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Despite its nom de guerre, there is nothing “basic” about the basic communication course in colleges and universities. It has served as a locus for research into communication skills, instructional technology, speech anxiety, instructional design and pedagogical practices. All of the research on these topics impacts more than just the basic course, as it is often relevant to instruction in other courses. The work done in the basic communication course is complex and important for both our students and the discipline. In this, the 27th volume of the Basic Communication Course Annual, there continues to appear studies that examine the changing face of the course that is the bulwark of the communication discipline.

For a second straight issue the BCCA contains a set of short essays by scholars devoted to discussing one key question. This time the question addressed is “What is the most important area of training for a new basic communication course instructor?” As with the prior issue’s Forum essays, these are varied in their answers. Such variety indicates the multitude of challenges faced by communication departments who deliver large and medium scale basic courses, and whom rely on new pools of instructors either through adjunct faculty or graduate teaching assistants to successfully deliver their course.

In this issue we find four essays in the Forum that provide a diversity of perspectives in their answer to the
training question. First, T. Kody Frey, John F. Hooker and Cheri Simonds propose that the most important piece of training for new basic course instructors concerns speech evaluation. No doubt this particular task is central to a course that depends upon consistency across multiple sections. The second essay, penned by Trisha Hoffman, Tara Franks and Belle Edson, argues that the generational differences inherent in a student population consisting of millennial students poses a significant challenge for new instructors and thus necessitates a strong training dimension for new instructors. In the third entry to the Forum Luke Lefebvre and William Keith build upon the previous Forum by making the case that new instructors need to be trained not on the production of speeches, but on the achievement of the goal of the course: creating competent communicators. Finally, Cheri Simonds, John Hooker and Anna Wright suggest that new instructors need to be trained on how to manage and maintain an effective discussion in their classrooms. Each of these cases is certainly valid, and is indicative of the plethora of issues faced by new instructors within the basic communication course, and the changing nature of training those instructors to effectively deliver this important course.

Consistent with the complexity and richness of the “basic” communication course, this volume of the BCCA also features five very strong research articles on developments within the course. Joshua Westwick, Karla Hunter and Laurie Haleta provide a unique contribution to what we know about teaching public speaking online and how that medium for course delivery impacts both speech anxiety and self-perceived communication competence. The second essay, by Samuel P. Wallace,
proposes a model for updating the basic communication course to focus on outcomes and not assignments. This model also illustrates how departments can build a course that is embedded within general education programs. John F. Hooker and Cheri Simonds then provide an examination of something the discipline often takes for granted: what employers mean when they say they want communication skills in graduates. Specifically, they examine the 2014 Basic Course Director’s Conference held in Dayton, Ohio, and use statements by industry professionals in that venue to help tie both basic course research and justifications for the basic course to practical concerns of a core constituency for the course. Mary Z. Ashlock, William A. Brantley and Katherine B. Taylor then deliver a comparison of speech anxiety found in students registered for traditional 15-week courses and those who took the basic communication course in a more intensive format. The final entry to Volume 27 by Alisa Roost is a thoughtful examination of ways in which the basic communication course can help support veterans as they transition back to student life.

All told, this volume of the BCCA contains significant contributions to what we know about instructional technology, speech anxiety, course design, communication skills and pedagogical practices. This scholarship also provides a foundation to continue the conversations we have on a daily basis regarding the basic course, its place in general education, its ability to impact the lives of our students and its importance to society.

Joseph M. Valenzano III, Editor

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of language retrieval difficulties that PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) can cause. Furthermore, military language focuses on succinct, clear messages that are different from academic rhetoric. Finally faculty may find that very specific directions support veterans as they transition to a less-structured civilian environment. Ultimately, faculty should listen to veterans’ concerns.

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The Invaluable Nature of Speech Evaluation
Training for New Basic Course Instructors

T. Kody Frey
John F. Hooker
Cheri J. Simonds

Recent reforms in higher education recognize the centrality of communication in general education programs (e.g., Association of American Colleges and Universities, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, LEAP, Common Core State Standards). As oral communication knowledge and skills are becoming recognized as integral to general education programs across the country, many basic course directors are finding themselves in the position of offering multiple sections of the course taught by multiple instructors. Additionally, basic course directors find themselves with the responsibility of providing clear measures of what they do and how well they do it. Because oral communication assessment is key to remaining integral to general education (Allen, 2002), basic course directors must provide instructor training on how to fairly and consistently evaluate student performances. But before this training can take place, basic course directors need to have an evaluation system in place that is fair, consistent, and reflective of actual student performance. There are several challenges to speech evaluation that warrant such a process. This essay will address those challenges and propose a systematic evaluation process.
that can serve as an impetus to instructor training in this area.

**CHALLENGES OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

In speech evaluation, two of the most commonly experienced problems come from assessing the reliability and validity of speech performance ratings. According to Miller (1964), raters evaluate speech performances reliably when the ratings given by a variety of critics who have received similar training procedures are consistent. Thus, multiple evaluators do have the potential to reach coherent agreement regarding speech performance standards, but require training in order to do so. Miller (1964) goes on to define rating validity as judgments that are made in regards to sound criteria that reflect educationally significant speaking standards.

Speech evaluators should strive to achieve high levels of both reliability and validity when assessing students’ speeches; however, Bock and Bock (1982) argue that the fallible nature of human judgment means that any evaluation of speech performance will have certain errors associated with it. Guilford (1954) points out six areas where subjective bias can creep in to speech evaluation: first, instructors may be too harsh or too lenient based on a characteristic of the speaker that is not relevant to the speech evaluation; second, instructors may tend to avoid very high or very low scores and have grades cluster around the middle of the scale; third, instructors may suffer from a halo effect which occurs when raters become too hard or too easy in their evaluations of specific speakers; fourth, instructors may give similar scores for different parts of the speech that are
logically related; fifth, instructors may assign similar scores to different parts of the speech because the happen in close proximity in time or on the evaluation form; and sixth, instructors may compare their own communicative skills to the speaker and grade based on that comparison. In terms of reliability, Bohn and Bohn (1985) demonstrated that error is typically a function of the speech rater, and the two most commonly reported types of rater errors to occur in speech rating were leniency error and halo error. Carlson and Smith-Howell (1995) supported this claim by testing four separate types of evaluation forms commonly used in speech assessment. Results showed that the four forms produced total-score reliability, meaning evaluation forms and speech experience ultimately do not affect speech ratings, but the individual rater does make a difference.

Thus, reliability within the speech evaluation process is dependent upon objectivity in grading, and a standardized training for instructors across different basic course class sections is required. Kelley (1965) notes that objectivity in grading is necessary for four reasons: (a) creating confidence in students, (b) increasing respect for the art of speaking, (c) providing students with greater knowledge and understanding of their performance, and (d) providing instructions on how to positively improve skills. In order to meet these goals, basic course instructors and students must receive comprehensive training regarding objective criteria that will help to insure rater reliability and student understanding of how to demonstrate learned communication competencies through their speaking preparation and performance.
Speech evaluation validity is concerned with grading speeches using a set of sound criteria that reflect universally desired oral communication skills. In their study of speech evaluation forms, Carlson and Smith-Howell (1995) found that each of the four forms utilized had construct, content, and predictive validity. The forms had construct validity through their focus on both content and delivery aspects of speech performance; content validity because raters from differing backgrounds were able to detect the presence of objective criteria in oral presentations consistently; and predictive validity because observed score ratings for “A” speeches and “C” speeches fell within the expected ranges for each (Carlson & Smith-Howell, 1995). Included in the study was a criterion-based grading rubric that served as the basis for the evaluation forms. The key to this type of rubric is creating it using low-inference behaviors that are easily identifiable by new instructors once they are trained to apply the rubric to sample speeches.

**Systematic Speech Evaluation**

To address these concerns of reliability and validity, Stitt, Simonds, and Hunt (2003) tested a training program on speech evaluation assessment. They argue that basic course directors must explore the ways speech evaluators are trained to assess student speeches in order to develop effective and consistent rating procedures and to ensure a common student experience across multiple sections of the course. They introduce the notion *evaluation fidelity*, which is a shared understanding among raters and between instructors and their students in terms of established performance criteria. They
found that instructor training significantly reduced the range of scores instructors provide for a given speech. In addition, there was greater evaluation fidelity between instructors and students. However, they also found that instructors could be more constructive in their instructor feedback. To address this concern, another team of scholars examined instructor feedback on student speeches (Reynolds, Hunt, Simonds, & Cutbirth, 2004) and also determined that instructors were tempering their comments with positive politeness statements and that they needed to be trained to provide more effective feedback. In answering this call for training, Simonds, Meyer, Hunt, and Simonds (2009) developed a more comprehensive instructor-training program. This training program consisted of a common evaluation form including categories for evaluation (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion, delivery) and low-inference behaviors or skills within the categories (e.g., introduction—attention device, relevance statement, credibility statement, thesis sentence), a grading scale for each category, the development of criteria or level of expected performance for each skill, and the development of models of expected performance for both the instructors and students involved in the evaluation process. Additionally, they developed categories of feedback (positive, positive descriptive, negative, and constructive) for instructors to use in determining how to use language from the criteria to determine a score. They found that with the revised training program, instructors were able to more accurately and reliably apply the types of feedback using language from the criteria to determine a student’s score.
When criterion-based assessment tools such as a “Criteria for Evaluating Speeches” form are implemented within the classroom, the grading process becomes routine and fair across different sections of the course and consistent from speech assignment to speech assignment for individual students. As conceptualized by Topping (1998):

When the criteria for assessment have been discussed, negotiated, used in practice, and clarified by all participants, greater clarity concerning what constitutes high-quality work is likely, which focuses assesse (and assessor) attention on crucial elements. Access to concrete examples of assessed work can also help students articulate the attributes of good and poor performance and promote the development of a vocabulary for thinking about and discussing quality (p. 255).

As previously reviewed, standardized grading rubrics can lead to increased levels of reliability across multiple sections of the basic communication course when paired with proper instructor training. Rubrics also lead to increased instructor-student dialogue through the explanation and clarification of the grading criteria (Broeckelman, 2005). Theoretically, an explanation of how students can achieve certain grades should lead to a greater level of shared understanding between the instructor and the student. Consequently, this opens up a constructive dialogue between the instructor and the student.

Promoting confidence and consistency in new instructors through speech evaluation training is essential to the success of the basic course. As noted above, there are many potential benefits to training new instructors
Invaluable Nature of Speech Evaluation Training

to evaluate speeches using a standardized, low-inference criterion-based system. Students learn more when they have clear expectations for how their speaking will be evaluated and also want to know that they are being evaluated in a consistent, fair fashion with their peers in every section of a basic course program. When speech evaluation training is not done systematically with new instructors, students and instructors both may face uncertainty and give in to some of the subjective biases listed above that prevent them from fairly and consistently evaluating student performances. Therefore, speech evaluation training is invaluable on many levels and is the most important area of training for new basic course instructors.

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Invaluable Nature of Speech Evaluation Training


Invaluable Nature of Speech Evaluation Training

students? Basic Communication Course Annual, 16, 36-70.


Volume 27, 2015
Cultural Awareness Training: Preparing New Instructors for the Millennial Student

Trisha K. Hoffman
Tara Franks
Belle Edson

It is not unusual for instructors to face challenges relating to, understanding, or motivating their students. Educators can chalk this up to a variety of factors, including differences in and between education levels, life experiences, and ascribed power roles. We argue, however, that it is the generational differences between instructors and their students that pose a much greater challenge toward the establishment of a productive teacher-student relationship and the facilitation of learning. With the age of the Millennial college student upon us, we make the case that the most important area of training for new instructors is developing cultural awareness about the Millennial generation. As McGlynn (2005) said, “facilitating learning involves understanding who our students are” (p. 12). As such, we believe it is essential for new, and seasoned, instructors to learn about the social, cultural and environmental factors that shape the Millennial learner (Roberts, Newman, & Schwartzstein, 2012). In the following pages, we hope to inspire cultural curiosity through highlighting Millennial characteristics and recommending tools for developing cultural awareness in new college instructors.
The Millennial Learner

Millennials were born roughly between 1982 and 2002 (McAlister, 2009). As students, Millennials have been described as overly confident, narcissistic, sheltered, entitled, and lacking empathy (Dolby, 2014; McAlister, 2009; Twenge, 2009). Stewart’s (2009) article, in particular, storied the culture shock he experienced coming back to the classroom after spending 15 years as an administrator. He described the warnings he received from his colleagues about teaching Millennial students, among them, “today’s students are not the kinds of students you taught!” (Stewart, 2009, p. 111). This caution captures both the generational and cultural gaps that educators frequently experience when classroom personalities and/or student learning styles do not match their own expectations. Often, this culture shock occurs for instructors as a result of comparing their own educational experiences to current generational trends. However, with a developed awareness of the social factors that influence Millennial personalities and learning styles, new (and returning) instructors may be better equipped to manage this culture shock.

Like all generations, Millennials prioritize certain values over others. Perhaps the most obvious and distinguishing characteristic that separates Millennials from other generations is their dependence on technology (Dolby, 2014). Considered to be highly technologically savvy, Millennials are referred to as true “digital natives” (McAlister, 2009). Coming of age in an era of rapid technological advancement and increased Internet access, Millennials are the first generation to be exposed
to multiple forms of media throughout childhood. As a result, “today's students communicate and think differently than the students of previous generations because of the central position of technology in their lives” (Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007, p. 30). From an educational stance, it is essential to acknowledge and understand how Millennials engage with technology in order to modify our course curriculum as a practice of cultural adaptation.

To Millennials, technology affords them many advantages, including increased efficiency, enhanced relational development and maintenance with friends and family, and greater access and mobility overall (Dolby, 2014). Research shows that Millennial students view technology as a valuable tool for engaging in both social and academic/professional endeavors. Many educators argue that this excessive exposure and access to digital tools has created a generation of distracted multitaskers who have short attention spans and an insatiable need for instant gratification (McAlister, 2009). Millennials also have a tendency to use trial by error learning to keep up with the rapid changes in technology. For example, they are much more likely to push several buttons on a new phone to figure out how it works, rather than read the instruction manual. These tactics transfer to the classroom. Because of their penchant for technology, Millennial students prefer, and come to expect, learning environments that incorporate multimedia through the use of videos and social media platforms (Nicolletti & Merriman, 2007). Additionally, as visual learners they tend to retain more information from visual cues than traditional text- and lecture-based learning methodologies. For educators, these charac-
teristics pose challenges and opportunities to the learning process, namely when it comes to retention, recall, maintaining student interest during class, and/or developing skill mastery through repeated exposure (McAlister, 2009).

Instructors must consider, then, how they can utilize various technologies as pedagogical tools, rather than view technology as a distraction to student learning. For example, educators may virtually connect with students using GoToMeeting software during office hours, or assign personal blog assignments as an exercise in public scholarship. In order to meet the visual preferences of our learners, instructors might consider posting a grading rubric in place of an assignment description, or assigning a collection of digital academic articles or websites instead of a book chapter. Of course, we are not suggesting that textbooks and/or more traditional pedagogical methods have outgrown their worth. Rather, integrating multimedia learning platforms may foster connections with Millennial students that influence student success.

In line with Millennials’ preference for technology, they are also socially engaged individuals. Many of them had active childhoods with highly structured schedules that revolved around study groups, after-school programs, and sporting events (McAlister, 2009). As such, Millennials often thrive in structured, interactive environments that promote collaboration and team-based activities (McGlynn, 2005). They also appreciate practical application of course material through connecting curriculum to their personal and professional lives. Certainly, instructors who are trained to teach in traditional lecture-style methods may face challenges
maintaining the Millenial student’s interest and attention. However, we suggest that instructors who are trained to develop interactive environments and practically applied curriculum may find higher success rates among their students (Roberts, Newman, Schwartzstein, 2012). For example, instructors in a business communication course might encourage students to develop an online resume through Wordpress software. Similarly, group communication instructors may experiment with using social media platforms to hold online discussion boards.

Beyond their technology use, Millennials’ casual personalities often surprise and frustrate instructors. Millennials see less of a distinction between the role of student and teacher than members of past generations (McAlister, 2009). This generation also wants to know more about their instructors on a personal level and prefer more relaxed or informal educational environments. Parents of Millennials also raised their children to see themselves as unique and special (Harward, 2008). Described as the “Me Generation,” Millennials want to be personally known by their instructors and respond well when they feel their uniqueness is confirmed and acknowledged in the classroom (Twenge, 2009). With a proclivity for narcissism, coupled with a highly commodified education system (i.e., the student is treated as “customer”), Millennials can easily become disgruntled when they feel unsupported by their instructors (Nilsen, 2010). This is especially true when they receive poor grades. All of these factors can create challenges in maintaining student trust, attention, and respect. With an understanding of these personality characteristics, however, new instructors may be more prepared to ef-
fectively manage classroom situations where their authority may be challenged.

Aside from personality, classroom issues may be more closely linked to a complex and policy-ridden public education system. Millennials have experienced the fallout of No Child Left Behind, inflated grading, fewer hours of homework, and rote memory teaching methods geared toward improving standardized testing scores (Twenge, 2009). As a result, students often lack the necessary critical thinking and writing skills to succeed in college (Nilsen, 2010). Furthermore, as the children of “helicopter parents,” they have rarely been allowed to fail and often receive high levels of praise and pressure to succeed from parents, teachers, and coaches throughout their childhoods (McAlister, 2009; Nilsen, 2010). They are often ill equipped to deal with failure and are simply “unprepared to deal with the mistakes they will make” (Harward, 2008, p. 66), despite receiving repeated messages from their parents that they can “do anything.”

Certainly, poor grades and difficulties meeting the demands of the college classroom could issue a blow to a student’s ego and self-esteem. Instructors, then, must be prepared to understand, manage, and diffuse heightened student emotions and demands. In this way, instructors take on new and shifting roles, acting not only as educators, but also as counselors and stewards of information. We believe it is essential to equip new instructors with the tools to navigate their changing roles, as well as train today’s educators to clearly communicate and develop appropriate boundaries with students. Some effective practices may be through clearly communicating course expectations and grading procedures,
developing solid grading rubrics, providing structure and direction in assignments, and directing students to additional resources available at the university (Nilsen, 2010; Roberts et al., 2012).

**TRAINING IN ACTION**

Taken together, the cultural and social factors that have shaped the average Millennial student provide insight to the struggles, attitudes, learning styles, perceptions, and expectations our students bring to the classroom. Instructors need to be educated about these changing demographics in order to create productive learning environments and develop healthy relationships with Millennial learners. As a multi-generational teaching team at a large university, we train new graduate instructors for their first experiences in the classroom through a semester long seminar titled New Graduate Instructor Orientation (NGIO).

Part of this training includes hosting a critical discussion about the characteristics of Millennial students, the challenges the new instructor might face in working with this population, and the ways in which higher education is shifting given the unique learning needs of the Millennials. We draw on our varying generational perspectives to help concretize the qualities and characteristics that distinguish different generations in educational settings. In practice, we frame this course much like “cultural sensitivity” training by encouraging new instructors to engage in a dialogue about the differences and similarities they share with their students and to exercise compassion and understanding in the place of frustration. This training serves to address and reframe...
negative perspectives of the Millennial student population and develop awareness about the shifting climate of higher education. Furthermore, we seek to bring attention to changing demographics and Millennial student cultural values by engaging in practical and self-reflexive activities that seek to bridge the gap between past and present teaching methodologies (e.g., application-based and engaged pedagogy in place of lecture and text-based instruction). For example, we invite new instructors to brainstorm various pedagogical practices that encourage student engagement, promote group work, and/or implement the use of technology. These discussions and activities often lead to a broadened mindset about who our students are and how to promote student development in a rapidly evolving world.

It is evident that Millennial students possess a unique set of characteristics that require educators to adopt more interactive, engaged approaches to pedagogy. The traditional means of educating students in higher education (e.g., lecture formats, standardized testing, and textbook-centered instruction) simply do not meet the learning styles and/or needs of most Millennials. “American educators are dealing with this new generation of learners, who call for new ways of interacting, teaching and thinking about the learning process” (Nicoletti & Merriman, 2007, p. 31). As educators, we must first be willing to understand members of the Millennial culture in order to develop effective pedagogical strategies that meet the needs of our students. New instructors, then, should be equipped with information and tools that help them effectively engage Millennial students. Certainly, we are not the first, or likely the last, to acknowledge the challenges as well as
the possibilities associated with educating this generation (Roberts et al., 2012).

Although the discussion about Millennials in higher education has reduced to a simmer in recent years, we believe training on educating Millennial students remains an important endeavor. The youngest members of this generation are currently in junior high, which means Millennials will continue to filter through our college classrooms for at least another decade. They are also currently on track to become the most educated generation in history, further highlighting the need to understand how Millennial students engage in the learning process (Dolby, 2014). Despite the perceived, and possibly real, challenges associated with teaching Millennials, their entrance to higher education calls for a shift in the way we conceptualize education and learning. Rather than complain about Millennials’ idiosyncrasies or lack of skills, we can embrace the new opportunities and insights they bring to the classroom. We are presented with an opportunity to re-envision our pedagogical goals and practices. Through continued dialogue, we can prepare the next group of college instructors to construct a positive learning environment for the modern student. Through cultural awareness, sensitivity, and updated pedagogical training, we can begin to appreciate our students for their ingenuity, connectedness, and curiosity. To be successful, though, we must meet them halfway.
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Preparing to Prepare Quality Speakers: What New Basic Course Instructors Need to Know

Luke LeFebvre
William Keith

Speaking is an enormously complex activity (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2005), which cannot be separated completely into parts (delivery without content, content without language, organization without content or language, etc.). Yet there is a tendency for most new instructors to misunderstand the basic course. Beginning instructors often focus only on products (e.g., outlines and bibliographies) that stand in as tangible evidence of mastery rather than the process of developing skilled communicators.

Products are not the point of the course – the point is for students to be more effective communicators with an audience; it does not matter if students have perfect outlines and speaker notes if they do not improve their speaking skills. In Vygotskian terms the central or valued activity of the course’s instructional activities should support students to improve this activity, and none should be merely preliminary to it. Students at every point should be doing a (simplified, easier, more difficult) version of the valued activity. There is an old saying among football coaches: Players who spend a lot of time running through rows of old tires mostly get better at running through rows of old tires.

Students should focus on practicing speaking skills, not just preliminary activities such as learning concepts about speaking. A common obstacle for training instruc-
tors is to describe the valued activity in an appropriate way. Often instructors first think the assignments included in the basic course simply are the activity the course teaches, but they are not. For example, giving an "informative speech" is supposed to help students become better public or oral communicators in general – the speech is a means to that, not an end itself.

As we contemplate the important elements for training new basic course instructors two variables emerge: (1) how instructors situate the course’s structure and composition and (2) the skills needed for teaching the course. The first section details how instructors should prepare the course in terms of learning outcomes, pedagogy, and evaluation. The second section outlines how these new teachers should meet the learning outcomes, engage students through pedagogy, and create meaningful evaluation.

THE BASIC COURSE AS A PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE

The basic course has been defined as “that course either required or recommended for a significant number of undergraduates” (Gibson, Gruner, Brooks, & Petrie, 1970, p. 13). The purpose of the basic course is to teach students how to prepare and deliver appropriate and effective messages for various contexts. Usually this course introduces students to the study of communication, so our roles as instructors are even more consequential (Beebe, 2013). Accordingly, we wish to outline our ideas about how instructors should situate the structure and content of the basic course.
Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes comprise the vital, core aspects of the basic course (see Wallace, 2014). These outcomes identify what students should be able to demonstrate as a result of what and how they have learned in the basic course beyond simply verbal and nonverbal components of delivery (Maki, 2010). While the course’s performance dimension is vital (often the most terrifying aspect for students) good performance is a product of effective content preparation. For us, this means that public speaking requires the ability to organize information, ideas and arguments to achieve a variety of goals with an audience, including informative, persuasive and argumentative goals. We argue the instructor’s pedagogy should be content-driven.

When a speaker is competent, an audience is able to comprehend the content of a speech (Brodie, Powers, & Fitch-Hauser, 2006). While the charismatic qualities of a gifted speaker can mesmerize students, they may conceal weaknesses in the integrity of the content and speech organization. The surface of the speech, good or bad, is easier to attend to than the content. Deepening appreciation of content and argument is a – perhaps the – core task instructors should set for their students. Basic course students gain confidence and appear most competent to listeners when they preview their main points, follow the previewed organizational pattern marked with clear transitions between those points, and summarize the main points in the conclusion. Yet to master organization, students need to understand deeply what they want to argue, persuade or inform about, so their ability to organize ends up connecting...
back to research, content, translation of technical information and so on.

**Pedagogy**

In addition to clear and appropriate learning outcomes, instructors must provide a safe place for learning. A public speaking course may not necessarily seek to "make students comfortable" speaking (that is difficult for most of us!) but the classroom climate has to make them comfortable learning to speak. Their safety derives from instructors embracing a scaffolded, active-learning pedagogy that supports student risk-taking. Instructors should create opportunities for mistakes in the skill building stages without a significant negative grade impact, thus allowing students to view both failures and successes equally as opportunities for learning. Effective instructors use missteps as stepping-stones to guide learners to develop solutions to their own problems. New basic course instructors would be wise to understand that learners acquire public speaking skills incrementally (Lucas, 1999), and that creating a classroom that allows for learners to risk, error, learn, and persist as speakers is fundamental for building competent communication skills. Bruner (1977) captured this concept best when he noted that a teacher’s primary goal is to help learners discover that success and failure are not rewards and punishment, but only information. Given the high emotional stakes of public speaking for students, who sometimes experience even competent performances as humiliating failures, instructors must work extra hard to build a safe and secure classroom climate.
Preparing to Prepare Quality Speakers

New basic course instructors should understand the process dimension for developing a speech. Integrating time for process into the course structure, in the form of exercises and workshops, aids developing speakers to formulate sound organizational patterns and useful preparation skills for performance. Our vision of this classroom setting involves students actively engaged in the preparation of their speechmaking: developing skills for the speaking occasion, applying high-order thinking (analyses of their own speeches and speaking choices), gaining holistic comprehension of the intent and impact of the speech, and evaluating the preparation and performance process which produced the speech.

Instructors should offer specific occasions where students interact with them and collaborate with others, particularly on tasks for preparing future speeches. These workshops enhance the learners’ competencies and confidence in acquiring effective speech skills. For example, we suggest allowing learners to test speech sections, such as the introduction with smaller audiences. We recommend incorporating a rotation and limited periods for speech rehearsals to various small groups within the class. Instructors can use such strategies to expose learners to subsets of their audience while practicing (and improving) speaking skills that will later be graded.

Evaluation

Understanding how speakers’ initial imperfect attempts at speaking help them to learn is only possible when clear, achievable standards are communicated to learners. Hence, well-articulated standards help communicate how students can use the standard to reflex-
ively assess their own preparation to improve the process for the next speech. Central course activities should align with the standards of achievement for learners; the expectations should be apparent and achievable during exercises, homework, drafts and so on. We suggest effective instructors use a rubric as a communication tool (see Schreiber, Paul, & Shibley, 2012).

Rubrics must communicate the important standards and emphasize attributes of the speech and speaker beyond delivery; the course will not be content driven unless the instructor creates a rubric that clearly and consistently communicates the importance of a speaker’s content. Therefore, instructors should design and use a rubric that is “weighted” to include more criteria that relate to the speech content and structure of the message.

Learners should utilize these rubrics to assess other student speakers or example speeches via video replay. The basic course requires reflexive skill recognition, based on peer feedback, instructor feedback, and (by means of video) self-generated feedback. In essence, the same knowledge that allows a speaker to produce competent skills is the knowledge that forms the foundation to recognize competent speaking skills in self and others (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Assessing speakers and their skills together allows students to understand the standards of achievement, familiarize themselves with the rubric, create meaning with the instructor about the expectations for the speech, and begin the process of norming standards as a class.
Preparing to Prepare Quality Speakers

Preparing to Teach the Basic Course as a Public Speaking Course

Given the elements we have outlined when a new instructor is preparing to teach the basic course – learning outcomes, pedagogy, and evaluation – we now turn to what new instructors should know and be able to do, in order to begin becoming effective instructors.

Meeting the Learning Outcomes

New instructors need to realize some learning outcomes are clearly subordinate to others. In order to begin the process of identifying superior and subordinate learning outcomes, instructors should pinpoint the most essential learning outcomes to build speaking skills. When analyzing the activities new instructors choose to include in the course as they relate to the learning outcomes, Aristotle makes the point in The Rhetoric (1.1.14) that we should not define these in terms of successfully persuading the audience, but in terms of choosing the possible goals and the possible techniques for achieving them. Hence, he defines rhetoric as "seeing the possible means of persuasion." The idea of effective communication in the classroom is not that every listener agrees and is persuaded, but that the speaker understood what the choices relative to that end were, and made smart and defensible ones. Therefore, the question trembling new students in the basic course should ask themselves is not, "Will I be a perfect communicator by the end of the term?" ("No, and we promise not to grade you on that.") The more effective way to frame the purpose of the basic course for the learner is, "Will I learn, through guided practice, what
choices I have as a communicator and how best to make them?” Here we see why the course must be content focused. The vast majority of the choices students make are content choices: research, information, arguments, supporting material, and the adaptation of all this to the audience.

How does stage fright fit in? We argue it is a strategic error for instructors to let stage fright dominate the course. Students need to give better speeches at the end of the term than at the beginning. If they feel more comfortable speaking, that is a bonus, but not the point of the course; while communication apprehension can serve as a barrier to improved performance for some students, many excellent speakers are never comfortable, their whole lives, with public speaking. Similar to public speaking, almost all students have engaged in competitive activities that, while making them nervous, are ultimately satisfying.

We propose new instructors use learning outcomes to guide their pedagogy for the basic course in the following hierarchy: (1) Using clear language and organization for the audience; (2) Connecting with the audience; (3) Achieving a communication goal(s) with the audience; (4) Adapting ideas to people and people to ideas; and (5) Making communication choices and being responsible for those choices. These should guide instructor decision-making for any assignment in the basic course.

**Engaging Pedagogy**

Instructors need to create humiliation-free classrooms that directly support the learning goals. The classroom is the place where student anxiety becomes a
legitimate issue. It is easy to confuse critique of one's choices with critique of oneself. If a student hears, "Those points could be in a different order," as "You're a terrible communicator," the student may lose motivation and could have trouble concentrating on the activity to become a better communicator. Therefore, we owe our students “simple decency” (see Bain, 2004, p. 18). No matter how tough the critique is, or how bad the speech was, our verbal and nonverbal communication must consistently communicate respect and esteem for the student as a human being. That respect is consistent with tough grades and critiques, but instructors have the responsibility to make sure that students do not feel ashamed for creating a bad outline or mixing up the order of points when delivering the speech. Role-playing how to provide feedback that addresses choices and behavior(s) of students separate from the individual while preserving the standards and expectations for the course is fundamental. Cultivating a persona that unconditionally approves of everyone while critiquing their work is essential for new instructors.

As John Campbell (1996) has pointed out, a public speaking classroom is a community; a community of learners, which, through thinking about what to say and what has been said, deliberates important issues of the day. In a classroom focused on lecture and "covering concepts" with no meaningful discussion, perhaps the tone of the classroom does not matter as much. However, with a pedagogy focused on doing, and doing together, the tone of the classroom becomes all-important. When students believe that the instructor is supportive and positive toward every speaker, they can become highly motivated and outperform expectations.
Meaningful Evaluation

For most new instructors of the basic course, grading is, unfortunately, the most challenging and least fun part. Nothing is worse than feeling insecure about the grades one returns to students, because grades matter so much to them. Students typically perceive speaking grades as subjective, and in some cases their frustration about perceived arbitrary grades can be intimidating to a new instructor. A more substantive way to address student (and instructor) concerns about subjectivity is to construct detailed rubrics and incorporate them deeply into the course.

Rubrics should be introduced early, and discussed regularly; that way students are never in doubt about how they will be evaluated. Learners can work out some of their anxiety by working with the rubric. If the rubric for a given speech assignment is well-constructed, it will reference terminology from lectures and the textbook. Hence, students will be motivated to understand the rubric, expectations communicated in the rubric, and look more deeply into the course content to increase their comprehension of the rubric. Essentially, a rubric mediates between the expectations of the course and the skills they are supposed to enable. As students practice various kinds of speaking, the rubric becomes a way to create a useful dialogue between performance outcomes and the process for reaching those standards of achievement.

Conclusion

In sum, preparing new instructors will be most effective when a clear conception of the course comes to-
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gather with an understanding of requirements for learners and teachers. When these elements cohere, teaching the basic course is a satisfying and rewarding experience.

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Instructional Discussion:  
The Most Important Area of Training  
for New Basic Course Instructors  

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In order to determine the most important concept to teach new basic course instructors, it is important to know what we want students to be able to do as a result of the basic course and what teaching method will best reach that outcome. One main goal of the basic course is to teach students to communicate orally and give them practice doing so. This can be accomplished through what Muller (2014) defines as instructional discussion, or “an instructional interaction where teachers and students engage together in an exploration of problems, ideas, and questions in ways that incorporate the knowledge of all participants to generate a collective wisdom or understanding that would not have emerged without the interaction” (p. 326). This definition illustrates the importance of engagement and interaction, both important goals within the basic communication course. Additionally, instructional discussion highlights the central role of communication in the teaching and learning process. Thus, it is imperative that training programs for basic course instructors address how to plan, facilitate, and assess an instructional discussion as well as teach students how to engage in the process.
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RATIONALE

Instructional discussion involves students and teachers engaging in in-depth conversations of course material, while providing opportunities to practice communication skills and enhance communication knowledge. There are several theoretical and empirical benefits to participating in instructional discussions. Because instructional discussions are characterized by experiential learning, where students are active agents in the learning process, this strategy encourages student engagement and involvement (Simonds & Cooper, 2011). According to Astin’s Involvement Theory (1984), students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. As students spend time outside of class reading and thinking about course content, they can internalize material by reflecting on how the concepts relate to their own personal experiences (Girgin & Stevens, 2005; Luse, 2002; Nixon-Ponder, 1995). The discussion method then affords them opportunities in class to use concrete, personal experiences followed by a reflection and analysis of those experiences. Cegala (1981) further suggests that involvement is a way to measure communication competence where students articulate and defend their ideas as well as respond to the ideas of others’. Researchers have found that instructional discussions improve students’ course preparation, increase participation, enhance student learning (Dallimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2008), promote student understanding of material, and promote critical thinking skills such as self-assessment, which will serve them well once they have to employ the same skills in other classes and in their careers (Dancer & Kamvou-
In addition to the theoretical and empirical benefits of the instructional discussion method, there are also pedagogical implications. By virtue of using this method, instructors can reinforce reading expectations, create a student-centered classroom, promote higher order thinking, and maximize class time (Simonds & Cooper, 2011).

**PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Instructional discussions change how students spend time out of class, which has implications for how instructors and students spend time in class. The core of instructional discussion, as it should be used in the basic course, involves students thoroughly reading and understanding course material prior to class and reflecting on ways they can make contributions in class. When they get to class, they are afforded opportunities to engage in a higher order discussion by applying their own interests and experiences to course concepts. To facilitate this process, instructors can develop reading response questions that allow students opportunities to master the content and plan a contribution for class discussion. This method reinforces the expectation that students should read before coming to class, thus preparing students for success in college as they will be
Instructional discussion training importance

Instructional discussion allows students and teachers to create a collective knowledge that would not have otherwise emerged without the discussion. Through instructional discussion, classrooms become student-centered. Students come to class prepared to discuss course material through the use of reading questions. Then, once in class, students can contribute to the learning of self and others. Through a collaborative discussion, students bring their own knowledge and experiences to class, which allows them to better understand the material as well as contribute to the learning of others. Creating student-centered classrooms has additional benefits to the basic course. In a comparison between teacher-centered (lecture-based) and learner-centered (interaction-based) public speaking courses, Kahl and Venette (2010) found a significant difference in speech outline grades with learner-centered courses having the average student score much higher than the average student in teacher-centered courses. Not only will instructional discussion enhance student participation and learning, it will also yield better results on course assignments.

Additionally, as students participate in these conversations, they are also honing their listening skills. Instructional discussion is consistent with the speaking and listening standards of the Common Core. As the standards continue to be emphasized, more students will be coming to universities with the ability to engage in instructional discussions. These standards require students to initiate and participate in collaborative discussions so they can express themselves clearly and
persuasively while building on the contributions of others (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). Essentially, these standards provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their speaking and listening abilities by taking part in rich, structured conversations. When students come to the college level communication course, they will be able to contribute appropriately to these conversations, draw comparisons, analyze and synthesize multiple perspectives, listen attentively, build on contributions, and express themselves clearly. Thus, students enrolled in the basic course will already have the speaking and listening skills to engage in a sophisticated discussion. By teaching basic course instructors to facilitate an instructional discussion, we will capitalize on what incoming students expect, which will allow for greater understanding of course material. Further, the basic course will continue to nurture the speaking and listening skills students are taught in K-12 schools, thus enhancing the consistency of the discipline among grade levels.

One of the most important functions of instructional discussion is that, once the reading expectation has been established, valuable class time can be used for deeper probing of the materials. Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of cognitive learning identified seven levels: knowledge, comprehension, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. When creating a discussion-based classroom environment, students can enter class with the knowledge step accomplished through readings, the comprehension step through answering basic questions about the concepts described in the readings, and interpretation by answering higher-order questions prior to class that demonstrate how cer-
tain communication concepts relate to other concepts or assignments in the course. It is possible to go as far as the application level by asking students to complete questions about the readings as the concepts have applied to a situation in their own life.

Therefore, when the students come prepared to discuss, the instructor can start with application level questions and let the students’ prepared contributions allow for peer learning. The instructor can then move to asking probing questions designed to get the students to participate in active learning (Hertenstein, 1991; Simonds & Cooper, 2011), critical thinking (Delaney, 1991; Robinson & Schaible, 1993) and problem-solving (Davis, 1993; Gilmore & Schall, 1996) by synthesizing information and then assessing whether the synthesis is valid. As basic course instructors struggle to cover course content while allowing for in class presentations, the instructional discussion method maximizes classroom instructional time by holding students responsible for class content outside of class. Instructors no longer need to spend class time lecturing over material students should have read, rather, they can spend time in class engaging them in higher levels of learning.

THE TRAINING IMPERATIVE

The importance of training teachers on how to properly conduct classroom discussion cannot be overstated, as a number of problems can arise when proper techniques are not used. Jones (2008) points out that the type of questions asked during discussion matter because if students are asked lower-order recall questions rather than higher-order questions that promote
involvement and reasoning, students will be less inclined to deeply think about what they are reading. White (2011) raises the issue that instructors must be aware of cultural differences within their students and realize that students who are from different cultures may look at the discursive style being used and find it unfamiliar and challenging to adopt. This can lead to feelings of alienation on the part of these students and instructors must be cognizant and sympathetic to the students’ needs.

Moreover, instructors need to be taught how to plan a productive discussion by providing students with reading response questions and preparing high order discussion questions. Instructors need to know how to facilitate the discussion to encourage future participation and validate and build on student contributions. They need to know how to encourage student participation in class as well as strategies for assessing student preparation for and participation in class discussions (Simonds & Cooper, 2011). This strategy requires certain skills and instructional finesse to ensure student success and build classroom confidence.

**CONCLUSION**

As we have elucidated in this essay, there are many reasons why basic course instructor training programs should address instructional discussions. First and foremost, instructional discussion is a communication-centered strategy that encourages student involvement and engagement. The instructional method has the potential to improve student communication competence by providing them with opportunities to articulate and
defend their ideas. Aside from the theoretical and empirical benefits outlined here, there are also pedagogical implications that enhance the learning experience for both the instructor and the students. Students can be taught to read and reflect on course content while planning, in advance, contributions for class discussion. Once there, they have opportunities to share their experience and take ownership of the learning process. What better place than a communication classroom for students to get these experiences? Instructional discussion is a communication-centered strategy that builds classroom confidence where students can competently communicate their ideas. Basic course instructors can model effective communication by engaging in this instructional strategy. Thus, basic course instructor training programs need to address this theoretically and pedagogically sound strategy.

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Articles

Shaking in Their Digital Boots: Anxiety and Competence in the Online Basic Public Speaking Course

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Although once unimaginable, online courses have entered into higher education and the popularity and frequency of this type of course continues to rise (Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2007). In 2013, an all-time high of 7.1 million college students (33.5%) took at least one online course, up 6.1% from 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2014). This increase in online course offerings is also visible within the introductory public speaking course. The 2006 survey of the basic communication course specifically asked about the number of institutions that offered the course online and showed that 62 of 306 (20.8%) responding institutions offered an online basic course (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). Moreover, Allen and Seaman (2008) found that 50 percent of university faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online courses.

In the face of this educational transformation, however, some communication faculty have expressed concern with this instructional context. Helvie-Mason (2010) suggested that many public speaking instructors continue to be cynical of teaching public speaking online. Miller (2010) advocated that “What appears to
be the critics’ collective driving force are concerns over the educational quality of an online course” (p. 153). Concerns regarding educational quality in the online context, especially within the basic communication course, have prompted a call for additional research to test the effectiveness of achieving student learning outcomes in the online course (Vanhorn, Pearson, & Child, 2008). In response to that call, this study assessed two key-components of an online public speaking course: speaker anxiety and self-perceived communication competence.

One of the primary goals of most basic public speaking communication courses is the reduction of speaking anxiety (Kinnick, Holler, & Bell, 2011). Communication instructors’ resistance to teaching public speaking online exists based on concerns regarding the inability of the online classroom to provide skill development and student growth (i.e., reduce apprehension and increase competency) (Vanhorn et al., 2008). Based on the importance of these student learning outcomes in the basic public speaking course, this study extended previous research (Ellis, 1995; Hunter, Westwick, & Haleta, 2014; and Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997) by examining pre and posttest levels of public speaking anxiety (PSA) and self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) for students enrolled in online sections of the basic public speaking course. The purpose of this study was three-fold. First, we tested the effectiveness of an online basic public speaking course that treated speaking anxiety. Second, we tested whether the course was effective in increasing those students’ self-perceived communication competence. Third, we explored the changes in PSA and SPCC based on gender.
To frame the importance of this study, we explored the relevant literature on speaking anxiety, communication competency, and online public speaking instruction. Next, we proposed two hypotheses based on the relevant literature. The methods section examines the course design and treatment plan for the course under investigation, then delineates the study design. We conclude with the results and discussion of the significant findings.

PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

PSA has been defined as “a situation-specific social anxiety that arises from the real or anticipated enactment of an oral presentation” (Bodie, 2010, p. 72). The speaking anxiety construct extends from research on communication apprehension (CA). Research indicates that PSA is the most common component of CA (McCourt, 2007; Richmond, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2013), affecting a large portion of the population to a degree that impairs their ability and willingness to speak publicly (McCroskey, 1984; Richmond et al., 2013). These findings further demonstrate that such fears may hinder career aspirations, personal relationships, and self-image.

Practically all speakers experience PSA as a temporary psychological state that passes after the speaking event has concluded, but others have trait-like PSA that extends across many public speaking situations. For these individuals, PSA may manifest itself when no specific speaking event is planned. Therefore, state anxiety is a more “transitory state or condition of the organism which fluctuates over time,” while trait anxiety is more enduring—a “unitary, relatively permanent personality
characteristic” (Spielberger, 1966, p. 13). Identifying these differences allows basic course directors and instructors an opportunity to design course curricula based around treatments that will enact genuine change within the trait of individual levels of PSA. We believe that students in the online course will decrease their trait-like speaking anxiety over the course of the semester.

Historically, research has found small but significant PSA differences based upon self-identified gender, with females having consistently reported higher PSA (Friedrich, 1970; McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond, 1982), and higher CA in general (Behnke & Sawyer, 2000; McCroskey et al., 1982). A meta-analysis of communication apprehension studies confirmed these findings (Lustig & Andersen, 1990). McCroskey, Simpson, and Richmond (1982) concluded that “Although the variance attributable to the biological sex variable, 2 to 4%, is not large, it may represent somewhat of a barrier to advancement of women within our society generally” (p. 133). Therefore, ensuring that course design employs effective PSA reduction for all students is necessary, especially given the aforementioned findings that high PSA can hinder college and career aspirations and overall life satisfaction (Emanuel, 2005; McCroskey, 1984; Nutt & Ballenger, 2003). Hunter et al. (2014) found that both male and female students experienced significant reduction of PSA as a result of the basic public speaking course in its traditional, face-to-face format, but that the female students began the course with significantly higher PSA than the males. However, the significance of PSA differences in gender was erased upon students’ completion of the face-to-face course. Therefore, it is im-
portant to assess the changes in PSA by gender in the online basic course in order to determine whether this same PSA reduction is possible in an online format.

Despite negative characteristics of PSA, one positive aspect of this condition is that it can be treated. Numerous methods of treating speaking anxiety exist. Three of the most common ways to remedy speaking anxiety symptoms and behaviors are exposure therapy, cognitive modification, and skills training (Bodie, 2010). Combining these methods can increase their effectiveness and boost long-term results (Bedore, 1994). The online basic course used in this study blended elements of these three treatments—a different treatment for each “proximal cause” of PSA (Bodie, 2010, p. 86). Exposure therapy is designed to treat psychological arousal, cognitive modification addresses negative thought patterns, and skills training seeks to increase public speaking ability. This blend is “more effective than any single method” (Pribyl, Keaton, & Sakamoto, 2001, p.149) at reducing PSA, maximizing effects and long-term results of treatment (Bedore, 1994). Because a major tenet of the anxiety treatment focuses on skill-building, this study also looked at the concept of communication competence (CC).

**COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE**

Communication competence (CC) “generally refers to the quality of interaction behavior in various contexts” (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987, p. 93). Essentially it aims to explore the effectiveness of an individual’s communication behavior within a specific context. Communication competence has generated a good deal of research and
debate, including differing opinions about how it should be defined (McCroskey, 1980; McCroskey, 1982; & Spitzberg, 1983). In essence, the study of CC examines the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication in a given context. One of the primary contexts examined is the classroom and, in particular, the traditional, face-to-face public speaking classroom (Canary & McGregor, 2008; Hinton & Kramer, 1998; MacIntyre & MacDonald, 1998; McCroskey, 1982; Rubin, Graham & Mignerey, 1990; Rubin et al., 1997).

Numerous studies have associated student-perceived competence levels with reported levels of anxiety, suggesting that students with greater anxiety report lower perceptions of their CC (Ellis, 1995; MacIntyre & MacDonald, 1998; Rubin et al., 1997). Studies by Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey (1990) & Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel (1995) pointed to the fact that communication instruction can make a salient and positive difference for students, relative to anxiety and competence. Ellis (1995) reported a decrease in apprehension and an increase in competence for college students over the course of a semester of public speaking instruction. Similarly, Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan (1997) examined whether public speaking classroom instruction might result in changes in students’ perceived CC and CA. Their results confirmed the inverse relationship between CC and CA, using a pretest-posttest design. Students’ CA levels decreased, while their CC increased from time one (at the beginning of the semester) to time two (at semester’s end) (Rubin et al., 1997).

As previously noted, females, historically, have consistently reported higher PSA as compared to males (Friedrich, 1970; McCroskey et al., 1982). However, a
limited amount of research has explored gender differences related to SPCC. Considering the association between competence levels and anxiety (Ellis, 1995, MacIntyre & McDonald, 1998; Rubin et al., 1997), further research exploring the impact of gender on SPCC is merited. Donovan & MacIntyre (2004) explored age and sex differences in willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived competence. Their research identified that female university students have lower self-perceived competence compared to males. These authors suggested “communication educators may need to be especially concerned with these variables among their female university students” (p. 426). However, this was the only study which identified gender as a variable related to SPCC. Moreover, the previous research did not explore the change from the beginning of the course to the end. Thus, this current study examined the impact of gender on SPCC in the online basic public speaking course.

**Online Instruction for the Basic Speech Communication Course**

Much of the above-cited research was based on traditional, face-to-face instruction. But, what about online instruction in the basic public speaking course? Previous communication research has served the apprehensive population by examining the basic speech course relative to reducing anxiety and increasing competence. Rubin et al. (1997) examined the changes of CA within a face-to-face course from the start of the academic semester to the end and found significant decreases in the students’ level of CA by semesters’ end. Moreover, these
authors associated student perceived competence levels with reported levels of anxiety. Extending this line of research, with a more specific emphasis on public speaking anxiety, Hunter et al. (2014) found that in a face-to-face basic speech course, students’ PSA was significantly lower at the end of the semester than the beginning. These significant reductions in apprehension and anxiety were found in the traditional, face-to-face classroom. However, limited research has examined the effects of the online basic speech course and its impact on students’ PSA; let alone course impacts on students’ SPCC. Considering the success of reducing CA and PSA in the face-to-face basic speech course, this study asserted that similar results can be found within an online basic speech communication course. Thus, the results of this study could offer further validation for the merits of this online instructional methodology.

Helping students reduce levels of speaking anxiety and increase their self-perception of communication competence in a public forum is a priority for communication educators, especially those with an interest in the basic speech communication course. Although studies have explored these constructs in a traditional classroom (Hunter et al., 2014; Rubin et al., 1997), the online context has received little attention in previous research. This oversight is problematic considering the increased use of online education, including the basic speech communication course.

Considering the rapid growth of the online basic public speaking course, a scant amount of research has addressed online instruction in the basic speech course. While 90% of academic leaders envision the number of students taking online courses increasing to a majority
within five years, over two-thirds of those leaders believe that online instruction will continue to be met with credibility concerns from faculty (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Previous research on the online basic communication course has illuminated concerns with the educational worth of online courses, primarily focusing on quality student learning and student outcomes (Miller, 2010).

In a comparison of traditional to online public speaking courses, Clark and Jones (2001) utilized the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) to measure the differences between instructional contexts and found no significant differences in CA amongst students. Furthermore, Clark and Jones (2001) found no significant difference in self-assessment of public speaking skills. However, the “online format” tested and compared with the face-to-face course in that study actually required five in-person, in-class meetings during a given semester. Therefore, although the format examined would have been considered an online class in 2001 at the time of the study, it actually constitutes what has come to be known as a “blended learning” format, an entirely separate learning context that merges face-to-face and online formats. Graham (2004) defines blended learning as “combining online and face-to-face instruction” (p. 3). The findings by Clark & Jones (2001) were significant in that they “[provide] no evidence that students elect online courses either as a way of avoiding face to face contact or because they feel that they have no need for it” (p. 118). This research also suggested that when compared, it appears that online (hybrid) and traditional sections yield similar changes in CA. However, the research did not explore changes in com-
petency, let alone public speaking anxiety, from the beginning of the semester to the end in purely online sections of the basic course.

Other research has focused specifically on learning and satisfaction within the online classroom. Russell (1999) wrote a book called *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon* in which he compiled the results of 355 research studies that found no significant difference between the quality of instructional outcomes for distance-based courses versus those delivered using traditional, face-to-face instruction. This text is often cited to illustrate that there are not significant differences between the online and traditional classroom. Additionally, according to Miller (2010) “Several studies suggest that learning outcomes and learner satisfaction are comparable between online courses and traditional classroom courses” (p. 154). Yet, many instructors continue to voice concern and frustration surrounding the online basic speech course (Helvie-Mason, 2010). Recognizing that one of the customary goals of the course is the reduction of anxiety, Clark & Jones (2001) indicated that “it is useful to know whether there are differences in these areas between students who prefer one format to another” (p. 112).

In light of previous research illustrating decreases in speech anxiety upon completion of a traditional face-to-face basic speech course (Hunter et al., 2014; Rubin et al., 1997) and the significance of communication competency on student learning and development (Rubin et al., 1990; Rubin, Welch & Buerkel, 1995), this study explored the changes in students’ speaking anxiety and communication competency in the online context.
HYPOTHESES

The review of literature has led to the following hypotheses:

H1a: In an online basic public speaking course, students will have significantly lower trait-like public speaking anxiety upon completion of the course than they had upon entering the course.

H1b: In an online basic public speaking course, there will be a significant ordinal interaction between gender and trait-like public speaking anxiety before/after the course.

H2a: In an online basic public speaking course, students will have significantly higher levels of self-perceived communication competence upon completion of the course than they had upon entering the course.

H2b: In an online basic public speaking course, there will be a significant ordinal interaction between gender and self-perceived communication competence before/after the course.

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess impacts of the online basic public speaking course on students' speaking anxiety and perceptions of their communication competence, this study used quantitative analysis through pre/post-test design. Quantitative measures replicated part of McCourt’s (2007) CA research methodology in that a survey measuring PSA was “given on a website to students enrolled in an online introductory college public speaking course.”
course at the beginning of a semester and then again at the end of that semester” (p. 3). McCourt’s study, like this one “expected that the experimental group, speech students [in her case] (N = 31), would display significantly lower scores on the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety” (p. 3). In addition to applying these methods to the online context, the current study adds the variable of SPCC, operationalized by using McCroskey & McCroskey’s (1988) Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale (SPCC).

**Description of the Online Basic Speech Communication Course**

The university involved in this study requires a basic speech course to meet graduation requirements. The course objectives are designed to help students develop the skills needed for effective public speaking. Within this context, the course aims to strengthen both student competence and confidence associated with successful speech practices. The students’ ability to cope with speech anxiety is enhanced through the use of frequent public speaking activities, evaluative feedback, and skill development. It is also assumed that as students’ level of speech anxiety decreases, the amount of perceived communication competence will increase.

The online basic course follows the model of the traditional face-to-face course with adaptations for online instruction. Course content is delivered through online lecture tutorials. Moreover, adaptations include weekly online discussion board questions to replicate use of student peer evaluations of each online speech given based on the speech criticism model used in the traditional face-to-face context. Also, the students in the
online basic speech course deliver three speech assignments, each increasing in their scope and depth. These speeches are delivered in front of an audience of three members capable of making informed decisions and reasoning. The audience can be friends, family members, teammates or co-workers. The speeches are then recorded via webcam, and then uploaded to the course management software for instructor evaluation/feedback and student feedback.

**Infusing Treatment into the Course Design**

Exposure therapy was infused into the course through its design, which consists of increasingly-challenging speaking experiences throughout the course “to reduce reactivity by graduated exposure to speaking situations of greater potential stimulation” (Bodie, 2010, p. 87).

This type of “exposure” therapy has been utilized by psychotherapists to treat phobias from spiders to fear of flying, and it is also an essential element in building competence as well as confidence in public speaking in the college classroom (McCroskey, Ralph, & Barrick, 1970). Moreover, every time a student gave a speech or discussed his or her topic, ideas, or source material with the instructor or other students, he or she was engaging in this type of “repeated exposure” therapy.

Elements of cognitive modification, such as those tested by Fremouw & Scott (1979), were also included in the course design. Students were trained to identify their negative feelings about public speaking and replace them with positive attitudes, experiences, and strengths-based feedback. PSA readings, online resources and discussions offered the students a restruc-
tured, alternative view of anxiety as a normal and frequent human trait. In this way, students were given opportunities to practice “realistic thinking” (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 2004, p. 81) acknowledging that the problem of anxiety exists, and acknowledging one’s challenges as a speaker, but viewing these challenges through a strengths-based lens. Also, in the online course the instructors are trained to provide positive, encouraging feedback along with critique. In the calibration for the course, instructors partake in training on creating useful and reliable feedback for student speeches. Instructors are asked to identify one or two strengths about a student’s speech for every constructive criticism or limitation identified. This type of evaluative feedback helps build student confidence. Cognitive modification allowed for improved attitudes toward PSA and, hence, toward public speaking.

Finally, competence training inherent to the course built public speaking skills, which are vital to the reduction of PSA (Adler, 1980; Kelly, 1997). The online public speaking program examined in this study was crafted to enhance student competency through assigned readings and testing on classroom concepts related to skill development, and through student participation in online discussion boards. As a result, the skills training provides a major portion of the instructors’ assistance in helping their students to achieve greater confidence in public speaking.

Participants

Participants in this study (N = 147) were undergraduate students (n = 46 males, n = 101 females) at a mid-sized Midwestern university, each enrolled in a sec-
tion of the online basic speech communication course. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 54 ($M = 20.63$, $SD = 5.28$). Because this course fulfills a university general education requirement, a variety of student majors were represented.

**Procedure**

A purposive sample was drawn in order to assess the PSA and SPCC of students in the online basic speech course. The sampling frame for the questionnaire included all students enrolled in the course for four semesters, about 335 students. Upon university approval for human subjects, the students were offered extra credit for completing the questionnaire once during the first ten days of the semester, as well as a second time (a posttest) during the final week of the semester. The pretest and posttest portion of the analysis garnered a return rate of 44 percent with 147 students completing both the pre and posttest.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

PSA was operationalized for numerical analysis and pretest/posttest comparison by utilizing McCroskey’s (1970) Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). The questions on the PRPSA are written on a 5-point Likert-type scale, 1 being “strongly agree” and 5 being “strongly disagree,” indicating how well each statement applies to the participant. This questionnaire consists of 34 statements that measure levels of anxiety that are solely speech related. Each statement describes a personal characteristic such as “My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.”
results indicate whether the person has high (131 and above), moderate (98-130), or low anxiety (below 98). Reports of PRPSA means are not often published as the impetus of the instrument is designed and used to identify highly anxious students (Pribyl et al., 2001). However, Hunter et al. (2014) reported a mean PRPSA score of 114.83 (within the moderate range) for their sample of college students (n=468) entering the basic communication course, an anxiety level nearly identical to that reported in McCroskey’s (1970) research (n=945) from over four decades ago (114.6). The PRPSA scale has proven to be highly reliable (Smith & Frymier, 2006). The reliability for PRPSA in the current study was α = .93 initial course and α = .95 post course.

Competence has been operationalized in several ways, including objective observation, subjective observation, self-report and receiver-report (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). One of the more consistently-used measures in research has been the self-report method, especially when CC is linked to PSA (Ellis, 1995; Hinton & Kramer, 1998; MacIntyre & MacDonald, 1998; Rubin et al., 1997). Considering the aim of this study, with regard to assessing the online basic public speaking course, a self-report measure was utilized. Because of concerns surrounding student growth and development in online courses (Miller, 2010), the self-report measure afforded an opportunity to determine students’ own beliefs before and after the course.

SPCC was operationalized by using McCroskey and McCroskey’s (1988) Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale. This measure was developed to obtain information concerning how competent people feel in a variety of communication contexts and with differ-
ent types of receivers (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The questions on the scale ask respondents to rate their perceived communication competence for 12 different scenarios. Participants are asked to score their competence from zero (completely incompetent) to 100 (fully competent). Each statement represents a communication scenario such as “Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.” The score for the instrument is obtained using a mathematical formula which provides the total for the SPCC scale, indicating the level of competence a person perceives that he or she possesses. For the total SPCC score, any number above 86 denotes that the participant has a high-perceived level of CC while scores below 51 indicate a low perception of one’s CC. In addition, scores for the public, meeting, group, and dyadic contexts are provided. Further computation can be completed to measure SPCC in reference to the receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends) (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The SPCC scale has proven to be reliable (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The reliability for SPCC in the current study was $\alpha = .80$ at the outset of the course and $\alpha = .90$ post course.

RESULTS

Split-plot ANOVAs were utilized to determine whether there were changes in the dependent variables (public speaking anxiety and self-perceived communication competency) over the course of a semester. This design also allowed for the testing of interactions based on students’ gender. Alpha was set at $p < .05$ unless noted.

This study’s first hypothesis predicted that students enrolled in the online basic public speaking course...
would have significantly lower trait-like PSA upon completion of the class than they had upon entering the course. This hypothesis was supported. A within-subjects, split-plot analysis showed that the pretest mean score ($M = 117.04$, $SD = 20.79$) was 8.14 points higher than the posttest mean score ($M = 108.90$, $SD = 21.17$). Thus, a significant decrease was found between the mean PRPSA scores from the beginning of the semester to the end ($F(1, 145) = 28.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .162$).

This study’s first hypothesis also predicted that in the online basic public speaking course there would be a significant ordinal interaction between gender and trait-like PSA before/after the course. A $2 \times 2$ split-plot ANOVA was used to measure the interaction between the dependent variables (pre-PRPSA and post-PRPSA) and the independent variable (gender). No ordinal interaction was found between PRPSA time $\times$ gender ($F(1,145) = .514$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2_p = .004$). As noted above, there was a significant main effect from pretest to posttest. Also, there was a significant main effect for gender ($F(1, 145) = 5.85$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .039$). Female participants’ pretest PRPSA scores ($M = 119.92$, $SD = 22.15$) averaged 9.22 points higher than male participants’ scores ($M = 110.70$, $SD = 15.97$). In addition, females’ posttest PRPSA scores ($M = 111.13$, $SD = 23.19$) were also significantly higher than the male participants ($M = 104.01$, $SD = 14.98$). Females’ posttest scores averaged 7.12 points higher than the males’. Female students lowered their PRPSA scores by 8.79, while men lowered their PRPSA score by 6.69. Female participants did have higher PRPSA scores than men at the beginning and end of the course, however, female scores decreased by a greater amount than males. Thus, by the end of
course, the female students’ PRPSA was closer to the males score during pretest—thus, helping to close the gender gap in PRPSA between females and males.

This study’s second hypothesis predicted that students enrolled in the online basic public speaking course would show significantly higher self-perceived communication competency upon completion of the class than they had upon entering the course. This hypothesis was not supported. A within-subjects split-plot analysis was conducted to determine whether SPCC changed from the beginning of the semester to the end. The posttest mean of 76.88 \( (SD = 15.58) \) was not significantly higher from the pretest mean of 74.52 \( (SD = 16.10) \). No significant increase was found between the mean SPCC scores from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester \( (F(1, 145) = 2.42, p > .05, \eta_p^2 = .016) \).

This study’s second hypothesis also predicted that in the online basic public speaking course there would be a significant ordinal interaction between gender and self-perceived communication competency before/after the course. This hypothesis was not supported. A 2 × 2 split-plot ANOVA was used to measure the ordinal interaction between the dependent variables (pre-SPCC and post-SPCC) and the independent variable (gender). The SPCC time × gender interaction \( (F(1, 145) = .001, p > .05, \eta_p^2 = .016) \) failed to produce a significant ordinal interaction. Also, as noted above, the main effect for SPCC time was not significant. Moreover, the main effect for gender \( (F(1, 145) = .276, p > .05, \eta_p^2 = .002) \) was not significant.

To extend our understanding on the impact of SPCC, a split-design ANOVA was used to determine the ordinal interactions between the pretest and posttest
SPCC subsets and gender, as well as the significant main effects. With regard to the communication contexts measured within the SPCC, three of the four contexts (public, group, and dyad) produced no significant ordinal interactions. The main effect for gender was also not significant ($F(1, 145) = .943, p > .05, \eta^2_p = .006$). However, one significant main effect was found in a particular communication context. The main effect for the SPCC context pertaining to communication in meetings was significant ($F(1, 145) = 8.458, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .055$).

This means that students in the online course increased their SPCC in meetings from the beginning of the semester ($M = 64.87, SD = 21.63$) to the end of the semester ($M = 70.14, SD = 18.95$).

With regard to the SPCC with particular types of receivers, two of the three types (acquaintance and friend) produced no significant ordinal interactions. Also, the main effect for gender ($F(1, 145) = .654, p > .05, \eta^2_p = .004$) was not significant, but one significant main effect was found for a particular receiver type. The main effect for SPCC stranger was significant ($F(1, 145) = 16.672, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .103$). Over the course of the semester, students’ SPCC in communicating with strangers increased from the beginning of the semester ($M = 58.62, SD = 23.32$) to the end of the semester ($M = 66.51, SD = 20.85$).

**DISCUSSION/COURSE IMPLICATIONS**

The comparison of pretest to posttest PRPSA means showed a statistically-significant decrease in PSA upon completion of the online public speaking course compared to scores upon first entering the course, thus the
first research hypothesis was confirmed. Hence, the system of teaching the online basic speech course infused with exposure therapy, cognitive modification, and skills training was successful at lowering trait-like PSA by an average of 8.14 points. This significant decrease in trait-like PSA suggests that the online basic public speaking course does provide a quality educational setting which produces measurable increases in skill development and student growth. Emanuel (2005) stated that the main purpose of the basic course is career preparation, and Kinnick, Holler, and Bell (2011) further asserted that one of the primary goals of most basic communication courses is the reduction of public speaking anxiety. Furthermore, McCroskey (1984) has asserted that increased PSA can act as a barrier to career accomplishments. Therefore, significant decreases in PSA are a marker of student growth that evidences educational quality, hence helping diminish, to some extent, the concerns about the online basic public speaking instruction identified by instructors like Helvie-Mason (2010) and Miller (2010).

It is worth noting however, that previous research by Hunter et al. (2014) explored the changes in PSA for students enrolled in the traditional, face-to-face basic speech course and found a significant decrease from pre-test to posttest that reduced the students’ PSA by an average of 13.21 points. Russell (1999) suggested that the wealth of studies finding “no significant difference” between online and face-to-face courses served as evidence that these two environments produced roughly equivalent outcomes for student learning. Although we are not able to directly compare the results of this study to the Hunter et al. (2014) study, there may be a differ-
ence in student outcomes between online and face-to-face instructional contexts for the basic public speaking course. Future research should explore a side-by-side comparison of traditional and face-to-face courses in their ability to reduce public speaking anxiety.

Hypothesis one also proposed that there would be a significant ordinal interaction between students’ gender and trait-like PSA before/after the course. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no significant interaction between gender and pretest/posttest PRPSA. However, the main effect for gender and pretest/posttest was significant. These results are similar to previous research which found that females have regularly reported higher PSA than males (Friedrich, 1970; Hunter et al., 2014; McCroskey et al., 1982). Although women’s speaking anxiety remained significantly higher than men’s at the end of the online course, both genders benefited from the triangulated treatment for anxiety reduction. This finding is particularly important, given the Hunter et al. (2014) finding that the basic public speaking course in the face-to-face context was able to erase significant gender differences in PSA, while this study found that the online course was unable to do so. Future comparisons of the two instructional contexts is warranted to ascertain the extent of the differences between their outcomes.

A second hypothesis that arose out of the literature review predicted a positive change in students’ SPCC from the beginning of the semester to the end through the online basic speech course. This hypothesis was not confirmed. Although the online course design was able to increase students’ perception of their communication competency by 2.36 points, this increase was not statis-
tically significant. Research by Rubin et al. (1990) and Rubin et al. (1995) demonstrated that face-to-face communication instruction significantly helped students both overcome anxiety and improve perceived competency. While the current study did find a significant small/moderate change in PSA, the change in students’ SPCC was limited and not significant. The small change in SPCC may be explained by the previous findings of MacIntyre and MacDonald (1998) who suggested that speakers look to their audiences for feedback and support during their presentations. A majority of face-to-face basic course sections enroll 23-26 students (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010) who serve as both speakers and audience members. However, in the online course evaluated, the students are asked to present their speeches to an audience of only three individuals. Moreover, these three individuals need not have any previous speech training. Thus, the difference in the required audience size and the communication competency of the selected audience may have reduced the impact of the course’s exposure therapy as compared with that in face-to-face courses, hence diminishing the online course’s impacts on improving students’ perceptions of their communication competency. This is one particular area that is worthy of additional investigation. Do online courses that require larger audiences who consist of people trained in public speaking help students improve their SPCC more than those that require small, untrained audiences? These findings would be of great use to basic course directors and faculty who teach in the online context and are concerned with increasing students’ self-perceived communication competency.
Hypothesis two also proposed that there would be a significant ordinal interaction between students’ gender and SPCC before/after the course. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no significant interaction between gender and pretest/posttest SPCC. Although females’ SPCC scores were lower than males’ during the pretest and the posttest, the difference was not significant. These results contradict Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) who found significantly lower SPCC for females when compared to males. The lack of significant difference between females’ and males’ SPCC may suggest that gender differences are waning. However, the lack of change could also be related to the online context used to teach this course. Thus, additional research is needed to assess the differences in impacts on SPCC between online and traditional courses. Also, the impact of gender, as it relates to SPCC, needs further exploration as potential differences in gender could be a disadvantage to female students (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004).

While analyzing SPCC, the various constructs measured in the SPCC instrument (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) afforded additional data analysis and results. The SPCC measure explored students’ perceptions of their SPCC as well as seven subsets of perceived competency. Within the seven subsets of SPCC, significant differences were found between students’ pretest and posttest perceived communication competency within only two of them: the meeting context and for communicating with strangers. Students enrolled in the online basic public speaking course had significantly higher meeting SPCC at the end of the course than they had at the beginning. However, there were no significant changes in the public, group, or dyad context. The
significant change in meeting SPCC is surprising considering the research by MacIntyre & MacDonald (1998) who suggested that speakers look to their audiences for feedback and support during their presentations. The online course used for this study asked speakers to have an audience of three members. Yet, the group context of the SPCC instrument inquires about a students’ self-perception of talking in a “large meeting.” Thus, there appears to be a relationship between the size of the online audience and students’ self-perception of their meeting SPCC. However, further exploration of the SPCC contexts is needed to illuminate these differences in both traditional and online sections of the basic course. Perhaps more startling than the significant change in the meeting context is the lack of change in the public, group, and dyad contexts. Communication educators should explore additional techniques and pedagogical choices which will increase these elements of students' SPPC as they relate to student growth and development in the online course.

The SPCC scale also identified perceived competency for communicating with different types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, and friends). There were no significant differences in acquaintance and friend SPCC from the beginning of the course to the end. However, there was a significant difference in SPCC with strangers at the beginning of the course versus that at the end. These results can, perhaps, be explained by the online course design. Although students are required to have a live audience, their speeches are delivered to a camera which limits the interaction with the live audience (which is typically comprised of friends and acquaintances). Moreover, the students are required to
watch their classmates’ speeches and provide written criticism to their classmates, but students enrolled in the online sections of the basic public speaking course have typically not been introduced to one another. Thus, unlike in many traditional, face-to-face basic public speaking courses, one’s classmates are likely still perceived as strangers, even by the end of the course. As a result, over the course of the semester, students can develop more perceived competency for communicating with their online classmates (strangers) than with their live audience (friends and acquaintances). Again, this result indicates that additional research is needed to explore the impact of course design on the SPCC subsets and student development. Future research should test whether online course interventions designed to elicit stronger relationships among classmates would enhance overall student SPCC by the end of the course.

**Limitations/Future Research**

Limitations of this study include the absence of a control group and the self-reporting nature of the PRPSA and SPCC data. The absence of a control group limits the study in that it cannot be ascertained that the treatment (the online basic speech course) is the only factor significantly decreasing the students’ levels of public speaking anxiety. Since nearly all of the participants were first-year students or sophomores, the research may also be measuring the development of greater confidence that is likely to accompany the college experience, rather than the effects of the course alone. At the university studied, approximately half of all incoming freshman take the basic public speaking
course their first semester of college, and the other half are enrolled for their second semester. Future studies may be able to test all incoming first-year students for PSA and SPCC before they begin any coursework, once they have been enrolled in classes for a few weeks, and finally at the end of the semester. In this way, students who take the public speaking course immediately upon entering college can be compared with a control group of students who are taking other courses at that time and have not yet enrolled in public speaking.

Another potential limitation of the current study pertains to the self-report methods of the instruments used to gather data. Perhaps a richer analysis could be derived through in-depth interviews, focus groups or a triangulation of these methods. Additional qualitative measures for data gathering and analysis would also aid in ascertaining the causes of the PSA as well as, perhaps, offering a way to validate further the PRPSA’s and SPCC’s findings.

**CONCLUSION**

As communication programs and basic course directors are asked to provide evidence of successful student outcomes for online basic public speaking courses, measures such as the PRPSA (McCroskey, 1970) and the SPCC scale (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) can gain renewed impacts for instructors and departments who seek to assess these variables in an online context. Programs concerned about whether their courses will achieve similar PSA decreases within online basic speech courses might consider redesigning curricula to include the three-prongs of PSA-alleviating instruction.
and practice tested in the model discussed in this analysis. Furthermore, the lack of change in SPCC found in this study suggests that online instructors should consider the relationship between the speaker and the audience as part of the online course design.

SPCC is impacted by instructional context. This study did not find any significant differences between pre- and posttest assessment of SPCC. MacIntyre & MacDonald (1998) suggested that the presence of an audience may reinforce the nature of the public speaking experience and how speakers perceive themselves and their level of competency. The lack of findings relative to SPCC suggests that online course design should be reflective on the need of a substantially large audience.

PSA is a common apprehension that impairs the life satisfaction and career success of many of its sufferers. However, through the treatment of speaking anxiety that involves a three-pronged approach of exposure therapy, cognitive restructuring, and skills-training, much of the negative impact of this dilemma can be lessened. The overall findings of this study supported the true importance of the basic speech course at the university level, specifically within the online context. The significant reduction in speaking anxiety within the online course is promising and suggests that this student learning goal can be met in this instructional setting. However, since enhancing students’ self-perceived communication competence remains a critical learning outcome of the basic communication course, these findings suggest that online course development heighten focus on SPCC-related interventions.
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A Model for the Development of a Sustainable Basic Course in Communication

Samuel P. Wallace

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970’s, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Carnegie Foundation, 1977) famously likened the state of general education to a “disaster area,” and argued that, in its current form, it significantly diminished the value of a college degree. Instead of viewing this damming assessment as a call to arms, the response from schools was meek and further muddled programs that were already confusing. Many simply added new areas in which students were required to take classes and did little to integrate general education into major programs of study. This unfortunate response is illustrated by a later report issued by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2002).

In 1994, the AACU examined general education at member institutions and found three fundamental problems with its form and substance that echoed the assessment of the Carnegie Foundation (AACU, 1994). First, general education programs lacked any coherent organizing philosophy that students could comprehend, creating the perception of the core as separate and not part of major areas of study. Second, general education courses presented a fragmented core experience because they lacked any connection with each other. Finally,
students did not understand the value or purpose of general education, which resulted in a lack of motivation to study for these courses or to take them seriously. In response to this state of affairs, the AACU called for outcome driven general education programs that actually connected the core with the major areas of study (AACU, 2002). In 2009, the AACU commissioned a study by Hart Research Associates that showed institutions both recognized the problems and were beginning to do something about them by reforming general education programs. Even though many positive steps to reform and improve are underway, they present significant challenges for designing, implementing, and maintaining courses in the new curricula.

The purpose of the current essay is to provide clarity and direction for developing a course that fits the description recommended by the AACU. The essay illustrates how the concept of outcome driven courses presents both a change from traditional perspectives of the basic communication course as well as an opportunity to integrate communication content into a student’s broader college education. In addition, based on the development of the new basic communication course at a medium-sized Midwestern university, the essay proposes a model that emerged from the experience. The model should provide support and direction for departments in the development of sustainable courses that respond to the criticisms made by the Carnegie Foundation and by the AACU. Overall, the essay argues that the keys to sustainable courses include careful development, integration, rigorous assessment, and adaptability.
THE BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE AND CURRICULAR REFORM

Former National Communication Association (NCA) President Frank E.X. Dance once called the basic communication course “the bread and butter” course for the discipline because of the revenue and support it creates for communication departments across the country (Dance, 2002). Additionally, in 2012 one of his successors, Richard West, suggested that perhaps there should be a standard basic communication course in much the same way as psychology has a standard approach to its entry-level course (West, 2012). Finally, in 2013, West’s successor, Stephen Beebe, made strengthening the basic communication course his presidential initiative and formed two task forces to explore how that could be accomplished. The focus NCA presidents have placed on the course is appropriate as it has been a central component of general education programs for decades. The centrality and importance of the basic communication course to the discipline, departments, and institutions places its configuration in the crosshairs of the reforms sought by the AACU. In addition to course development, designers need to more carefully consider the integration of the course into the environment where it will “live.” As nearly every environment is different (and sometimes very different), the notion of a “standard” basic course is problematic.

The State of the Basic Course. Although there are multiple iterations of the basic course around the country, two forms dominate. In the latest of numerous analyses on basic course delivery models, Morreale, Worley & Hugenberg (2010) found that 86.7% of the
basic courses in the country were either focused on public speaking or so-called hybrid courses that combine segments on public speaking, interpersonal communication and small group communication. The subject of integration into general education did not appear on the Morreale, et al. survey. It bears noting that the 1996 NCA Policy Platform Statement on the Role of Communication Courses in General Education (NCA, 1996) endorsed the inclusion of a communication course in every institution’s general education program. More recently, the NCA Revised Resolution on the Role of Communication in General Education (2012) as well as the AACU Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative both strongly support the inclusion of oral communication in general education and an outcomes-based approach to those courses.

In their study of online learning, Clark and Jones (2001) concentrated on community colleges, as those schools offer a huge portion of basic courses across the country. The focus on community college students is relevant and reasonable especially since, as Engleberg, Emanuel, Van Horn, & Bodary (2008) pointed out, 83% of two-year institutions require an oral communication course in their general education programs, compared to the 55.3% of four-year institutions reported by Morreale, et al. (2010). Nevertheless, the majority of schools require the basic communication course, and as Craig (2006) notes, few departments on any campus can claim to have a course all students travel through. Even so, this boast is based on a model in which classes, and not necessarily learning outcomes, are required of students.
Professional groups also share the discipline’s commitment to oral communication instruction, further underscoring its placement in an outcomes-driven general education program. Crosling & Ward (2002) surveyed professional groups and businesses and reported that most employers wanted oral communication training for business majors before they graduated. This was echoed in the Hart Associates (2009) report when they referenced a 2006 study commissioned by the AACU that found 73% of business leaders and executives in the private sector felt colleges and universities should spend more time cultivating communication skills, but did not specify how that was to be done, or even what was meant by “communication skills.” Kelly (2008) found similar results regarding the educational needs of engineering students. This evidence illustrates the need for communication instruction in college curricula, but fails to provide any clear direction on what type of instruction is needed.

Considering the strong need for direction, it is becoming more apparent that the focus should be on student learning outcomes. While the basic communication course has traditionally reflected more of the distribution approach to general education (the requirement that students take specific courses to achieve a well-rounded education), that model is beginning to fade as more schools move toward an outcomes-driven approach. The question now is: what would a basic course in communication look like with such an approach?

An Outcome-Driven Basic Course. The extensive research on the basic course illustrates that it can, and sometimes does, provide instruction on important skills and abilities for students; perhaps the very same skills
and abilities sought by professional organizations. For example Hunt, Novak, Semlak & Meyer (2005) found that students who completed the basic course demonstrated increased critical thinking skills, leading Mazer, Hunt, & Kuznekoff (2007) to argue the course should make critical thinking an outcome. These studies help provide a mechanism to assess critical thinking as an outcome, but there is a need to investigate other possible student learning outcomes for the basic course.

There are useful cases to which schools can look for assistance in creating programs that are outcome driven. For example, a large public Midwestern university's faculty sought to move away from the distribution model to the outcome-centered approach advocated by the AACU. The general education program was rebranded with a different name and the University “centered [it] around student achievement of ten distinct learning outcomes” and a commitment “to assessing student achievement of the outcomes” (Fuess, Jr. & Mitchell, 2011). Unlike a traditional general education program in which students took courses in categories that often did not connect with each other, students at this university were required to pass a certified course for each learning outcome in order to graduate. The new program allowed for the integration of general education into major curricula and establishes “a new and better understanding of the undergraduate educational experience” (Wehlberg, 2010, p. 6). It is important to note that this program does not require courses in the traditional sense, but rather outcomes for which students must demonstrate mastery. Certain courses can achieve multiple outcomes and thus double count in a student's curriculum. This experience is instructive and useful for
 redesigning programs, but falls a bit short of identifying a process for how specific courses can be adjusted to a more outcome driven approach.

Case Study. To help fill this gap, this essay describes the experience at the University of Dayton, a medium-sized private Midwestern university that developed a new general education core. This particular experience provides an even more glaring warning about the impact to communication departments and the basic communication course when general education focuses on outcomes and not courses. It is no surprise that this school responded to the calls for general education reform from the AACU because integrative education is central to this university’s mission. After an extensive review and using the University’s mission statement as a guide, a faculty committee settled on seven essential student learning outcomes that would comprise the heart of general education at the institution. These outcomes now serve as the guiding principles and rudimentary evaluative framework for courses that seek to be required in the new general education program. Unfortunately, one of the casualties in the first iteration of this new curriculum was the oral communication requirement, which was eliminated as it was initially perceived by the faculty committee as unconnected to any of the seven outcomes.

When the old oral communication approach was summarily dismissed, the Department of Communication quickly moved to create a new course that would be designed to make a significant contribution to the achievement of at least some of the new core learning outcomes. As part of this process, a department committee surveyed administrators and faculty members across
the campus to determine whether a required oral communication course was even needed. Following this extensive consultation, the department committee determined that a new basic course needed to be developed and that four main outcomes, identified partially through the consultation process, would provide the focus of the course. These outcomes included the ability to explain complicated or specialized ideas to non-experts, to advocate a position using credible evidence, to engage in civil dialogue about controversial ideas, and to analyze and critically evaluate the oral messages of others. The committee then mapped the four course-related student learning outcomes back to the university outcomes. It was recognized that student learning outcomes could be achieved in a variety of ways, and so the committee began testing course designs well in advance of the arrival of the first cohort of students who would be required to take it. A fortunate by-product of the process used to develop the outcomes-based foundation communication course was the emergence of a model that other institutions can follow when designing a course, reforming a course, or trying to sustain an ongoing presence in general education.

**The Development of a Sustainable, Outcomes-Based Basic Course**

In Fall 2011, the department committee began to design the first round of pilots for the new basic course. That course design was influenced by several factors, both internal and external to the department, and those factors are briefly reviewed in this section.
**Influence of Mission.** Every college or university has a mission statement, and that statement permeates (or should permeate) the mission of all units at the institution. As such, the mission of the university, college or division, and specific departments all influence the development of general education courses. Additionally, the institutional mission is reflected general education mission, so the general education plays a role in course development and design as well.

Well-crafted and carefully considered mission statements normally contain a good deal of latitude for interpretation. Nevertheless, items that define the uniqueness of a university always stand out. This medium-sized private university is a comprehensive institution that values both research and teaching with specific emphasis on linking the two. Second, it is interested in educating the whole person, which indicates an emphasis on liberal education for all its students. This University is focused on broad interdisciplinary education grounded in solid scholarship and research, so it is imperative that classes reflect this value structure.

In addition to the university mission, The College of Arts & Sciences, where most liberal arts education courses are found at this school, has a mission. Its statement says that liberal learning is essential for responsible, engaged, and worthwhile living. It teaches students to reason and communicate clearly, to think analytically and critically, and to appreciate the value of global, societal, and individual perspectives. Any course aspiring to support and remain central to the mission of the College should somehow support this perspective, which is clearly derived from the University’s mission statement.
The Department of Communication, which is housed within the College of Arts & Sciences, has an even more specific mission statement for its courses. The mission promises a theoretically and professionally oriented communication education; one that promotes research that advances the communication discipline, and supports service in the department, university, profession, and community. The Department’s student learning outcomes suggest that, upon graduation, communication majors should be able to effectively articulate messages, to critically analyze messages, to make communicative choices within an ethical framework, to engage in culturally diverse communities, and to adapt to evolving communication challenges. Four of these student learning outcomes find their roots in the University mission. To support the mission of the Department, the new foundation course was designed to contribute to the achievement of as many of these student learning outcomes as possible within the parameters of the course.

Finally, course designers carefully examined the mission of general education as articulated by the AACU when developing classes for the core. At this medium-sized institution, the new program reflects the trends in higher education moving from an instructional paradigm to a learning paradigm, as described by Barr and Tagg (1995), where the focus is much more on student learning and a good deal less on faculty teaching. To adhere to this new philosophy and to support the mission of the University, the basic course was to be developed in such a way that its course description and goals could be traced or mapped back to the missions articulated here.
Objections could be raised to adapting the basic course in communication to general education curricula because it might suggest “selling out” just to get enrollment. However, a close tie between general education programs and the basic course in communication is nothing new. Oral communication classes have been a part of general education programs nearly since the inception of general education, as those programs contained requirements for students to take courses in the humanities and the sciences (Cohen, 1988; Thomas, 1962). The basic course in communication supports, and is supported by, many general education programs. The oral communication course supplies some essential knowledge and skills, and the general education curricula supplies the large enrollments that fund many graduate programs as well as to provide instructional training and experience to new teachers in the field (Valenzano, Wallace, & Morreale, 2014). As a result, it can be argued that Communication departments who fail to adapt to and integrate with general education curricula do so at their peril.

External Influences. Although the scaffolding of missions within a university is an important influence on a general education course, it is not the only influence to which a course should respond. General education courses serve students from all majors on campus, so those constituencies should also be consulted in the course development process to identify what they believe are primary outcomes for the basic communication course. For this example, consultation took place during the initial stages of the process to make sure the course adequately reflected their concerns and the needs of the students. This process involved representatives of the
Department interviewing faculty members and administrators in more than 30 departments spanning all the academic divisions. If a foundation course in Communication is to survive and thrive in the new program, it should fulfill a genuine need as perceived by the constituent departments.

An unexpected but considerable challenge came in the form of how to begin those conversations. The representatives of the department quickly discovered that asking faculty members about the oral communication needs of their students resulted in the interpretation of “oral communication” as “to give a speech,” and perhaps to use a visual aid such as PowerPoint. The immediate and powerful reaction made it clear that these were things that client departments felt were unnecessary. When framed as fairly specific communication learning outcomes for their students, however, the demeanor of the constituent departments changed. In fact, after lively exchanges, many colleagues offered to continue to supply feedback during the development and pilot testing of the new course and expressed an interest in ongoing consultation. The specific knowledge and skills identified by the client departments during this process helped form the student learning outcomes for the new basic course.

To truly be a foundational and integrative course for all students, the skills and information imparted in the new course needed to be incorporated into other courses students would take during their time at the university. The schools of Business and Education, and the College of Arts & Sciences all had specific course and educational experiences that could build on and expand the skills and knowledge acquired in the basic communica-
tion course. In order to respond to the issues presented in the course, it was designed to be taken in the first two years. Previous basic courses in oral communication at this university could be taken at any time prior to graduation.

Another external influence that pertains specifically to the basic communication course, and was discussed earlier, is the importance of communication instruction to employers and professional organizations. Including these groups in the developmental process can be difficult, but the Department managed to conduct a series of interviews with professionals who hire college graduates and depend on them for the success of their various companies. In these discussions, it became apparent that very few of those professionals reported a need for good public speakers. Instead, they identified a need for skills related to careful and open-minded listening, understanding and participating in cultures of organizations and regions, collaboration, ability to explain concepts, the ability to solve problems, the ability to focus clearly on the moment (avoiding distractions), the ability to establish, build, and maintain interpersonal relationships, and the ability to clearly advocate a position.

One final area of influence on course design is the discipline itself. Recently, the field of communication has expanded its approach to foundational knowledge and skills in oral communication. Very recently, conference panels and conversations more and more contain the terms "civility" and "dialogue," and those concepts are beginning to gain traction in communication courses. Consistent with the new trends in the field, with elements identified in the various mission statements, and with needs identified by constituent depart-
ments and employers, the committee decided to design the course with an emphasis on civil dialogue. Additionally, the new course design focused on student learning rather than the completion of specific assignments.

**Specific Constraints.** Institutions vary in many ways. Some have more financial and instructional resources than others, while others have the ability to use larger and better equipped classrooms for instruction. At the institution in question, the technological and physical facilities were up to date enough to allow for the use of fairly sophisticated teaching tools. However, like most other schools, the course needed to be designed for 15-week semesters, meet in established classrooms that typically could accommodate no more than 35 students, and meet one, two, or three times per week for a total of 150 minutes. Finally, there was a need to select which core university learning outcomes the course would seek to achieve. Once finalized, there remained only a very short time to pilot and assess sections of the course and to adjust the design to meet the goals of the course as well as the new general education program.

**Self-Monitoring and Revision: Pilot Testing.** Once the student learning outcomes were identified, the development team set about testing a variety of different assignments, materials and instructional methods. As this team believed that learning outcomes could be achieved in a number of ways, several approaches were tested over the course of the pilots. For example, one of the sections in the first round of pilots designed an assignment to achieve the “explanation” outcome by requiring students to use online meeting software to make
the presentation to class members who were located all over campus, one section used a “committee” environment, and the third section used a more typical public speaking scenario.

**Pilot One** consisted of three sections of twenty students each. Although the student learning outcomes were the same, each section in this round of testing used different assignments, methods, and instructional materials to try to understand what worked best. In addition to an externally administered Midterm Instructional Diagnosis (MID) and individual interviews conducted with all 60 students at the end of the term, this first-round assessment included a twenty-item pre/posttest attempting to measure mastery of content. The most significant issue that emerged was related to the need to reconsider the required readings. There was a need for a textbook representing a single voice; a need for a textbook written at a level to challenge the students in the course; and a need for content relevant to civility, dialogue, and especially explanation.

**Pilot Two** was made up of twelve sections. In this pilot, the assignments were much more standardized, a single textbook was created to try to address the issues identified in Pilot One, a revised version of the pre/posttest for measuring content mastery was implemented for basic content assessment, a rubric for assessing performance-based assignments was tested, and instead of interviews (which were impractical with the large increase in students in the course) an open-ended survey was administered at the end of the term to gather information on strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.
Pilot Three was the final round of testing, and this group grew to 15 sections. This was the last chance to “clean up” any remaining issues before the class became an official university-wide requirement and expanded to about 44 sections per term. For this final series of pilot sections, the assignments were standardized, the pre/posttest for content mastery was “tweaked” to improve reliability, and the evolving rubric for evaluating performance assignments was revised to better describe the various levels of student achievement.

It should be noted that the end of pilot testing does not mean the end of content and performance based assessments, revisions to course materials and assignments, intense instructor training, or gathering student feedback. Once developed, sustaining a course requires ongoing activity in all of these areas to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to provide a path for improvement.

REFLECTIONS: TOWARD A MODEL OF COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The model presented here is based on the following assumptions: First, the basic course should make a positive contribution to supporting the mission of the University and to supporting the mission of the general education program. Second, the basic course should make a positive contribution to developing the specific skills and knowledge identified by constituent departments as necessary for the development and success of their students both before and after graduation. Third, the basic course should respond to the feedback provided by professionals regarding the oral communication knowledge
and skills needed for success in their organizations. Fourth, the approach to the basic course in Communication should reflect the best thinking, practices, and research of the field of Communication. Finally, having established itself as central to the support of the University mission, responding to the needs of the constituent department and the related professions, and reflecting the best thinking of the field of Communication, the basic course will be much more resistant to administrative challenge when questions of budget, necessity, or mission arise.

The model is perhaps best viewed from a systems orientation such that anything that affects one part of the model will potentially affect all parts of the model. The model itself contains five major components: environmental influences, the course mission, student learn-
Environmental Influences. Because no general education course can exist in a vacuum or in isolation, any model must consider how the environment affects and interacts with the course as well as how the course affects and interacts with its environment. Those factors that seem to be most salient to the basic course and should likely be considered in its design are: The mission of the University; the mission of the General Education Program; the mission of the College or Division; the mission of the department; the needs or requirements of constituent departments; the requirements of the professional marketplace; possible constraints such as legislative/administrative or other mandates affecting the course, or procedural or structural constraints (for example, length of class periods, classroom space, the length of the academic term, etc.); relevant perspectives and best practices of the field of Communication; and other classes or educational experiences that might build on this foundation.

The Course Mission. The course mission should reflect, to an appropriate degree, the environmental influences. The statement of the mission should be a description of the course content along with generalized course goals or objectives, philosophy, or other guiding principles.

Student Learning Outcomes. Based on the learning paradigm, these outcomes should directly reflect the course mission. What specific knowledge should be gained or skills acquired by students as a result of tak-
ing this class? What will students know? What will students be able to do? What will students be able to demonstrate? They should be high priority items that are focused and specific, and they should be both actionable and measurable.

**Course Design.** The design is the specific strategy that will be used to accomplish course goals. The design of the course should be directly focused on the achievement of the student learning outcomes. This design should include the basic structure of the class, the choice of literature or readings, the development of assignments and/or activities designed to achieve specific goals, and methods of evaluation of student performance. A common mistake is to create assignments and then try to somehow fit the student learning outcomes to them; the learning outcomes must come first.

![Image of Course Design and Self-Monitoring & Adjustment diagram]

*Figure 2. Course Development as an ongoing Process: Part 2*

**Self-Monitoring and Revision.** This component is commonly referred to as assessment. We chose not to use what has become known as the "A" word in the model because of the negative connotation the term car-
ries in many quarters. Unfortunately, and perhaps for good reason, a typical perception of assessment leans less toward a useful tool for course development and more as useless administrative busywork. While Hess (2013) suggests that “evidence” might be a better term, the model proposed in this essay would suggest “feedback” as another alternative. Whatever it is called, on the more micro level, the self-monitoring function should provide measures or other indicators of how well the SLOs are being achieved and inform the course designer about modifications to assignments or other course structures that might be needed to better achieve the SLOs and enhance student learning. In the particular case of the basic course in communication, careful attention should be paid to assessing content mastery as well as performance or application. On the more macro level, the assessment should provide indicators of how well the course mission is being accomplished, and how well the course mission and design are aligned with the influences that constitute its environment, especially the University Mission, the General Education Mission, and the needs of the constituent departments.

While few models are perfect, the course development model discussed here can be useful and effective for nearly any course aspiring to position itself in the general education curriculum. The outcome-oriented approach makes the course’s efficacy more apparent than the teaching-oriented approach as it changes the argument for inclusion from "What courses should be taught?" to "What outcomes should be achieved?" The basic course in Communication can especially take advantage of the change in perspective to establish its position in general education. Instead of the often chal-
lenged "defense" of the basic course that public speaking is necessary for a well-rounded college education, basic courses in oral communication can demonstrate measurable outcomes that support the mission of the institution, the general education curriculum, and the specific requirements of constituent departments. As those missions and requirements are revised or reconsidered over time, the basic course can adapt. Instead of defending the "one size fits all" (i.e., the way we have always taught it) basic course by merely changing the argument as demands change, the outcome-driven basic course can truly adapt. The Communication faculty will then bring its expertise to the table to design learning experiences to achieve the relevant student learning outcomes.

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Valenzano, Wallace, and Morrall argued that the role of the basic communication course in general education has shifted from a focus on course driven instruction to an outcome-based model of core communication competencies based on feedback from employers and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The changing nature of higher education has necessitated many course directors to build a rationale for keeping their course(s) as a part of general education. Basic course directors have seen a barrage of pleas for help in justifying the importance of the course to administrators through e-mail listservs and at sessions and conversations at conferences. This trend of general education overhaul, which can find the basic course on the outside looking in, has not gone unnoticed.

During his term as National Communication Association (NCA) President, Stephen Beebe established the basic communication course as his presidential initiative. Beebe (2013) referred to the basic course as “our front porch” and solicited resources from directors around the nation to create a repository of resources on the NCA webpage. Also, a resolution was adopted at the 2012 NCA conference arguing for the inclusion of the role of communication in general education in order to help illustrate the necessity of communication skills for students to acquire and maintain jobs following gradua-
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In 2014, a task force commissioned by NCA created a document listing core competencies that should be addressed in introductory communication classes. Additional resources included extensive reference lists and made suggestions on how to teach and assess these competencies.

Communication knowledge and skills in the workplace are often listed as one of the most important attributes employees can possess (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). While this notion is often seen in the popular press, academic researchers have also found that communication skills are a necessity for success in careers and for organizations themselves (Dilenschneider, 1992; Du-Babcock, 2006; Robles, 2012; Roebuck, 2001). The AAC&U (2013) reported that in a national survey of business and nonprofit leaders, 93% of employers indicated that clear communication skills are more important than a potential employee’s undergraduate major. However, a disconnect occurs in identifying exactly which communication skills employers value compared with those valued by academics and students (English, Manton, & Walker, 2007; Rubin & Morreale, 1996, 2000; Shivpuri & Kim, 2004; Wardrope, 2002). It should be noted that while this disconnect occurs, sometimes it is due to other influences such as disciplinary traditions of communication and the overall aim of general education, and an argument can be made that there is more to the basic course than simply vocational training (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013). The focus of the current piece is to provide specific information about communication skills desired by employers that basic course directors and instructors may
not currently understand or utilize due to the vagueness of previous descriptions.

While students from all majors complete coursework in hopes of getting a job and starting a career, students who are not in the communication discipline get their first and possibly only instruction dedicated to communication in the basic course (Valenzano et al., 2014). Therefore, it is incumbent upon basic course directors and instructors to learn which communication skills business leaders desire, recognize where those skills are taught in the basic course, identify where there might be gaps in the current core competencies taught, and show students how these skills are necessary in their future jobs.

**Vocational Training Trends in Higher Education**

Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) conducted an examination of courses offered in communication across 148 four-year institutions and compared these with a similar study by Wardrope (1999) to determine the ten-year trend in types of communication courses offered. Bertelsen and Goodboy concluded that there had been a significant movement to respond “to private and professional demands for communication skills and competencies” (p. 270). Morreale and Pearson (2008) conducted a content analysis of 93 publications including non-academic sources and employer surveys and developed six general themes that showed the importance of communication education for personal and professional success. However, these general themes are not supported with many specific skills valued by professionals in the
In order to specifically tie tangible communication skills necessary in the workplace to introductory communication course pedagogy, the 2014 Basic Course Directors’ Conference included a session inviting business leaders to engage in a conversation about communication in the workplace. Those included on the panel came from a global engineering company, a worldwide branding company, a nonprofit hospital foundation, an international manufacturer of health care products, a national home improvement chain, and an art institute. The panelists and basic course directors and instructors in attendance were able to engage in a dialogue to clarify which communication skills were most desired in future employees and discuss ways to best develop these skills through the basic course curriculum. While each speaker’s presentation and the following question and answer session with the panel provided specific actions and skills, the business leaders were speaking mostly in layman’s terms and, while they were clarifying what they meant through follow-up questions, were not in the phraseology of the communication discipline. This study attempts to translate layman’s terms into phraseology of the communication discipline to determine which needs are being met through the basic course and which are not.

**METHODOLOGY**

While a transcript was unavailable to the authors, they took copious notes and solicited notes from other attendees to provide the data for the current study,
which analyzes statements made by industry professionals at this public conference. From these notes, the authors looked for themes to emerge that related to concepts taught in the basic course based on Morreale, Worley, & Hughenberg’s (2010) most recent basic course survey. The authors also looked for themes that seem currently to be lacking based on the core competency task force recommendation and the aforementioned basic course survey.

The authors aimed to take terms and concepts used by those in industry and translated them into the parlance of the basic course. This was an attempt to identify where these skills are already taught in order to allow basic course directors and instructors to tie their assignments and content to potential workplace communication skills as well as address potential deficiencies. Understanding how to translate terms will better allow instructors to demonstrate the relevance of the course for future employment to students and also address potential changes to explore where the basic course may not be meeting vocational needs. A secondary goal of the study was to allow those in the communication discipline to strengthen the position of the basic course nationally in general education by being able to translate what already is taught into layman’s terms understood by administrators and decision-makers outside the discipline. This analysis can be used as a data point in the argument on how to construct basic courses based on direct feedback from industry professionals and can be compared with the NCA (2014) Core Competencies for Introductory Communication Courses report to see if and how the course can be strengthened further.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Common Skills Taught in the Basic Course

The current study used data collected to determine which skills common to the basic course translate into the business world. The remainder of this section looks at individual skills and uses comments from the panelists to illustrate what we are and are not doing as a discipline to meet students’ communication ability needs.

Thesis Statements

The second panelist from the global branding company made multiple references to specific business communication situations that are analogous to thesis statements. Panelist two stated “meetings need to have a clearly communicated purpose. So do e-mails.” Panelist three from the nonprofit hospital foundation said that it is very “important to explain to coworkers and clients what is about to happen to reduce their uncertainty.” In the question and answer session when the panelists were asked what the most important skills were, one mentioned was to have a point when you speak, which is what our basic course students should be communicating in their thesis statements and then it should be evident they are building the rest of their speech or written assignment around that point. This skill is found as a recommendation in the NCA (2014) Core Competencies Task Force report in the Creating and Analyzing Message Strategies section.
**Extemporaneous Speaking**

While thesis statements are the bedrock for speeches given in the basic course, panelist one from the global engineering company went so far as to say “eliminate the term public speaking.” This panelist stated that extemporaneous speaking was the transferable skill that could be used across many business communication settings and will be done far more often than presenting a public speech. In the question and answer session, the panelists addressed that while presentations will be given in a work setting, employees need to practice these presentations (much like basic course students practice their speeches) so they can be knowledgeable enough to respond extemporaneously to questions from others during and after the presentation. While it could be argued that the Core Competencies Task Force report peripherally recommends this in the Monitoring and Presenting Your Self section, the word extemporaneous does not appear in the document. While it is likely many basic courses do have students speak extemporaneously, it may not be in the fashion or to the extent mentioned at the conference. The panelists listed this as one of the most important skills, stating that employees need the ability to think before they speak and respond to others on the fly based on knowledge they have previously obtained and mentally organized. Extemporaneous speaking other than giving a speech may be an area of deficiency in the basic course as this skill is not explicitly outlined in the NCA recommendations for basic course core competencies.

In addition to extemporaneous speaking skills, the idea of the elevator speech, where an employee has just the duration of an elevator ride to pitch an idea, was
mentioned. This would likely require more planning and memorization, and is analogous to the NCA (2014) Core Competency Task Force recommendation under Creating and Analyzing Message Strategies with the suggestion of developing a one-minute message targeting a specific purpose.

**Audience Analysis**

Another facet of being able to successfully respond to others was pointed out by panelist six from the art institute who stated that traditional college students just entering the working world will likely experience a “generational gap in communication” with at least some of their coworkers, especially ones who have been at the company for many years and have been promoted to the level of the incoming workers’ boss. Therefore, audience analysis of the formalities of communication within the company is essential for new employees to understand. Similarly, we ask our students to analyze the audience for speeches in the basic course when choosing topics and adapting their speeches utilizing what they know about to whom they are speaking. While audience analysis may be a confusing term for students who think about it as only relating to speeches, NCA (2014) recommends the core competency of adapting to others; discussing audience analysis on a broader scale may be a potential area of improvement for basic course instructors to clarify the transferability of the skill.

**Establishing Credibility**

Analyzing your audience and conveying that you have their interests at heart also can lead to establishing credibility, which was typically referred to by the
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Panelists as establishing trust. Panelist three stressed the importance of eye contact, which is evaluated through speeches in the basic course. In the question and answer session, other skills listed as being important trust builders were to be inquisitive, which students demonstrate through their research to establish credibility on speech topics and to maintain deadlines, which also is reflected in students’ accountability to one another when working in groups.

Conflict Management

Panelist five from the national home improvement chain stated that, besides establishing credibility, another way of building trust is being able to manage conflict, which is a skill basic course students can learn through group work. Panelist four stressed the ability to handle disagreements through communication and that being able to change one’s mind if necessary can build trust. These manifest themselves in the basic course both when the students are doing group work and in their role as audience members for a persuasive speech. NCA (2014) recommended the core competency of adapting to others, which can be accomplished through the development of conflict management skills.

Ethical Communication

The NCA Credo for Ethical Communication (1999) lists respect for other communicators before responding to their message and honesty as key principles. Some of the communicative behaviors reflecting ethical communication noted by the panelists dealt with listening. Panelist four stated that listening in its entirety to something you disagree with is a valuable skill and one
that the basic course addresses both in ethical communication and persuasion. Panelist one noted the importance of accepting constructive feedback, which shows respect for other communicators and can be accomplished through instructor and peer evaluation of speeches or having respectful discussion and dialogue during class. During the question and answer session, another facet of ethical listening that emerged was the ability to recognize when empathy is needed and the importance of being able to convey it in communication with coworkers. Also in the question and answer session, one of the most important communicative behaviors mentioned was that it is acceptable to say, “I don’t know.” This reflects honesty and could be seen in question and answer sessions following speeches where the class and instructor get to probe the speaker’s knowledge further.

**Implications**

There are implications for both instructors and directors of the basic course. Instructors can find value in relating topics in the basic course to the outside world to provide relevance, among other things, to their students. Basic course directors can also use the information from this study to shape their courses in a way that both introduces students to the communication discipline and provides them with the knowledge that skills learned are transferable after college.

**Instructors**

As previously discussed, those in the professional world may use different terminology for some of the
same communicative behaviors taught in the basic course. It would behoove them to familiarize themselves with these terms and be able to relate those to students as synonyms for terms that are specific to the basic course. In addition, instructors may be able to take some ideas from the discussion above and come up with additional ways of getting students to develop skills such as practicing extemporaneous speaking in ways other than the traditional public speech. Being able to make these connections for the students can also help them understand the importance of the basic course.

Course directors

Course directors can also benefit from learning what specific communication behaviors are valued because they can adapt their course structure and be able to position themselves better when threatened with loss of general education status. Rather than dictating what should be taught based on disciplinary convention, the dialogue with and the vocabulary used by professionals can help the director keep the basic course relevant and advocate for it outside the discipline. Being able to speak to the importance of corporate communication skills without using communication jargon can make a course director a better advocate.

As stated earlier, former NCA president Stephen Beebe coined the phrase that the basic course was the “front porch” of the communication discipline. If basic course advocates are not willing to listen to multiple constituencies and change with the times, it can threaten entire departments. Chairs need to be able to demonstrate the value of the course to administrators in layman’s terms because without it, departments can be
subsumed or disbanded entirely (and have been already).

**CONCLUSION**

The importance of student acquisition of communicative skills for use in the workplace has been discussed in many different forums but has often lacked clarity as to which skills are most important due to a disconnect between academia and industry. Opening a dialogue between the basic course directors and instructors and those who work with our students after they graduate such as the one that took place at the 2014 Basic Course Directors’ Conference allows for greater understanding of what specific communication skills and behaviors are most desired. This analysis is designed to marry the information gathered from the professionals at the conference with basic course pedagogy to create a better understanding of student needs and how to meet those needs.

In addition, this mapping of course assignments to communication behaviors which are valued in the workplace can also strengthen the position of the basic course in general education by providing tangible evidence that what we do is vital in preparing students for the types of communication that they will be required to be proficient in once they graduate and start their careers. There is also value at looking at the gaps in what we teach in relation to the needs of the professional in terms of communicative skills and addressing those through adapting our course. As those who are responsible for possibly the only formal communication instruction a college student receives, basic course direc-
tors and instructors need to be able to translate to students and administrators the relevance of what students get out of the course that will allow them to succeed in the workforce and the consequences of not being formally taught these skills.

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William A. Brantley  
Katherine B. Taylor

The study of public speaking is considered by many to be the foundation upon which the discipline of communication was built; it has evolved into a vast literature of experimental and expository studies (Bodie, 2010). Communication apprehension (CA) is defined as “an individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78) and is an integral part of the study of public speaking. This fear or anxiety is heightened when individuals go beyond basic communication interactions to deliver public speeches. A factor to consider in CA is whether intensive courses such as three- and five-week summer courses actually increase students’ CA instead of helping lower students’ apprehension. In order to address this factor, the authors reviewed the extant literature on intensive courses to build the rationale for this study. To begin, Scott and Conrad (1992) reviewed 50 studies of intensive courses and found mostly equal or superior learning outcomes in comparison to traditional-length courses. Since this groundbreaking study, intensive courses have been found to be rewarding for students and under favorable conditions can create a more focused, collegial, relaxed, motivating, concentrated,
memorable, and continuous learning experience compared to semester-length courses (Scott, 1995). Given these factors, it seems logical that students with moderate CA would respond favorably within an intensive course setting.

This article seeks to explore how intensive basic public speaking courses may be as effective and in some cases may appeal more to higher CA students. Its goal is the development of an exploratory study that could be used to help explain a significant effect of the basic speech intensive course on reducing CA. To begin, the authors present historical data about CA and academic achievement, followed by information about physiological factors in communication and its relation to techniques to reduce CA. The authors then present primary data and further research on intensive courses that lead to the practical implications for basic course directors and administrators.

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Seamon (2004) found that students in intensive courses initially performed significantly better than students in the semester-length courses in posttests on content and questions on higher-order learning. Researchers reached a similar conclusion: intensive courses appeared to provide equivalent or superior long- and short-term learning outcomes compared to traditional courses across a variety of disciplines (Daniel, 2000). In another study examining academic achievement, CA in the instructional environment was studied by considering three CA levels (high, moderate, and low)
relative to various performance situations in a basic communication course. Students were placed in a high CA, moderate CA, or low CA group based on their score on the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension. Correlational analysis indicated there were significant differences in achievement indices among all three CA groups on the first two of four performance assignments and on the final course grade (Powers & Smythe, 1980). Communication apprehension has also had profound effects on college student retention and success. A four-year longitudinal study found that CA has a substantial impact on the probability of high CA students’ survival in college, and this impact adds to the case favoring the provision of training programs to assist such students to overcome their anxiety (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989). In addition, it is important that the basic communication course offer consistent instruction so students do not receive disparate pedagogical experiences (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). This could relate to students with CA because they could better grasp the concepts and techniques needed to be successful in public speaking courses. Information about physiological factors must also be considered when exploring effects of the basic speech intensive course on reducing CA.

**Physiological Factors in Communication Apprehension**

Physiological factors have helped researchers to identify signs of CA. Scholars have suggested that biological factors, such as temperament, influence human social behavior, particularly in the formation of traits
such as CA (Beatty, Heisel, Lewis, Pence, Reinhart, & Tian, 2011).

The relationship between trait-like CA and resting alpha range asymmetry in the anterior cortex is also now being studied, and partial correlations have been revealed between CA and EEG scores. Although research in cognitive neuroscience suggests that asymmetry in the anterior cortex is a relatively stable, in-born, infrastructure of emotion, some studies indicate that asymmetry can be increased by temporary induced (Beatty et al., 2011).

Heart rate as it relates to CA has also been examined. Results suggest that the heart rates of anxious speakers were significantly higher than those of non-anxious speakers when both performed in low-intensity situations. Heart rates, however, were not different for anxious and nonanxious speakers when performing in high-intensity situations (Beatty & Behnke, 1991).

Other recent developments have provided new information about speech anxiety patterns among high- and low-anxiety speakers. One study examined the relationship between public speaking anxiety and physiological stress indicators at four different stages in the delivery of a public speech. Public speakers’ gastrointestinal body sensations were compared at different times and across different levels of psychological trait anxiety. The results showed significant differences in both the magnitude and the patterns of somatic responses between high- and low-trait anxiety groupings (Witt, Brown, Roberts, Weisel, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2006). The effects of interpersonal communication as a source of comfort (i.e., amelioration) on the physiological stress associated with giving an in-class speech were studied using corti-
sol as an objective measure of stress reactivity. Salivary cortisol was collected from students. The study found that participants in the distraction condition experienced significantly less stress than participants in the control condition (Priem & Solomon, 2009). Given the physiological factors present in CA and significant moderate communication apprehension scores from students enrolled in intensive public speaking courses in this current study, it is critical for basic course instructors and administrators to use techniques that reduce CA.

**Techniques to Reduce Communication Apprehension**

A national survey was conducted to determine what methods instructors use to treat CA. The results showed that instructors treat apprehensive students during regular class time by 1) concentrating on a skills-training approach to teach the necessary speaking skills, 2) by creating a supportive and positive classroom environment, 3) by recognizing students’ CA as normal, and 4) by using teaching techniques that help students handle feelings of apprehension (Robinson, 1997). This section will discuss the techniques to reduce CA including self-monitoring, visualization, videotaped feedback, impromptu speeches, sensitization and practicing speeches.

Researchers have investigated the underlying mechanisms affecting the accuracy with which public speakers communicate performance-related anxiety to their audiences. One study found that the self-monitoring construct is important for understanding how audiences decode a speaker’s emotional state, but the speaker’s ability to self-monitor anxiety was not confirmed (Saw-
Another study compared the influence of basic oral interpretation courses and basic public speaking courses on students' self-reported levels of CA. The findings suggested that the basic course in oral interpretation may help reduce student levels of CA (Rose, Rancer, & Crannell, 1993).

Visualization treatment and its effect on public speaking anxiety has been the subject of research. One of the initial studies utilized pre- and posttests on two experimental groups and one control group. The results indicated significant differences based on the presence or absence of the visualization treatment as well as how much experience an individual has in public speaking (Byers & Weber, 1995). Researchers began questioning whether speech anxiety affects only presentation behavior, or if it also affects the ways in which people prepare their speeches (Daly, Vangelisti, & Weber, 1995).

Researchers have continued to examine speech preparation processes and speech apprehension. In a related study, results showed students with high CA spent more preparation time on noncommunication-oriented activities (e.g., speech outlines) than students with low CA. In contrast, students with low CA reported spending more preparation time on communication-oriented activities (e.g., practicing speech introductions) than did students with high CA. In addition, students with high CA reported spending more time preparing their speeches but received lower grades than students with low CA (Ayres, 1996).

Researchers have continued to examine how videotaped feedback affects students’ self-reported levels of communication competence and apprehension. Since the early 1950s, researchers have conducted extensive
studies on the use of television in education. Results have shown that the use of videotaping students in public speaking can make a positive or negative contribution, depending upon the methods used (McCroskey & Lashbrook, 1970). Students reported that their improvements were greatest in classroom settings; self-directed videotape feedback had a limited impact on students’ perceived improvements, based on their initial levels of competence and apprehension (Hinton & Kramer, 1998).

One study found that subjects who completed an impromptu speech significantly lowered their situational CA. The point from this study is that when given the opportunity to deliver an ungraded impromptu speech, students may be able to concentrate more on controlling their CA and improving their speaking skills rather than worrying about their grade (Rumbough, 1999). The literature indicates that although numerous techniques are available to help students manage high CA, the difficulty is determining which technique will target a student’s specific needs. The results of testing a multidimensional model showed that there was a significantly greater reduction in CA levels when teaching students to self-select treatment techniques versus only using traditional skills training (Dwyer, 2000).

Researchers have focused on the process called sensitization in which individuals experience increased psychological discomfort, usually during the first moments of their presentations. One study explained how individuals experienced patterns of excessive worrying during their presentations. Results indicated that these students report more worrisome thoughts during public speaking than those who have become progressively
more comfortable making public speeches (Addison, Clay, Xie, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2003).

Another investigation included two studies that related anticipatory public speaking anxiety to the nature of the speech assignment. The purpose of the study attempted to determine if differences in anticipatory anxiety in public speakers existed for each of the milestones, or narrowband measures. The hypotheses were supported in both trait and anxiety studies where certain differences in anticipatory speech anxiety were detected among different types of informative speeches (e.g., impromptu, extemporaneous, and manuscript reading; Witt & Behnke, 2006).

The final technique of practicing speeches before an audience to improve performance has also been examined over the years. Students who practiced their speech before an audience earned an average of three additional points on their speech evaluation scores—a 7.5% increase with the evaluation scale used. Practicing speeches before a mirror was also regarded as a potentially effective technique (Smith & Frymier, 2006).

In addition to these techniques to reduce CA, Steven Spurling conducted a study on intensive courses to identify what increases student success (Spurling & City College of San Francisco, 2001). Data was collected on the performance of students in English, mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes during an intensive summer term and was compared to students enrolled in similar classes during the spring and fall terms. The results showed that both compression (i.e., shortening the length of terms) and intensity of study (i.e., more hours per week of class within the subject matter area) positively influence student success.
speech anxiety in public speaking courses

independently of each other. Spurling’s work points to a possible connection between intensive courses having a positive impact on students with moderate CA, especially in the basic communication courses. It is important to recognize “Intensive courses have become a mainstay of higher education. . . . Although intensive courses have become quite common, many academic and administrative pundits condemn their use and claim that these formats sacrifice academic rigor and learning. . .” (Scott, 2003, p. 29). In contrast to negative beliefs concerning intensive courses, the overall course ratings on student evaluations are higher for intensive courses than for traditional courses (Kucsera & Zimmaro, 2010). Given that students take intensive courses to fulfill their intrinsic sense of accomplishment and to have external rewards such as benefits and avoiding punishments (Bahl & Black, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 1985), it makes sense students with moderate to high CA may choose to enroll in intensive courses for a shorter time span.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory, quasi-experimental study is to determine the differences in CA levels of students in intensive public speaking courses versus traditional 15-week semester courses. According to the literature, a number of factors have affected students’ CA levels; however, little research has examined intensive versus traditional classes. Fueled by previous research findings on intensive classes, we designed the current study to explore the following question: Do students en-
rolled in intensive public speaking courses report higher levels of CA?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants in this study were 722 undergraduate students at a midsize Southern university distributed among 70 sections of an introductory public speaking course that is required for all students at the university. Each section of the course had a maximum enrollment of 24, allowing for a larger data set; however, if students withdrew from the class or were not present to complete the pretest and posttest, the data was not used. No incentive was offered to students other than asking them to participate for purpose of research. Of the total sample analyzed in the study, 358 participants (50.4%) were male and 364 participants (49.6%) were female. In terms of student rank, 300 participants (41.6%) were freshmen, 287 (39.8%) were sophomores, 81 (11.2%) were juniors, and 54 (7.5%) were seniors. Participants were recruited from the fall semester 15-week courses (n = 371), spring semester 15-week courses (n = 276), summer semester 3-week courses (n = 40), and summer semester 5-week courses (n = 35).

**Procedure**

Participants were met by either the principal investigator or co investigators in basic public speaking classes before completion of their first assigned classroom speech during the second week of class for the 15-week classes or within the first several days of the 3- and 5-
week classes. Students were informed of the overall purpose of the study, and were also informed that their responses would be confidential. Participants were asked to complete Scantron “bubble” sheets to record identifiers: age, race/nationality, gender, rank in school, and student ID numbers were used throughout the procedure and confidentiality was maintained. After 20–30 minutes, the investigator collected the surveys and data collection tools. The participants were informed that the investigators would return to conduct the same survey after the participants’ last classroom speech. These speeches occurred during the last week of the 15-week classes and the last two days of the 3- and 5-week classes.

**Instrument**

Students were asked to complete the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), developed by James C. McCroskey (1970). This was the first scale developed in work with CA and it remains highly regarded and used in public speaking texts today (e.g., Ferguson, 2008). Basic communication course instructors continue to use this survey to help students identify and understand their CA levels. The authors’ methods included collecting data from this survey and conducting statistical tests to determine compare CA levels in traditional and intensive courses and current trends in public speaking data. This survey consists of 34 statements, and has a five-point scale in which students indicate “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” Sample items include: “While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous”; “I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while
giving a speech”; and “While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.” Although other instruments are more widely used to measure CA in group settings, the original PRPSA is highly reliable (alpha estimates > .90) and focuses only on public speaking anxiety (McCroskey, 1970). The quasi-experimental methodology used had an adequate sample size, sufficient time between the pretest and posttest, and used standard significant statistical tests. In order to ensure reliability, the researchers used uniform instructions and administered the survey in the most similar ways possible with each basic course instructor.

Analysis

The researchers used standard correlation measures (Pearson, Spearman-Rho, and ANOVA) to determine if there was a correlation between students’ public speaking apprehension and class length, and the semester the class is offered. Students were tested at the beginning and the end of the class in a quasi-experimental research design to determine if the class had an effect on PRPSA scores.

RESULTS

The study investigated the possible effects of basic public speaking courses on students who were enrolled in intensive and traditional public speaking courses. The range of PRPSA scores in the instrument used were High: > 131; Moderate: 98–131; and Low: < 98. The mean score for the PRPSA instrument was 114.6. The overall results from this study were a mean pretest score of 110.05, and a mean posttest score of 96.45.
Table 1

Overall PRPSA Pretest/Posttest Scores of High, Moderate, and Low CA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High CA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>143.71</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>117.59</td>
<td>21.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate CA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>114.05</td>
<td>9.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>97.56</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.49</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.46%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low CA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>82.44</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>81.46</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.19%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our findings show a significant effect of the basic speech course on reducing CA (as evidenced by the effect size). Table 1 shows the overall PRPSA pre- and posttest scores for high, moderate, and low CA. In the high CA group, the posttest mean was 117.59, which shows scores in the moderate CA range towards the completion of the basic public speaking course. The moderate CA group posttest mean was 97.56 at the completion of the course, which shows the scores in the low CA range. Finally, the low CA group posttest mean was 81.46, which only had a .98 change in the mean score.

The results of Table 2 show a significant effect, lower than a 0.0001 probability, that the differences in the pretest and posttest were due to random effects. Table 2 specifically shows the overall PRPSA pre- and posttest scores for class types for the 15-week, 3-week and 5-week courses. In the 15-week group, the posttest score was 97.07 at the completion of the course, which shows the scores in the low CA range. The 3-week group posttest score was 102.19 at the completion of the course, which shows the score in the moderate CA range. Finally, the 5-week group posttest score was 97.03 at the completion of the course which shows the score in the low CA range. Overall then, the score from the 15-week group was in the low CA range and the intensive 3-week and 5-week groups were in the moderate and low CA range.

DISCUSSION

This study provides evidence for the changes in CA for students who take both intensive and traditional courses. The authors examined students' scores in the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Posttest SD</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>110.05</td>
<td>23.81</td>
<td>96.45</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Week</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>109.13</td>
<td>23.83</td>
<td>97.07</td>
<td>22.74</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Week</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>120.87</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>102.19</td>
<td>15.845</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Week</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>114.71</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>97.03</td>
<td>20.677</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>107.12</td>
<td>23.29</td>
<td>95.80</td>
<td>23.03</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>111.83</td>
<td>24.33</td>
<td>96.43</td>
<td>22.37</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer I</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>120.87</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>105.23</td>
<td>16.47</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer II</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>114.71</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>93.46</td>
<td>17.63</td>
<td>&gt;0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Anything less than 0.05 is considered significant
intensive and traditional courses and Table 2 lists our findings, which add new data to research on intensive courses and public speaking. To begin, this study’s findings provide new understanding regarding how faculty members generally believe that students in intensive courses have higher apprehension, and it is interesting that students in the three- and five-week courses did have a moderate CA at the beginning of the course. However, students in both intensive and traditional public speaking courses all had posttest means in the moderate or low CA categories. We note that our study supports previous research from Scott and Conrad (1992) which had recognized issues of the success of intensive courses. In addition, data from Anastasi (2007) indicated that student performance was not less significant for abbreviated summer courses compared to the same courses taken during a regular 16-week semester even when the instructor, teaching style, contact hours, exams, and other assignments were constant. In fact, some comparisons showed that performance in summer courses may have been superior to full-semester courses (Anastasi, 2007).

What was interesting, however, was that participants in this study are all enrolled in public speaking courses versus the other courses mentioned in the literature for intensive courses (e.g., English, business, mathematics, and ESL). To the authors’ knowledge, this is the first study to document both CA and intensive courses.

The implications of this research can be applied to intensive courses. In the present study, this discussion arose when determining whether an intensive course was effective and how much an instructor contributed to
the students’ levels of apprehension over the course of three- and five-week terms. Our findings add potent testimony in support of attributes of high-quality intensive courses, which include instructor characteristics, teaching methods, classroom environment, and evaluation methods. When these attributes are present during an intensive course, students prefer this learning environment versus a traditional course. However, when these attributes are not present, students reported intensive courses to be boring and painful experiences (Scott, 2003). This is a key area for basic course instructors and administrators because the current research suggests that basic public speaking courses have an impact on students’ CA scores, especially in intensive courses. These findings suggest other factors in the environment, as well as processes to reduce CA, need to be considered. Moreover, the study of subject matter content, pedagogy, and instructional communication are of equal importance in preparing an individual to be an effective educator in any field and at any level of instruction (McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2002). Instructors need to be particularly aware of this in intensive classes where CA may be at a moderate level overall.

LIMITATIONS

There were two limitations in this study. The first limitation was the public speaking classroom. Some instructors address this issue by holding basic public speaking classes at a variety of speaking venues within the university. Another limitation was survivor bias. Due to students dropping out of the course in each sec-
a number of students did not complete the study. Students with CA are more likely to drop out and try the course again at a later time so the researchers may have missed out on data with the truly high CA students. Also, given the large sample size, significance would be expected. The researchers controlled this by taking survivor bias into account and by drilling down into the data by semester, gender, traditional 15-week semester courses, and shorter 3- and 5-week courses. The significance held at the more granular levels. Significance was also present during the first surveys, but not in the second survey. This indicated that an effect (e.g., the class) was alleviating differences in the public speaking anxiety pretest and posttest scores.

**Future Research**

There is more research to be done, especially as there are increasing numbers of intensive and traditional courses offered as part of a university’s general education requirements for graduation. A typical profile of students enrolled in public speaking courses may be useful to instructors to help gauge the students’ CA levels and assess ahead of time which techniques to use. Faculty could also have students indicate their majors in the demographic section for the public speaking courses. This may assist faculty and staff in other academic areas in student retention studies as the researchers of this study would argue high CA may make students believe they could not be successful in school and thus they drop out of a higher education. Conversely, the researchers of this study would argue re-
ducing CA could increase confidence in the student and thus they would remain in school.

A second area to explore is to group the students into high, moderate, and low pretest CA. Researchers could then compare their posttest CA scores to pretest scores. The idea would be to see if students with similar CA scores would feel more comfortable—and therefore reduce their CA scores—if they were in a class of students with mixed CA scores. Or are students with low confidence in their speaking skills intimidated by students with better speaking skills, and therefore feel discouraged from trying to improve?

A final area of future research is a longitudinal study. These students could be contacted five years from now and administered the PRPSA to find out if their CA scores had dropped and which factors may have had an effect. Recent studies continue to support the idea that individuals with high CA prefer, expect, and tend to hold jobs that require little communication with others, whereas those with low CA tend to be successful in organizational positions where considerable communication is expected from them (Bartoo & Sias, 2004).

CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine whether students enrolled in intensive public speaking courses reported higher levels of communication apprehension after exposure to intensive and traditional courses. The study compared students’ scores in intensive and traditional courses. The findings indicated that students enrolled in intensive public speaking courses had significant moderate CA scores compared to students enrolled in 15-
week semester courses. Basic course instructors and administrators involved in teaching numerous sections of public speaking should continue to monitor and evaluate the course structures and the environments in which students need to develop public speaking skills while dealing with CA. This is especially important given the continuous development of new technologies. Future research can assist as we continue to try to identify and reduce communication apprehension.

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Connecting to Veterans in Public Speaking Courses

Alisa Roost

In the fall of 2012, after Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) finished and as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan began to wind down, a veteran I will call Arun (not his real name) struggled in my basic public speaking class. Arun worked hard, but had difficulties with things that surprised me. He really struggled to pick a topic he “cared about.” This difficulty seemed to demoralize him; he told me he wasn't sure if college was right for him. Trying to be helpful, I asked him, “If you were president of the United States, what is the first policy you would want to change?” He explained to me, kindly, that he was not the commander-in-chief, wasn’t qualified for the job, and wasn't even born in this country. I could see I needed to do a better job supporting him, so I tried to research pedagogy for veterans in public speaking classes and found nothing. Surprisingly, there was very little about pedagogy for veterans in general, so I started talking with Dr. N. Roost, a psychologist who works for the Veterans Administration Health Care System (VA). As a result of our collaboration, I changed how I worked with Arun, which seemed to improve his engagement and performance. My experience reflects the truth of Ackerman, DiRamoio, & Mitchell’s (2009) statement: “There is an urgent need to share best practices, to exchange ideas, and to conduct research that will provide campuses with the in-
formation needed to promote the academic achievement of veterans who are students” (p. 13); unfortunately, little has been done to answer their call for such exchanges.

Supporting veterans can help us better support students with diverse backgrounds in and out of the military. The principles of universal design for learning, outlined by Chickering & Gamson (1987), highlight the benefits that intentional pedagogy for students with learning disabilities often has for far more than the students for whom the changes were intended. Similarly, Walters (2010) states: “Impairment-specific accommodations also elided the benefits that nonimpaired audiences or users may reap from alternative modes” (p. 440). Likewise, examining courses with veterans’ needs in mind may benefit many students. This paper develops three of the qualities that Cornett-DeVito & Worley’s 2005 article found for competent instructional communication for students with learning disabilities: “willingly provide individualized instruction that meets student’s needs” (p. 321); “demonstrate knowledge about learning disabilities and accommodation” (p. 322), and be “alert to alternatives to assist student learning” (p. 323). Of course, it must be noted that veterans are a particularly diverse group, which cannot be reduced to only one demographic characteristic, and certainly the majority do not have learning disabilities. Many veterans require no accommodations to excel, but others may benefit from some awareness of common experiences veterans have faced. And of course, veterans are members of diverse co-cultures and cannot be defined down to a single characteristic. A veteran may be a first-genera-
tion college student who has English as a second language and identifies as a black Hispanic. A simple label may erase more than illuminate; as Hendrix, Jackson, & Warren (2003) argued: “When the multiple identities we bring to the classroom are not acknowledged and appreciated, this sense of invisibility is felt” (p. 178). However, the basic speech course may be a particularly fruitful forum for awareness and accommodations for veterans, because of the subject’s intrinsic challenges and the fact that many students take it early in their time on campus. (According to Humphrey [n.d.], veterans often have enough credits to skip first-year classes and thus miss orientation.) Introductory communication courses can serve as an important tool for veterans transitioning to civilian life and provide all students with critical communication skills.

Veterans have had more impetus to enroll in college upon reentry in recent years. The Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 doubled the educational support for veterans who served after September 11, 2001, including both living stipends and tuition. Since World War II and the introduction of the GI Bill, college has been a primary method of helping veterans reintegrate into society. In fact, support for education and health benefits have been the two primary ways the federal government has supported veterans during their reentry to civilian life (The White House, 2012). The United States budgeted $78 billion at the federal level for veteran educational expenses between 2009 and 2019 (Brown, 2009). Approximately 4% of all college students were veterans or active duty soldiers in 2007–2008 (Radford, 2011), and a 2010 survey found
that 64.8% of all veterans “took college or university coursework leading to a bachelor or graduate degree” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010, p. D-43). In 2013 an estimated one million active duty military members, veterans, and their families took college courses financed by federal funds (Dao, 2013).

In spite of the large veteran presence on college campuses, minimal scholarship has addressed pedagogical techniques for working with veterans. (Exceptions include Roost & Roost [2014] on general pedagogical methods, Sinski [2012] on working with veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] and traumatic brain injury [TBI], and Singleton Dalton [2010] on strategies for teaching writing to veterans). Scholarship has focused primarily on defining veterans or developing veterans’ centers. (See, for example, the special issue of New Directions for Student Services: Creating a Veteran-Friendly Campus: Strategies for Transition and Success, with articles by Ackerman, DiRamoio, & Mitchell [2009], as well as Baechtold & De Sawal [2009], and also Rumann & Hamrick [2009], and Summerlot, Green, & Parker [2009]; see also Sargent [2009]; Burnett & Segoria, [2009]; and American Council on Education [2011].) As Abramson (2012) notes, no national statistics of veterans’ graduation rates exist. While blanket pathologizing of veterans would mask the range of aptitudes and mindsets they bring to the classroom and range of levels of combat they have experienced, certain psychological conditions have a much greater prevalence among veterans than among the general population. Broad statistics help capture the impact of these conditions. Additionally, all veterans have been exposed to military ap-
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proaches to communicating; while the extent to which these approaches frame their thinking varies a good deal, understanding these approaches strengthens instructors’ ability to serve them.

This paper seeks to help ameliorate this relative dearth by reporting one instructor’s experience teaching introductory public speaking to veterans and the challenges faced. Specific issues many of my veteran students experienced revolve around alienation and connection, anxiety, language, and clarity of directions. Many veterans bring real-world experiences, maturity, and strong work ethics not necessarily prevalent in the traditional student population, but some seem to enter public speaking classes struggling to adjust to the college environment. In my experience, many students find public speaking intimidating, but it seems to present specific challenges to a number of veterans, for whom it intensifies a sense of alienation from their peers and triggers more extreme anxiety than most students experience. Some veterans seem to exhibit more difficulty meeting time requirements, speaking in an impromptu way, and following directions they find vague but most students find sufficiently specific. To explore these issues, this paper will describe some common reasons veterans experience these challenges and explore tools instructors might use to support veterans in college-level public speaking courses.
THE CHALLENGES VETERANS MAY FACE IN COLLEGE

This paper will talk about veterans in a general way without arguing that any experience or condition afflicts all veterans. Many veterans may have no need for the types of support this paper describes, but most instructors who work with veterans with any regularity will encounter needs these supports can fill among their veteran students.

Alienation

As a number of studies (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011; Lighthall, 2012; Zinger & Cohen, 2010) report, the college environment can be alienating for veterans. Military culture typically renders them accustomed to a very clear order of command; standard operating procedures that cover almost all situations; real-world applications; immediate, embedded assessment; and close camaraderie with military brethren. The military trains its personnel to expect this, and, in deployment conditions, immerses them in it. College offers a very different environment.

Veterans tend to be older than average college students, generally matriculating between 23 and 27, and they are more likely to have spouses and children (Humphrey, n.d.). Widening the chasm, combat veterans typically have had to handle high-stakes missions unlike anything most other students have experienced, and the college social scene can seem trivial by comparison. Traumatic events worsen the sense of alienation (Herman, 1997; Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009), and alienation from others is a symp-
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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

PTSD and TBI are common conditions for veterans of OEF and OIF. The Congressional Budget Office (2012) found that 28% of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan during 2004–2009 were diagnosed with PTSD, TBI, or both. Both correlate with deficits in working memory as well as deficits in sustained attention and initial learning (Vasterling, Duke, Brailey, Constans, Allain, & Sutker, 2002); reductions in processing speed (Nelson, Yoash-Gantz, Pickett, & Campbell, 2009); and other learning issues (Sinski, 2012). Further, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders defines PTSD very specifically (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), and the 28% figure does not capture many veterans with some but not all of the symptoms. The diagnosis those veterans may receive, “Anxiety Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified,” may correlate with some of the same challenges, but offer those veterans less support.

It would be a mistake to assume that all veteran students suffer from such ailments, but it is useful to be conscious of such ailments in seeking to serve the needs of veterans. Even Vasterling et. al’s (2006) finding that simply having been deployed to Iraq (even after accounting for the effects of head injury, stress, and depression) leads to neuropsychological deficits in paying sustained attention and learning verbally does not imply all veterans suffer from these difficulties, not least because veteran status does not equal a his-

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tory of deployment. The question of how many veteran students have PTSD, TBI, or an anxiety disorder related to combat service is beyond the scope of this paper, and knowing this information remains beyond the need of an instructor teaching a course in public speaking. However, Walters (2010) reported that among all students with disabilities many don’t self-report: “Directors of Student Disability Services at two major universities estimate that only half of students with disabilities report their disabilities and note that students with disabilities often forgo accommodations for which they are eligible because they believe their instructors will treat them differently” (p. 427). Likewise, Church (2009) found that “Many veterans are not self-disclosing and currently not utilizing the traditional service models existing on campuses for students with disabilities” (p. 43). Baechtold and De Sawal (2009) document that underreporting is common among veterans coping with PTSD, as many military veterans (especially women) are reluctant to receive help for fear of appearing weak, and current understandings of TBI may be inappropriately narrow (Lighthall, 2012). Lighthall’s (2012) formulation that veterans with PTSD or TBI have an injury, from which they may recover, and not a mental illness, is useful in framing attitudes.

The Fractured Support Network

While the United States theoretically supports veterans with various reentry programs, veterans return to a fractured support network with long waits at the VA and insufficient reentry support for civilian employment (Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of
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America, 2012). OEF and OIF combat veterans experience higher unemployment than the general population; in 2013, veterans who served after 2001 had an unemployment rate of 9.0% (with female veterans facing a 9.6% unemployment rate), compared to 7.2% for the population at large (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The college matriculation rate in part reflects these statistics, as some veterans probably pursue college as a means to get a civilian job. Suicide rates among active-duty and military veterans are also statistically significant: veterans comprise 7% of the United States population, but commit at least 22% of all suicides (Kemp & Bossarte, 2013, p. 15). (Because the military status of 23% of suicides was unknown, the rate may be even higher.) Furthermore, a veteran currently receiving support from the VA healthcare system “tries to commit suicide about once every half-hour, on average” (Stewart, 2012). The gaps in the VA healthcare system have been widely documented, but there are problems with educational opportunities are well. Recent changes have focused on counseling and veterans’ centers, but few pedagogical techniques have been examined.

PROPOSED ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VETERANS IN BASIC SPEECH COURSES

The issues that some veterans face, combined with the large numbers of veterans enrolled in college, means professors may want to consider how to best support this population. To that end, I offer recommendations around issues of 1) alienation and connec-
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Alienation and Connection

Public speaking may exacerbate the problem of alienation many veterans experience in two ways: assignments that expect disclosure of personal information, and student speeches that have an anti-military bias. Professors may want to consider not requiring personal disclosure to address many veterans’ disinclination for this, and consciously build a supportive classroom environment to address both issues.

Professors may see the invitation to share personal experience as an opportunity to be honored for service, but veterans may shrink from being treated as different from their peers. A quarter of a century after Ellsworth’s (1989) influential article “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy,” few professors would call on a black student to speak on behalf of all black students, but sharing a personal experience of time in Afghanistan feels different. However, veterans may shrink from disclosure that would highlight their differences. Boodman (2011) describes the isolation veterans experience when well-meaning faculty members expect them to have special insight into foreign policy; sharing personal experience gained in a war zone can be a similarly isolating experience. As Sahlstein, Maguire, & Timmerman (2009) note, soldiers limit self-disclosure even to family and life partners for a variety of reasons; this context makes self-disclosure with a public audience more complicated. I therefore recommend avoiding pushing veterans to share per-
sonal experiences or details of abilities and knowledge gained in the military.

Like many of the suggestions this paper makes in relation to veterans, this accommodation may address students who are not veterans. Any student may draw largely on experiences the majority of his or her peers do not share—some identities that make this likely include people of color, immigrants, LGBT students, and formerly incarcerated students. While faculty may be less likely to assume that peers will meet such experiences with veneration, other markers of distance may affect such students. While the military tradition and injunction against self-disclosure have a smaller effect on non-veterans (though members of military families may feel some of their effects), other students can have less-specific reasons to find self-disclosure complicated. However, as outlined above, veterans disproportionately experience other challenges that affect their performance, and this may make them more vulnerable to negative consequences from an assignment that pushes them past their comfort zone.

In line with Cornett-DeVito and Worley’s (2005) injunction to find alternatives to assist student learning, which may help serve both veteran students and more introverted non-veterans, it can be useful to offer alternative assignments in lieu of personal stories, if sharing personal information is not necessary for course goals. I continue to use personal stories as the first, low-stakes assignment of the semester, but I’ve begun to offer additional options for all students. My goals for the first assignment are to create a positive speaking experience, make sure students understand outlining, and allow students to practice extempora-
neous presentation. I have found that the personal story is the easiest for the majority of students, but alternatives (like an introduction of a person the student admires, or a researched presentation of what happened on a student’s birthday) can accomplish the same goals. This option can benefit other students who prefer not to make personal disclosures and still accomplishes the course goals for that assignment.

Other measures will help create an inclusive environment. Frisby & Martin (2010) conclude that “an instructor’s behavior dictates the type of learning environment that is constructed, the type of relationships that bloom, and the academic outcomes that students achieve” (p. 160). While camaraderie with other students also supports participation (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010), the link with the professor may be more important for those veterans who feel alienated from other students. Cornett-DeVito and Worley (2005) have found that building “rapport and listen[ing] empathetically” is especially important for students with learning disabilities who “are particularly aware of whether teachers seek to develop rapport with them, listen to them, and respect them” (p. 322). Research suggests that similar attention to rapport may be important for veterans. For example, veterans are generally older than traditional students, which Fritschner (2000) found correlates with caring more about what their instructors think than what their peers think.

Another key aspect of creating an inclusive environment for veterans is to address the fact that comments made about the wars may alienate veterans (Elliott et al., 2011). Speeches about foreign policy
since 9/11 can affect veterans differently from other students. Generally professors want to create a safe environment for all their students while respecting their students’ views. Current views on appropriate student speech vary. Dougherty (2009) argues that expression that is of a “current political or social issue” and not “poisonous’ to the learning environment” must be protected (p. 20). Giroux & Giroux (2004) argue, “It is the task of radical educators to secure not only a space for free inquiry and dissent—especially in times of global crisis . . . [but also] to open up rather than close down our classrooms to dialogue and debate over those contemporary issues and hot-button topics that most concern our students” (pp. 50–51). This approach probably applies to more professors than identify as radical educators. Balancing these goals, I review audience analysis throughout the semester, emphasizing the diversity of our classroom audience and naming specific groups, including veterans, which students must respect. Like offering alternatives to personal disclosure, this suggestion can serve students with a variety of identities, but students may be less likely to recognize the possibility that blanket statements about soldiers could offend veterans than, for example, the divisive nature of stereotypes based on gender. I reiterate this issue throughout the semester. When students select a topic that might be incendiary, especially involving the Iraq War, I remind them that they must respect all members of their audience and focus on specific behavior they believe should change, not group affiliation. I believe this has helped to create a more open classroom environment for all, and while I have heard students give speeches against predator
drones or military recruitment on high-school campuses (and against an Islamic community center in lower Manhattan, and legalization of gay marriage), the final speeches have been more specific with their concerns and focused on specific behavior rather than demographic identification, hopefully balancing an inclusive learning environment with individual students’ rights to express diverse views in an appropriate context.

Alleviating Anxiety

An inclusive environment is a strong foundation in any classroom, but a speech course may require more support for those veterans with anxiety issues; therefore, I recommend treating anxiety with care. One way I do this, in addition to naming groups that should be respected, is, on the first day, immediately after naming protected groups, I invite anyone who needs additional help or is having communication apprehension to meet with me privately. Since I’ve started doing this, more students who served in the military have come to talk to me about their needs, including those that stem from diagnoses such as PTSD and TBI.

While I have found no studies examining any possible link between PTSD and communication apprehension (and, of course, not all veterans have PTSD), there is enough crossover that it deserves further research to address the needs of those veterans who suffer from it. Etkin & Wagner (2007) show that PTSD shares some key neurological structures with Social Anxiety Disorder, especially “greater activity than matched comparison subjects in the amygdala and insula, structures linked to negative emotional re-
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Hofmann, Litz, & Weathers (2003) found that Vietnam veterans with PTSD experience higher rates of social anxiety, while Zayfert, DeViva, & Hofmann (2005) reported that 43% of people diagnosed with PTSD had social phobia. Bodie’s (2010) survey demonstrates that social anxiety is closely linked to public speaking anxiety. Hyper-arousal, increased anxiety, and avoiding situations likely to trigger anxiety and negative thoughts are hallmarks of PTSD. Avoidance of crowded social environments is the most common of the “markedly diminished interest in (pre-traumatic) activities” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). Hyper-vigilance can lead to greater anxiety for veterans experiencing it, exaggerating potential threats in social environments. The comments of Dr. N. Roost based on his experience at the Portland, Oregon, VA are suggestive: “because the autonomic nervous system is over-aroused, these environments [public speaking classrooms] become anxiety-provoking and often trigger panic attacks” (personal communication, July 13, 2013).

If a veteran asks for something that doesn’t affect the goals of the course, it is worth experimenting to see if the request can be met, without demanding justification. For example, if a professor has assigned seating, veterans may prefer to sit at the back of the room, so they don’t have to be aware of people coming from behind, and some may prefer clear aisles that make evacuation easy. This may simply be a result of retaining certain habits from their role in the service, but it is an easy request to accommodate. Other requests may include avoiding completely blacking out a room, or giving students a warning when this is about to happen.
to happen. Some veterans may want to avoid the sounds of explosions or flashing lights, even in a recording, or PowerPoint presentations with images of guns or violence. Giving a warning before something that may trigger anxiety, as well as permission to leave the classroom if experiencing anxiety or panic, may help veterans who have an anxiety disorder, just as it can help any other student with an anxiety disorder. (See Sinski [2012] for classroom recommendations specifically for PTSD and TBI.)

I make accommodations for all students who seek me out to discuss communication apprehension. Finn, Sawyer, & Schrodt’s 2009 study found that repeated presentations to small, varied audiences reduced anxiety. For those veterans who struggle with PTSD, this can be even more important. Cognitive Processing Therapy, one of only three empirically supported treatments for PTSD for adults, identifies five areas that PTSD disturbs: trust, intimacy, safety, esteem, and power/control (see Monson, Schnurr, Resick, Friedman, Young-Xu, & Stevens 2006; and Resick & Schnicke, 1992), all of which may affect public speaking anxiety. In keeping also with Ellison et al.’s (2012) finding that veterans can benefit from additional time and help from faculty, I have a relaxed presentation schedule for students with enough apprehension to contact me. I offer those students a range of options: present their speech in my office first, then an empty classroom with just me, then with me and a few of their friends, before they present in class. As long as a student presents a speech for me by the due date, I don’t count it as late, even if he or she needs more practice to deal with the anxiety before presenting it.
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to the class. (In practice, most students are comfortable doing their speech after one or two of these and nearly always prefer to present on their assigned day, after the pressure of the deadline has been lifted.) The section below on standard operating procedures and grading rubrics for veterans may also help those who experience significant anxiety to alleviate it; it’s also simply advisable for instructors to anticipate this anxiety, attribute it to its correct source, and treat the anxiety with respect.

Language

Military language prefers succinct, direct, clear, and often formulaic communications, expecting the same information delivered in the same way every time and urging short words and sentences; therefore I recommend a) avoiding penalizing veterans who give shorter speeches but have met all other requirements, b) emphasizing the importance of repetition and organizational statements for a civilian audience, and c) recognition of the impact of TBI on language retrieval when assigning impromptu and extemporaneous speeches.

A reason to avoid penalizing veterans for short speeches is that military training rewards such communication. The Army, which employs the most service people and has the greatest emphasis on succinct language, prefers written sentences that average 15 words in length with only 15% of the words having three or more syllables (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2010), while the U.S. Department of Defense (2013) is slightly more lenient, calling for “short, simple words” and a sentence average of under 20
words. The Army prefers short words like “fear” to long words like “anxious,” regardless of the difference in nuance (Singleton Dalton, 2010). While most soldiers are not writing as part of their jobs, they are surrounded by language that reflects clear, simple, brief communication. This can make it more difficult for veterans to embrace academic rhetoric, but it can also provide a rich foundation for classroom discussions about the social implications of language.

King-Sears (2009) identifies “tolerance for error” as an essential principle of universal design for learning. However, communicating that tolerance may be equally important. Before I started making these changes, several of my veteran students did assignments late or didn’t finish them. A military background may make them assume that suggestions, like a time minimum, are actually requirements. Personally, I am more concerned about the quality of the argument and the evidence used to back it up than I am about the actual length of the speech. With a student who self-identifies as a veteran, I emphasize that the “suggested time” is a guideline for an average speech but doesn’t impact the grade if the speech meets all other requirements. This doesn’t affect course standardization, as I don’t automatically fail any student for a good speech that falls outside time requirements.

Further, I help veterans, like others who struggle to meet time requirements, to improve their short speeches through repetition, especially in preview statements and summaries. While most students need to work on transitions, this seems particularly important to veterans. A military audience often knows the structure of an address beforehand and does not
require this (Singleton Dalton, 2010); therefore, this basic skill can present particular challenges for veterans. Military communication is fairly concise because it follows pre-determined structures for specific purposes. It doesn't tend to develop nuance. Except for those serving in the highest levels of command (who earn college degrees before assuming active duty and are unlikely to enroll in a basic course after service), military communication rarely allows space for counter-arguments or contradictions. Civilian communication is more diverse; as a result, the audience may not know what to expect. Thus, organizational statements and clearer transitions are integral to communicating successfully in varied communication environments.

Some veterans are very succinct in ways that can make it harder to aurally follow more sophisticated arguments. They may need more practice specifically on transitions and greater repetition to meet civilian communication expectations. Finally, because a civilian audience doesn't necessarily know the structure beforehand, it is important to reiterate the main points in organizational statements in a civilian speech.

When veterans have TBI, permitting shorter speeches and working on structure may be insufficient. Veterans with mild TBI are likely to have difficulty focusing and retrieving language. Lezak, Howieson, & Loring (2004) report that attention deficit disorder is the most common mild cognitive impairment for veterans with mild TBI, while Sohlberg & Mateer (2001) observed that those with mild TBI often had difficulty multi-tasking, but also with focusing attention and ignoring distractions. They also found verbal
retrieval to be one of the slowest elements to recover. Murdoch (1990) found that TBI causes slow recall of language, terms, and names; mispronunciations; and misnaming. This can exacerbate anxiety around speaking in class that can lead to skipping classes. It may also make writing or impromptu speaking quickly or on the spot more difficult. As a result, impromptu speeches may be especially difficult for some veterans. In extreme cases, especially if a veteran has both TBI and PTSD, it may be worth considering giving veterans with anxiety issues advance notice of when impromptu speeches will occur and giving them a topic category early. Avoiding situations that produce anxiety is a common marker of PTSD, and it may be better to have a warning about impromptu speeches than have a student skip all classes. This obviously affects the standardization of the course delivery, but professors in extreme situations may have to balance providing “individualized instruction that meets student’s needs” (Cornett-DeVito & Worley, 2005, p. 321) with a completely standardized course.

Finally, even extemporaneous speeches can be more difficult, as someone with TBI may struggle to find all the right words. Veterans with TBI or who have significant anxiety about word choice may need to combine elements of manuscript and extemporaneous presentations, using a far more extensive outline. I do require every student to deliver speeches using extemporaneous presentation, but for students who have significant difficulties with language retrieval, I make it clear that lack of eye contact can affect their grade but will not cause them to fail.
Of course, the accommodations that help veterans with TBI can be useful for other differently abled students, such as those who have attention deficit disorder unrelated to injury. Veterans also affected by the other challenges I’ve outlined here may have a greater need for these accommodations than such students, however. Instructors frequently encounter the question of when to push students to conform to standards they may find challenging to support their growth and development, and when such standards only set up a student to fail. Given the many challenges veterans face in the college environment, especially early in their college careers, many veterans may benefit from accommodation instead of unmitigated challenge.

**Standard Operating Procedure and Rubrics**

Generally speaking, military life is very open and specific about expectations; to address the challenges people face transitioning from this environment, I provide more structured assignments and make rubrics available when applicable. Comadena, Hunt, & Simonds (2007) found that instructor clarity is influential in student learning for all students. In my experience, this is even more important for veterans. Soldiers know what is expected in most situations. Academia, with its vastly different demands in different disciplines (and even within a single discipline) can seem unclear and confusing. Veteran students seem disproportionately to grow discouraged. Using tools that resemble military tools can alleviate soldiers’ anxiety. I developed this “Standard Operating Procedure” for Arun when he struggled with picking a topic:
Selecting a Topic: An Operating Procedure

Use what is useful; skip anything that feels like busy-work.

- Find the appropriate database for the discipline
  - Speak to either your professor or a librarian if you need help finding a database.
  - I recommended Opposing Viewpoints for brainstorming topics in the speech class.
- Read five (more or less) different topics that seem like they might be interesting. Just click on anything that catches your eye.
- For each topic, analyze:
  - How much information can I find?
  - How interested am I in this topic?
  - How much do I know about this topic?
- Are there one or two topics that I think I’d do a better job with? If not, rank each topic on
  - My interest,
  - My expertise,
  - Ease of acquiring information, and
  - Relevance to my audience
- If you have it narrowed down to two or three topics and none seem clearly ideal, talk to your professor about the strengths and weaknesses of each topic.

When I provided this procedure to Arun, he had a topic within a week and his generalized uncertainty faded. The tool seemed to make him much more confident about the class. I doubt I’ll use this specific rubric again, but I will be making operating procedures for
Similarly, making copies of grading rubrics available to students may be very important for veterans. Seeing, for example, “Transition from introduction to body” and other clearly laid-out expectations for a speech may give veterans more confidence and focus. Booth-Butterfield’s (1986) finding that highly structured assignments increase participation of students with communication apprehension and decrease anxiety may be particularly useful for teaching veterans, who are already used to a more structured environment. Obviously, it’s important not to place more work on veterans when giving them structure—reviewing five topics before picking one, as the previous operating procedure suggested, must be clearly marked as optional.

To further align assignments with veterans’ needs, professors may want to articulate the applicability of assignments and give as immediate feedback as possible. The military embeds the applicability of information explicitly within any instruction and continually builds assessment into each learning unit. Explicitly addressing why information is important may better engage veterans and all students. Hazel, McMahon, and Schmidt’s (2011) analysis of immediate feedback to reduce filler words and M. Epstein, Lazarus, Calvano, Matthews, Hendel, B. Epstein, & Brosvic’s (2010) conclusion that immediate feedback on tests supports retention indicates that incorporating as timely a response as possible may be useful for non-veterans as well. To this end, I give students written comments the same period they present their
speeches. I do not give grades until I’ve had time to analyze their outlines and bibliography, but I simply take photos of the feedback sheets I give them before distribution for my use in assigning grades. Immediate feedback and clear evaluation can also make learning more predictable, and I have found most of my students are more engaged with the written feedback, reading it more carefully and asking for more clarifications, when they receive it that same day they give their speech.

Veterans can benefit from guidance in project planning and using a day planner (Huckans, Pawall, Demadura, Kolessar, Seelye, Roost, Twamley, & Storzbach, 2010). While Huckans et al. (2010) specifically studied this accommodation in relation to veterans, most of the other research I have cited in this section relates to students more generally, which suggests that all of these accommodations can support various students who struggle in a basic public speaking course. Veterans’ need for them comes from a very specific source: the military environment that shapes their approach to accomplishing tasks, but other students may have similar needs.

**SUMMATION**

This paper has not sought to identify accommodations that exclusively benefit veterans. Indeed, few such exist, and I consider it a desirable feature that, as I believe to be true, many of the practices described here will benefit many students who struggle in basic public speaking courses. However, it has sought to (1) bring together a number of accommodations particu-
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larly suited to the challenges some (but, crucially, not all) veterans bring to basic public speaking courses, and (2) lay out the connection between these accommodations and challenges many (but not all) veterans face.

Further, this paper has not sought to create an exhaustive list of such accommodations, but only to begin a discussion. Ultimately, the most important thing may be to encourage student veterans to approach their professors and describe their needs. As faculty, we need to listen to what student veterans tell us. We also need to look for what is unsaid. Creating a safe classroom environment will encourage the veterans to contact faculty with any specific concerns or requests. It isn’t enough for campuses to set up a veterans’ center and expect that to meet all veterans’ needs. The GI Bill provides veterans with money for college but cannot provide all the support veterans often need to achieve their degrees. Few colleges even track the success of student veterans. It is incumbent on communication faculty to do their part to aid veterans, both by articulating their needs to other faculty and by identifying skills that translate to the civilian environment. We can better support veterans, both by valuing their strength and understanding some of the challenges many face. In light of this, building on my experience, I plan to support veterans in developing their own operating procedures for any area of class where more structure may be helpful. Guiding students as they transition from military to civilian life will be continually challenging, and I believe we need to rely on our intuition (until we have more research).
for balancing structure versus self-generated paths for each individual student.

**Limitations and Further Research**

The recommendations here are a preliminary beginning to what should become an ongoing and vigorous discussion. They developed out of my collaboration with a single psychologist who works at the VA and represent a professoriate of one, hardly a robust sampling. I have found the accommodations quite effective for their original purpose, generating more engagement from all students who self-identified as veterans. Furthermore, some non-veterans who have used resources I originally made available primarily for veterans (like looking at the rubrics online) have commented on the usefulness of the additional resources. However, more research is necessary. Group-work in classes with multiple veterans deserves further exploration. The military relies on significant trust and support within its community; that can be better harnessed within the academy. Existing scholarship indicates that veterans’ centers on campus are effective because they help veterans support each other through their academic careers. A cohort of veterans taking multiple classes with professors who are sensitive to military issues could help expand that support network into additional classes.

Additionally, I have worked only in a traditional public speaking course; future research could explore how to support veterans in online courses. Implementation across courses by multiple professors also deserves greater research. The only accommodation that
has been standardized at Hostos Community College, where I teach, is that all students have alternative assignments to personal stories. Some techniques, like making rubrics available online, would necessitate faculty agreeing on course rubrics, but the move toward greater consistency across all sections of general education courses and the increased expectations of regular assessment may make uniform rubrics more common. Examinations of how much structure is supportive and when it becomes burdensome could be useful. Finally, the neurological similarities between PTSD and social anxiety disorder, as well as the similarities between social anxiety disorder and communication apprehension, warrant an investigation of possible links between PTSD and communication anxiety.

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Call for Manuscripts

Submissions are invited to be considered for publication in volume 28 of 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.

FORUM ESSAYS: In addition to traditional pieces on basic course research and pedagogy, the Annual will continue to publish the “Basic Course Forum” which consists 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 2015 focus will be a form of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the basic course to help inform future directions for the course.
Each submission must focus on one area of SWOT and not conduct a full SWOT analysis. Choose a single strength, weakness, opportunity OR threat facing the course in the future and provide an essay detailing how we must, as a discipline, respond to or capitalize on the issue you identify. As you construct your essay consider what role the basic course should play in the changing nature of higher education in the coming years.

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. A reference page must be included as well. 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.

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 identification of the author(s), (2) the address, telephone number, and email address of the contact person, and (3) data
Call for Manuscripts

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 the editor at: BCCAeditor@udayton.edu.

Joseph M. Valenzano III, Editor
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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 1, 2015 to receive full consideration for Volume 28 of the Basic Communication Course Annual.