able to judge their own performance and therefore serve as their own source of feedback” (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979, p. 351). Feedback needs direction for effect, and goals (grades) provide that direction.

**GOALS**

A *goal* is an objective, aim, purpose, and intention (Locke & Latham, 1990) that an individual is trying to accomplish (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Goals direct human behavior toward desired objectives (Locke et al., 1981), to attain a desired outcome. An outcome is “something that follows as a result or consequence of an activity” (Bandura, 1989, p. 25). An out-
come differs from performance. A performance is the execution of an action toward a desired goal outcome. In an academic setting, letter grades of A, B, C, D, and F are considered performance level criteria, which create benchmarks for students to achieve (Bandura, 1989). Students who strive to achieve an A on a particular exercise have set a goal expectation or what has been termed a grade goal (Locke & Bryan, 1968; Wood & Locke, 1987). Grade goals serve as benchmarks for a student’s standard of personal success for a given assignment or the overall course. Due to the nature of the introductory course, where students learn the principles and acquire skills incrementally, grade goals aid students in monitoring and adapting speaking behaviors to achieve academic objectives in the course. By setting grade goals students learn how to respond to goal achievement and failure (see Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeider, 2000; Schutz & Davis, 2000), which allows for self-judgment and adjustment of goal setting. The following two hypotheses are propositioned:

Hypothesis 1B: Students who use video to produce self-generated feedback or use any combination of these activities, to produce self-generated feedback and implement a goal setting exercise, will demonstrate greater grade improvement on their second speech than those students who use only goal setting strategies.

Hypothesis 1C: Students who use any combination of these activities to produce self-generated feedback and implement a goal setting exercise, will demonstrate greater grade improvement on their
second speech than those students who use only video to produce self-generated feedback.

Methods for Goal Setting

Goal setting is grossly understudied within the discipline of communication. However, research (see Locke & Latham, 1990) examining the manner of setting a goal, outside the discipline of communication, has identified four distinct methods: (1) assigned, (2) participative, (3) self-set, and (4) selected self-set. Someone other than the performer determines assigned goals. In the classroom, assigned goals are dictated by the instructor to the student. Participative goals allow an individual to interact in the goal setting process. For instance, the instructor and students enrolled in an introductory course could interact with each other to decide the appropriate length for a speech. Instructor and students decide collaboratively how long the speech should be and what the consequences will be for falling short or going too long. With participative goal setting, an individual’s commitment is said to increase due to involvement in the goal setting process. Studies (i.e., Dossett, Latham, & Mitchell, 1979; Latham & Marshall, 1982; Latham & Mitchell, 1976; Latham, Mitchell, & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Saari, 1979; Latham, Steele, & Saari, 1982; Latham & Yukl, 1976) have found no significant difference in outcomes when comparing assigned and participative goal setting.

The individual performing the task creates self-set goals. This form of goal setting allows the student to determine how long the speech should be and what he or she will do if it is too short or long on the time limits. The instructor would then evaluate each student differ-
ently, depending upon the self-set goals set by each student. These self-set goals function as standards toward which efforts will be aimed (Mone & Baker, 1992). Erez and Kanfer (1983) maintain goal commitment is positively affected when an individual is allowed a choice in goal setting; however, a number of other studies (i.e., Barling, 1980; Dickerson & Creedon, 1981; Latham & Marshall, 1982; Ward & Carnes, 2002) have not found self-set goals to be consistent in relation to increasing performance from other methods such as assigned or participative.

The final method identified for goal setting is selected self-set goals. This method of goal setting was suggested by Mone and Baker (1992); however, a few studies (i.e., Klein, 1991; Locke & Bryan, 1968) utilized selected self-set goals but did not identify the process explicitly as selected self-set goal setting. The process of selected self-set goals involves asking participants to identify their desired goal outcome from a number of desired levels of performance standards. For example, in an academic setting students’ are asked to determine their grade goals for an assignment or the course. The levels would be A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc. In essence, the selected self-set goal is a multi-item measure regarding the standard of performance. Therefore, the student need only select the grade goal based on the specificity and difficulty described in the evaluation and/or rubric.

**Goal Striving and Monitoring**

As stated above, a goal identifies an individual’s destination, intention, or objective. How the goal is established impacts the intention of the individual and how the individual self-regulates behavior. When students
attain a goal, they experience a sense of empowerment (Schunk, 1989). Formation of goals can be either (1) anticipatory or (2) self-reactive (Bandura, 1986). Anticipatory goals are determined prior to the performance of an activity, when one is striving to accomplish an outcome. Self-reactive goals are developed through self-evaluation following the performance, when one is monitoring the accomplishment of an outcome.

*Anticipatory* goals regulate behavior through foresight (Bandura, 1986). Goals driven by anticipatory intentions require an individual to determine prospective goals and plans for attaining those goals. Bandura (1986) attests that “one can gain access indirectly to people’s [anticipatory goals] by having them report beforehand what they intend to do at specified times” (p. 468).

*Self-reactive* goals are formed by a comparative process, which allows for evaluation of a performance against a standard. This form of goal setting relies on self-evaluative reactions to one’s own behavior (Bandura, 1986). How satisfied or dissatisfied an individual is following comparison to the standard will influence goal adjustment and/or motivation. Feedback is essential for self-reactive goal setting.

**Research Question 1:** Does any difference in grade improvement exist between students using self-reactive goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback and students using anticipatory goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback?
FEEDBACK AND GOAL THEORIES

People use feedback to evaluate their performance or set goals prior to performance for comparison to their goals (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Locke & Latham, 1990). Either feedback precedes the goal or the goal precedes the feedback. In any case the interaction of feedback and goals regulate performance. As goal theory posits, goals mediate the relationship between feedback and performance, and feedback moderates the goal-performance relationship (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goals people have and the feedback they receive influence the task performance; goals and feedback work in tandem, but how each functions with each other differs theoretically.

Feedback Intervention Theory

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) proposed a preliminary theoretical model for identifying conditions under which feedback is most effective, Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT). Following their meta-analysis of nearly 300 feedback intervention studies, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) defined feedback interventions as “actions taken by an external change agent to provide information regarding some aspect of one’s task performance” (p. 255). In the case of classroom situations, the instructor might act as the change agent while the student would be the one whose task performance is being evaluated. Their research and this definition excluded self-generated forms of feedback; however, the central assumption and fundamental assertions of FIT still function appropriately when applied to self-generated feedback.

The central assumption of FIT is that “interventions change the locus of attention among three levels of con-
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trol: task learning, task motivation, and meta-task processes” (Smith & King, 2004, p. 205). This assumption is supported by five fundamental assertions: (1) goals are benchmarks that behavior is measured against after feedback is received; (2) goals are ranked in order of importance; (3) attention directs behavior adaptation toward certain goals to eliminate feedback standard gaps; (4) attention is targeted for behavior modification toward moderate level goals; and (5) behavior is affected when feedback interventions result in change of goal focus (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Two major claims resulted from Kluger and DeNisi’s (1996) feedback research. First, feedback directing attention to the task level (i.e., learning) augments task performance, while feedback directing attention to meta-task processes (e.g., praise and blame) attenuate task performance (King & Behnke, 1999; Smith & King, 2004). Second, feedback intervention effectiveness is moderated by the nature of the learning task (e.g., degree of difficulty—simple or complex). This second conclusion has not received much attention in the research literature, but recent findings support its position (viz., King, Young, & Behnke, 2000). Individuals assessing their own performance may observe unique characteristics of their behavior otherwise unknown to them depending on intent and focus. The type and form of feedback becomes highly significant to subsequent task-learning processes. Overall, FIT's re-examination of feedback processes postulates that certain forms of feedback may be more effective for improved learning.
Goal Setting Theory

The concepts of feedback and goals do not differ in Locke and Latham’s (1990) Goal Setting Theory (GST); however, goals are the primary mechanism through which feedback is interpreted because goals regulate human action (Locke et al., 1981). Locke (1968) maintains there is no one-to-one relationship between goals and action because people make mistakes or do not possess the capabilities to attain a standard. Goals mobilize the behaviors to complete a task.

The central assumption of GST is that people are motivated to achieve their goals. Therefore, goals affect performance in three ways: (1) goals direct attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities; (2) goals produce increased effort; and (3) goals increase persistence (Locke & Latham, 1990). In GST, goals are destinations and feedback allows people to gauge their proximity to the desired outcome.

Technologies that provide feedback in unique and immediate forms, such as video, can sometimes be so attractive they are incorporated into instructional practices without fully understanding how they should be applied and what their intended impact is on students. To date no clear relationship has been established between video feedback and improved speaking performance or how goals mediate the relationship between video feedback and speaking performance. Yet, the role of video feedback has been utilized and continues to be almost universally incorporated into the introductory course.
METHODS

Sample and Participant Selection

Participants in this study were 140 undergraduate students enrolled across ten sections of the introductory course at a large metropolitan university. Each section was conveniently sampled. Instructors were asked to have their course section(s) voluntarily participate in the study. Students in those sections were asked to volunteer to participate in the study and placed into one of the five conditions. Two of the ten experimental class sections served as the control group (n = 28) and the other eight sections were distributed equally per each experimental condition (n = 28) (i.e., two class sections per each treatment condition). Participants across all sections totaled \( N = 140 \) consisting of males \( N = 61 \) and females \( N = 79 \) (44% male, 56% female), which is consistent with the demographics of the university. The average age of participants was 20.5 years, with the range from 18 to 47. The ethnic breakdown of participants consisted of 8% Arabic, 5% Asian Pacific Islander, 21% Black, 4% Hispanic, 4% Multi-Racial, and 59% White, Non-Hispanic.

Conditions, Design, and Procedures

This study consisted of five conditions: (1) unstructured video replay, (2) goal-setting, (3) self-generated feedback from video self-observation, (4) self-reactive goal setting with self-generated feedback from video self-observation, and (5) anticipatory goal setting with self-generated feedback from video self-observation. See Figure 1 for a temporal depiction of each of the five conditions. All students presented an informative speech,
then two weeks later a persuasive speech. Each condition is described below.

**Condition 1: Unstructured video replay.** Students were provided the video of their informative speech and allowed to watch the video of their speech. No goals and/or self-assessment exercises accompanied the video self-observation.

**Condition 2: Goal setting.** Students in this condition completed a goal setting exercise prior to the informative and persuasive speeches (i.e., anticipatory goals). This form was made available to students two weeks prior to the informative speech and was completed and submitted to the instructor a week prior to the speaking event. Instructions for the goal setting exercise were as follows: (1) identify the course letter grade you would like to achieve at the conclusion of the
course; (2) identify the points totals you intend to earn for each section of the rubric of assessment; and (3) total the score for your overall grade score for the first (informative) speech.

Students also completed a goal-setting exercise prior to the persuasive speech. Instructions for the second goal setting exercise were as follows: (1) reiterate the course letter grade you would like to achieve at the conclusion of the course (some students identified a different overall course letter grade); (2) compute the difference between the predicted score on the first speech (informative) and what was achieved; (3) identify the point totals he/she intends to earn for each section of the rubric of assessment for the second speech (persuasive); (4) identify what aspects of your speaking performance may have been overestimated (students were not asked to identify underestimated goals) in your initial goal setting exercise and discuss why and how you plan to make adjustments to meet the desired goal for this speech; and (5) total the score for your overall grade score for the first (informative) speech.

**Condition 3: Self-generated feedback.** Students in this condition completed a self-assessment form after watching the video of their speech. Following the informative speechmaking presentation the video recording of the student’s speech was immediately made available to the student in digital form. Instructions for the self-assessment document were placed on the course’s course management system. The self-assessment exercise was part of the grade for the course.

The self-assessment form consists of three questions: What was the best thing(s) you saw yourself do during your presentation? What did you see that you would like
to change or do differently? How do you plan to make improvements for your next presentation? The first question asks students to generate feedback for two specific aspects of their performance—delivery and structural development. The second question asks students to “Analyze your presentation considering all aspects (i.e., delivery, organization, room arrangement, dynamism, etc.). Utilizing the criteria from the evaluation form and described in the rubric, what do you think should be changed for your next speech?” These first questions asked students to generate a minimum of five to seven sentences for each area. The final question asks students to “Describe how you plan to strategically adjust your method(s) of speechmaking to improve your presentation to be more effective and/or successful.”

Students submitted self-generated feedback forms to the instructor prior to receiving the instructor’s evaluations and before performing their second speech.

**Condition 4: Self-reactive goals—Feedback intervention.** Students in this condition used only the second goal setting exercise and the video for self-assessment purposes to self-generate feedback. This condition is designed to match the conditions described by Kluger and DeNisi (1996).

**Condition 5: Anticipatory goals—Goal setting and self-generated feedback.** Students in this condition used both the goal setting exercises and the video for self-assessment purposes to self-generate feedback.

**Coding Procedures for Evaluation of Student Speech Performances**

**Development of coding scheme and description.** The coding scheme used by the coders consisted of two
documents: (1) rubric of assessment and (2) speech evaluation form. Both documents were made available to all students across each course section for the course via Blackboard.

**Coder training sessions.** Two coders (an undergraduate and graduate student) were trained for coding tasks. Neither coder had knowledge of the purpose of the study. First, each coder was provided with a copy of the same assessment rubric and evaluation forms provided to the students in the study. Next, coders practiced using the coding scheme on student speeches outside the sample in this study. Cohen’s *kappa* test was used to evaluate the agreement between coders on the training coding scheme. Finally, coders discussed their codes and resolved differences before coding the sample in this study. Coder assessment scores were converted from their numerical form to a letter grade. Letter grades were determined as follows: A = 4.00, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.00, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.00, C- = 1.67, D+ = 1.33, D = 1.00, D- = 0.67, and F = 0.00.

**Interrater reliability.** Interrater reliability was assessed using *kappa* to test reliability of nominal data based on qualitative judgments. The overall reliability for coding between coders produced a *kappa* coefficient of 0.84. This reliability on the level of feedback, according to Landis and Koch (1977), can be considered almost perfect.

**Coding Procedures for Grade Achievement on Student Speeches**

Change in grade or grade improvement was calculated by subtracting the informative (first) speech grade point average from the persuasive (second) speech grade
point average. Letter grades were determined as follows: A = 4.00, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.00, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.00, C- = 1.67, D+ = 1.33, D = 1.00, D- = 0.67, and F = 0.00.

**Data Analysis**

Analyses evaluated the effect of unstructured video replay, goal setting, video use to self-generate feedback, self-reactive goal setting and video to self-generate feedback, and anticipatory goal setting and video to self-generate feedback on student speechmaking. Specifically, improvement in grade point average, between conditions was compared. The first one-way ANOVA tested the grade improvement for each condition against the control group (i.e., unstructured video replay), then planned comparisons between the other conditions were tested. The purpose of comparing these conditions to each other was to determine which conditions demonstrated greater improved speaking performance.

**Results**

From the initial screening of the data it was concluded that no significant differences existed between conditions in the experimental and control groups. Therefore, an ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of experimental groups compared to the dependent variable of grade improvement. Findings are described below.
HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

There was a significant effect for students who use video to produce self-generated feedback or implement a goal setting exercise or a combination of these activities on grade improvement, F(4,135) = 4.25, p < .01, \( \omega = .32 \). The following conditions demonstrated significant grade improvement.

**Hypothesis 1A**

Planned contrasts revealed that students who use video to produce self-generated feedback or implement a goal setting exercise or a combination of these activities significantly demonstrated greater grade improvement on their second speech than those students who used unstructured video replay, t(135) = 1.76, p < .05 (one-tailed), r = .15.

**Hypothesis 1B**

Planned contrasts revealed that students who use video to produce self-generated feedback or use a combination of video and goal setting exercises demonstrated significantly greater grade improvement on their second speech than those students who used only goal setting strategies, t(135) = 2.55, p < .01 (one-tailed), r = .21.

**Hypothesis 1C**

Planned contrasts revealed that students who use video to produce self-generated feedback and implement a goal setting exercise did not demonstrate significantly greater grade improvement on their second speech than those students who used only video to produce self-gen-
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erated feedback, \( t(135) = -1.59, p > .05 \) (one-tailed), \( r = .22 \).

Research Question 1

Planned contrasts revealed that students who use anticipatory goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback demonstrated significantly greater grade improvement on their second speech than those students who used self-reactive goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback, \( t(135) = 2.52, p < .05 \) (two-tailed), \( r = .22 \).

Discussion

Findings

This investigation confirmed a significant causal relationship between students using a combination of video to produce self-generated feedback and anticipatory goal setting exercises and grade improvement. Unstructured video replay, only goal setting strategies, and self-reactive goal setting with video to produce self-generated feedback were found to significantly differ when comparing student grade improvement to students who used video to produce self-generated feedback or the combination of anticipatory goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback. These findings suggest student grade improvement is related to how students use video to self-generate feedback and how students use a combination of anticipatory goal setting strategies and self-generated feedback, rather than if students use unstructured video replay or only goal setting strategies.
Further exploration of the data suggests that students who use both anticipatory goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback average a .89 increase in grade point average—nearly three grade levels of improvement (e.g., if a student scored a B- on her first speech she could increase her grade to B+/A- if she used anticipatory goal setting and video to self-generate feedback); whereas, students who use self-reactive goal setting and video to produce self-generated feedback average only .14 increase in grade point average, which would essentially be the same letter grade. As for students who use only video to produce self-generated feed-

![Figure 2. Change in Grade Point Average across Experimental and Control Conditions.](image-url)
back the average is slightly higher, .37 (a move of one letter grade, D- to D). See Figure 2.

**Implication of Findings**

These findings indicate when students combine anticipatory goal setting with self-generated feedback from video, speaking performance dramatically improves for the subsequent speech, which translates into students receiving higher grades. Students who set goals prior to speaking and viewing their video performance appear to visualize the objectives for what they would like to accomplish during the speaking occasion without the constraints of knowing their actual communication limitations. Following video feedback students can compare the actual performance to what occurred (i.e., feedback standard gaps) and determine what courses of action need to be taken to minimize or eliminate these discrepancies. By asking students to use anticipatory goals and view video to self-generate feedback students are allotted the opportunity to self-discover areas of communication in which they are not yet competent and seek assistance from their instructors about why and how these aspects of their communication can be improved. Students adjusting their communication strategies to be more competent communicators are learning a skill that will transcend the introductory course.

Theoretically it seems goals accentuate the feedback provided by video and should be outlined prior to a speaking occasion by the student-speaker. Goal Setting Theory (GST) demonstrated a significant or, at least, meaningful difference when compared to each of the other conditions in the study. Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) did not demonstrate the effectiveness of
GST. It seems knowing the objective prior to performing the task is critical for self-assessment and adaptation of goals when attempting the next speechmaking event. When standards of achievement are the primary focus, grade improvement is significantly greater. Goals are the motivating factor for student achievement when viewing video feedback. Moreover, goals directed attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities and goals produce increased effort and persistence for introductory public speaking students, which was demonstrated in skill development by increased grade performance.

**Pedagogical Implications**

This study provides practical implications regarding instructional use of video for introductory courses. Findings suggest that the interdependence of goals and feedback is central to speaking performance improvement. Current structures of the introductory course that support only unstructured video replay or self-generated feedback from video are not providing students with the most efficient means to grade improvement or the enhancement of competent communication behaviors. By emphasizing anticipatory goal setting with self-generated feedback from video students have the ability to assess the associations between what was planned for the performance and what actually happened during the performance. Goals drive behavior and allow students to redirect communication, following video self-observation, to be more effective in the future. The benefit of pursuing this pedagogical learning outcome is that students not only become more competent communicators but they also become more competent evaluators of communication. Rubrics assist students in identifying
communication targets and then following self-observation determine how to exceed the feedback standard gaps or continue to persist with current communication behaviors. Moreover, throughout the process of goal setting, students learn how to identify paths for achievement, recognize shortcomings, and develop avenues for improvement to reach their communication goals. This practice has the potential to empower our students to become self-monitors and self-regulators of their own communication. The development of decoding skills and abilities when communicating is essential to the introductory course, and the development of such skills parallels the encoding processes of transactional communication. A student’s ability to decode a message for accuracy and effectiveness goes to the foundation of the introductory course. The developing of communication goals, encoding our communication messages, being our own receiver through video technology, accurately and critically decoding our own messages, and providing formative and summative feedback that improves communication are the ultimate learning outcomes for the introductory course.

Academic programs and departments dedicate and invest resources to provide video feedback for students enrolled in introductory courses. Such programs and departments should ensure their student populations are effectively using these technologies. Simply providing video feedback of a single speech or unstructured video replay of a single or multiple speeches throughout a course is not sufficient justification for purchase, training, and incorporation of these technologies within the classroom. Without the accompaniment of anticipatory goal setting strategies and video feedback assessed with
the use of rubrics, video is superficial and misleading for students engaged in learning more competent communication behaviors. Also, it would seem that more programs are moving to more efficient methods (i.e., video streaming) for recording student speeches. These forms of video allow for greater accessibility for students, but if ineffective instructional methods are used with the technology the learners, teachers, and employers are not going to benefit. Video must provide a clear learning impact based on its economic investment, which is only possible by combining the technology with other instructional methods for the learner prior to the video feedback and while watching the performance captured on video. Anything short of these teaching practices combined with video feedback should be reconsidered to fully maximize the benefit of video technologies for assisting students to be the most effective communicators and as successful as possible to scholastically achieve in the introductory course.

**Limitations**

One limitation was the sample size ($N = 140$). The sample was appropriate for conducting the study, but limits its generalizability. Also, the study should be conducted in a variety of introductory courses at a range of other higher education institutions.

Another limitation may have resulted from different instructors participating in different conditions of the study. The introductory course was standardized across all sections; however, different instructors use different instructional strategies, vary in levels of immediacy, and/or present the content of the course with more or less clarity for student comprehension. Differing in-
structor styles could affect results found in each condition.

Also, the quality of student work put forth on the self-assessment forms and goal-setting exercises could be a limiting factor in the study. It is likely that some students spent more time and exerted greater effort when completing these tasks than others.

Additionally, all instructors used each of the exercises as part of student grades in each condition; however, some instructors weighted the self-assessment and/or goal setting exercise greater than others. Students may have seen these points as trivial and exerted little to no effort in completing the activities.

Finally, a limitation was access to instructor grades for both the informative and persuasive speech due to the internal review board for human investigation. Coder grades are the only source of student performance assessment used in this study; instructor grades for each condition were not examined as part of this study. If students are told by their instructors that what was exhibited during the speechmaking presentation was appropriate students would have little incentive to improve their performance, which could influence how students attempt future speaking occasions.

**Future Research**

In the future, research should investigate feedback types, noncorrective and corrective, self-generated by students. Examining the self-generated feedback produced following self-observation of video could provide insights into what forms of feedback contribute to student performance improvement. Additionally, it would be of interest to investigate how male and female stu-
students produce feedback types to determine if self-generated feedback types differ based on gender.

Also, future studies should examine students’ selected self-set grade goals for a speaking occasion. Research, beyond the discipline of communication, has found specific and difficult goals can lead to higher productivity than “do your best,” easy, or no goals. Pursuing this line of research could provide valuable insight into the relationship between student speech outcomes and students selection of difficult goals for a speaking occasion. Another avenue of research would be to examine if video assists students to more accurately assess their speaking performance and if their assessments correlate with their instructor’s assessment. Following the trends of student self-grading and instructor grading throughout the semester for each speech to determine if student-teacher perceptions converge or diverge would provide important information about the student self-assessment accuracy and if accurate self-observation improves throughout the semester.

Instructors play a critical role in the student learning experience. Future research should examine how teacher immediacy and affinity may associate with or influence how students select self-set goals and self-assess their video. Findings may indicate that teachers who exhibit higher forms of immediate behavior have students who produce higher quality goals and more accurate self-assessments of speaking performance.

Finally, future research should attempt to replicate the conditions of this study in a single class section, which would aid in controlling instructor variability across different course sections. Students could be ran-
domly placed into differing conditions, yet experience the same instructor and lessons of the course.

**CONCLUSION**

Video has the potential to be a powerful instructional technological tool for students’ speechmaking skill development in the introductory course when used with anticipatory goal setting and self-assessment strategies. Instructors of the introductory course should ensure their students view video feedback purposefully by providing methods of instruction that assist students to identify their goals prior to receiving video feedback and assess their performance to meet those goals. During self-assessment students should be encouraged to review their grade goals as related to the dimensions communicated on the rubric to assist in accurate identification of strengths and limitations demonstrated in the presentation. Selection of the methods that accompany video technology is critical for maximizing student learning when incorporating video feedback into the introductory course.

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<td>Whitfield, Toni S.</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Willer, Lynda R.</td>
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<td>Willmington, S. Clay</td>
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<td>Wolfsen, Amy Rochelle</td>
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<td>Wood, Jennifer</td>
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<td>Wood, Julia T.</td>
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<td>Worley, Deborah A.</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>Yook, Eunkyong Lee (Esther)</td>
<td>1990, 1997</td>
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Call for Manuscripts

Submissions are invited to be considered for publication in the *Basic Communication Course Annual*. The *Annual* publishes the best scholarship available on topics related to the basic course and is distributed nationally to scholars and educators interested in the basic communication course. Each article is also indexed in its entirety in the ERIC database.

Manuscripts published in the *Annual* are not restricted to any particular methodology or approach. They must, however, address issues that are significant to the basic course (defined broadly). Articles in the *Annual* may focus on the basic course in traditional or 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.

**NEW TO THE 2014 EDITION:** In addition to traditional pieces on basic course research and pedagogy, beginning in 2014 there will be a special “Basic Course Forum” consisting of selected articles addressing a specific question. The “Basic Course Forum” is designed to invite scholars and basic course practitioners to propose and debate specific key questions of concern related to the basic course. The 2014 focus will be:

“What are the central student learning outcomes for the basic course, regardless of format?”
Submissions for the “Basic Course Forum” must indicate their consideration for this area of the journal, and should be between 5-7 pages typed, double-spaced, and in 12 point standard font. Longer submissions may be considered, but the goal is to make a succinct argument in response to the question. Submissions will undergo blind peer review.

NEW TO THE 2014 EDITION: A second new aspect of the Basic Communication Course Annual in the 2014 edition will be a “Research Notes” listing to help scholars network regarding research projects on the basic course. To have a Research Note included in the Annual, submit an abstract of the project you are either working on or wish to begin. The Notes can be no longer than 150 words, and must include the following:

*Names and institutions of primary researchers
*Goals or research questions for the project
*How others can contribute to the work

Manuscripts submitted to the Annual must conform to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (2009). Submitted manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and in 12 point standard font. They should not exceed 30 pages, exclusive of tables and references, nor be under consideration by any other publishing outlet at the time of submission. By submitting to the Annual, authors maintain that they will not submit their manuscript to another outlet without first withdrawing it from consideration for the Annual. Each submission must be accompanied by an abstract of less than 200 words and a 50-75-word author identification paragraph on each author. A separate title page should include (1) the title and identifica-
tion of the author(s), (2) the address, telephone number, and email address of the contact person, and (3) data pertinent to the manuscript's history. All references to the author(s) and institutional affiliation should be removed from the text of the manuscript. After removing all identifiers in the properties of the document, authors should submit an electronic copy of the manuscript in (Microsoft Word) to BCCAeditor@udayton.edu.

Joseph M. Valenzano III, Editor
Basic Communication Course Annual, 26
Department of Communication
University of Dayton
Dayton, OH 45458-1410

If you have any questions about the Annual or your submission, contact the Editor by telephone at 937-229-2376 or by email at BCCAeditor@udayton.edu.

All complete submissions must be received by August 15, 2013 to receive full consideration for volume 26 of the Basic Communication Course Annual.