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Editor's Note

This is my last volume and issue editing the *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*. It has been a blast bringing JACA back to life and I'd like to start by thanking the Association for Communication Administration former and current Board of Directors for allowing me to work on their journal. It is something that I think all administrators—communication or otherwise—could use to enhance their administrative practices.

Volume 32's two issues are being published together. We received a large number of quality manuscripts last year and ended up with nine that would ultimately be printed. Because of my transitioning to the editorship of *Communication Research Reports*, I got a little behind on the JACA editing. In addition, I am co-editing a series on public relations/corporate communication for Business Expert Press and those manuscripts—and chasing authors—also wasn't expected. Anyway, I'm pleased with this volume's articles and look forward to discussions regarding them at ACA national and regional meetings.

As I hand this editorship over to the very capable Janie Harden Fritz I know that JACA is not only in good hands, but that it will continue to grow and impact on administrative communication concerns and theory. I wish Janie well; I only wish I had a backlog to leave her with.

Don W. Stacks
Volumes 31 and 32

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Who Are We Educating?
Why Undergraduate Students Choose to Major in Communication

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This study examined student traits and major characteristics that might lead students to choose communication as a major by collecting survey responses from 476 undergraduate students. Attitudes about the major and potential jobs, expected norms from parents, and areas of perceived behavioral control based on student anxieties were analyzed as predictors of choosing the communication major. Short term benefits of taking communication classes as well as the long-term benefits predicted students' intention of graduating with a communication major. The perception that the major required little math was associated with choosing the major for those higher in math anxiety.

Key Words: College Major Choice, Theory of Reasoned Action, Communication Departments

One of the important factors in administering a productive communication program is understanding the perceptions that incoming students may have of that program. When university funding models are based on enrollment and credit hours, and the public perception of the rigor of our discipline is evaluated by the abilities of our graduates, much of the fate of our discipline rests in the decision-making processes of eighteen to twenty-two year olds. A greater understanding of how undergraduate students view the major can help communication administrators and faculty design appropriate and engaging curriculum and market both the program and the graduates of the program.

Choosing a college major is one of the most important life choices that an individual can make (St. John, 2000). However, as Beggs, Bantham, Mullins, and Taylor (2008) argued, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting students choose a major not based on academic passions but rather superficial heuristics, such as a desire to avoid math and/or tedious class work. Knowing how students view the communication major can help communication programs appropriately frame their expectations and goals for a communication education. Other disciplines, in particular accounting, have taken steps to determine how undergraduates view and choose their major (Apostolou, Hassell, Rebele, & Watson, 2010; Miller & Stone, 2009). However, despite the importance of this issue, little published research has attempted to determine what drives undergraduate student interest in majoring in communication.

Communication is traditionally a popular major (Princeton Review, 2012) with 794 institutions across the nation granting baccalaureate degrees in communication (NCA, 2011). However, we contend from our experience with students and others that general perceptions of the discipline may not have changed much since McBath (1976) argued "most people outside of our field, both within and outside the schools, have only a hazy notion of the content and outcomes of communication education" (p. 80). It is useful for those who work in communication education to understand the attitudes and beliefs potential communication majors hold for at least two reasons.

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The first reason is that awareness of student expectations and goals can help communication educators and administrators avoid blatantly violating these expectations. Students might choose their major based on less than lofty goals, such as avoiding math (Baus & Welch, 2008) or a perception that the courses will be easy (Beggs et al., 2008). Of course, many of our communication research methods instructors believe that quantitative skills are often an important component of a communication program. In other courses, students who anticipated an easy ride may feel frustrated when asked to think and write critically about the philosophical underpinnings of message processes. The reverse may also be true; students with strong interest in the potential intellectual challenges may be disheartened if they hear others describing their major as less than rigorous. Either way, if communication educators do not understand student perspectives, we risk unwittingly violating expectations in our courses and programs. While we most certainly do not advocate reducing the educational rigor of our courses, we do argue that instructors who are aware of students' pre-conceptions have the opportunity frame their communications with students in ways that ameliorate the negative effects of potential expectancy violations.

The second reason is to improve communication departments' ability to recruit high quality students. The communication major is often a "discovery" major; one that students transfer into after they have arrived on campus. Understanding student's perceptions of communication could improve overall marketability of both the degree and graduates of communication programs. Those who are interested in improving communication courses and programs might benefit from knowing what perceptions drive students to enroll in said courses.

One way to consider student perceptions is to examine the attitudes and beliefs that inform their behavior in regards to major choice. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Fishbein &Ajzen, 2010) provides explanatory mechanisms for the connections between attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Thus, an exploratory study was constructed with the theory of reasoned action and previous research from other disciplines as a guide. The TRA will be briefly explicated before we turn our attention to extant college major choice research and the various issues that might predict student interest in the communication major.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

The TRA positions behavioral intention as the most proximal predictor of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Once people have formed an intention to do something, they are likely to behave in accordance with that intention. In turn, intentions are predicted to be the weighted sum of *attitudes*, *subjective norms*, and *perceived behavioral control*.

Attitudes

Attitudes are based on the *valence* of the likely outcomes of performing the behavior. In other words, attitudes are based on what desirable outcomes an individual perceives as associated with that behavior. There are a variety of outcomes associated with choosing a particular major that could affect students' desire to choose that major. Some potential short-term outcomes are associated with possible benefits students might accrue in taking particular classes. For example, students might be more interested in a major with fun classes and/or they might want classes that will provide them with useful skills (Keillor, Bush, & Bush, 1995). Beggs et al. (2008) found student interest in course content was a strong predictor of major choice. Other research suggests students want a major with wide variety of classes (Pappu, 2004).

In addition to the benefits of the coursework, in the short-term students might also be concerned about practical issues. They may want a major with a credit load that enables them to

graduate on time in order to avoid another expensive year of college. They may also be concerned that their grade point average is not high enough or that they will have difficulty signing up for classes that fill too quickly. Although extant research on major choice tends to focus on interest in the major (Pappu, 2004) or economic concerns (Montmarquette, Cannings, & Mahseredjian, 2002) students' expected outcomes associated with entering a major and graduating may also be strong predictors of major choice.

In regards to long-term outcomes, a consistent predictor of major choice found in previous research concerns the employment available to students' with a particular major. In particular, predicted income associated with a major is a strong determinant of major choice (Arcidiacono, Hotz, & Kang, 2011; Montmarquette et al., 2002). Aside from income, the sheer predicted availability of jobs for people with a given major is also associated with major choice (Beggs et al., 2008). The long-term outcomes associated with a major are likely to be strongly associated with the ability to find employment, preferably lucrative employment.

Subjective Norm

Subjective norms refer to the behaviors an individual perceives that others who are important to that individual want the individual to perform. Fishbein and Azjen (2010) argued people are more likely to perform a behavior if they perceive important others want them to perform the behavior. Some research suggests that parents and friends may be the important others who influence students' major decisions major (Newell, Titus, & West, 1996). Parents' opinions and perceptions of majors may influence students' enrollment choices. Students might also be influenced to take communication courses if they have a high number of friends already in the major.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Finally, perceived behavioral control is composed of beliefs about one's personal capacity to perform the behavior. Essentially, people must feel that they possess the skills and abilities required to perform the behavior and that there are no substantial external hurdles that would prevent them from successfully performing the behavior. Several factors may influence students' perceived behavioral control regarding their ability to graduate with a particular major. Anxieties and apprehensions about particular skills sets may influence perceived behavioral control. Individuals may be drawn toward majors they feel they have aptitude for and away from majors where they feel they lack behavioral control (Beggs et al., 2008; Pringle, Dubose, & Yankey, 2010: Pritchard, Potter, & Sacucci, 2004). In particular, we expect that three specific variables, communication apprehension, math anxiety, and writing anxiety may be related to students' choice of major. *If students' possess anxiety regarding their academic skills in math, writing, and communication, students' beliefs about what communication courses require regarding math, writing, and communication may be likely to predict their interest the communication major*. Therefore,

> **RQ_1:** Does student anxiety about their academic skills in math, writing, and communication predict interest in the communication major?

Communication apprehension is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). Individuals who are highly communication apprehensive anticipate negative outcomes from communication, suffer anxiety if forced to communicate, and tend to withdraw from social situations (McCroskey, 1970). Students should recognize that completing a communication

degree will include multiple occasions where one must complete communication tasks such as public presentations or group assignments. Thus, individuals who are highly communication apprehensive may avoid communication as a major choice. Conversely, individuals who experience little apprehensiveness regarding communicating may be drawn to communication as a major choice.

Math anxiety is the experience of tension when faced with attempting to solve mathematical problems (Richardson & Suinn, 1972). Baus and Welch (2008) found that math anxiety scores were a strong predictor of major choice for communication students. Individuals with higher math anxiety scores were more likely to choose communication than business majors. At many institutions, including the one where this research was conducted, communication requires less specific math courses (including statistics and accounting) than majors such as business or psychology. Thus, students with math anxiety may choose communication as a way of avoiding math components of other majors.

Individuals who suffer from writing apprehension experience a fear of evaluation of their writing (Daly & Miller, 1975). Daly and Shamo (1978) argued students' major choice might be predicted partially by their level of writing apprehension. Students with higher levels of writing apprehension may choose majors where they anticipate less writing will be required. Given that writing is a form of communication, we hope students might perceive a communication program as fairly writing intensive. This prediction is in line with Daly and Shamo's finding (1978). This finding has been corroborated by more recent work by Wiltse (2006) which found *communication majors had lower mean scores on writing apprehension than other majors*. Therefore,

> **H_1:** The perception that communication does not require writing will be positively associated with choosing the communication major for those with high levels of writing anxiety.

Study Overview

This study was conducted with students at a midsize comprehensive university who were in the final week of the basic introduction to communication class. This class contains a variety of majors as it counts as a general education class. At this point in the basic course it is expected that students will know enough about communication as a field to be considering the major. They were surveyed concerning their interest in communication and as well as their perceptions of communication. The questionnaire was designed to investigate if the above perceptions and abilities would be associated with interest in becoming a communication major. This investigation is exploratory in nature and should be considered an initial attempt to begin to determine which perceptions and traits are associated with choosing to major in communication.

Method

Sample

Participants were recruited from a basic survey course of communication theory near the end of the semester. They were given extra credit in exchange for their participation. There were 476 participants (171 male, 236 female, 69 did not indicate their sex). Their ages ranged from 18 to 46 (M = 19.66, SD =2.50).

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey including an online consent form. The online survey contained measures concerning their perception of the communication major, their likelihood of graduating with a communication major, anxiety measures, and demographics. Finally, the participants were thanked for their time and the survey took them to a separate data collection survey for them to indicate their personal information for assigning extra credit.

Instrumentation

Interest and Choice of Communication Major. The participants were first asked their perceived likelihood of graduating with a communication major on an eight-point scale ranging from "I will definitely not graduate with that major" to "I will definitely graduate with that major." The distribution was skewed positively as the modal response was the lowest likelihood of choosing the major. They were also asked what their current major was and 15% indicated they were already communication majors.

Original Perceptions of the Major Measures. Items were created based on the theoretic arguments above to investigate students' reasons for choosing a major. The response scale for these items was a 7-point scale ranging from "Not at all important" to "Extremely Important." Six items were written to tap the belief that choosing the communication major will have positive short term consequences to form the "benefits from classes" scale (see Appendix A for all new items). These items focused on the enjoyment from taking the classes in the major and the immediate benefits from those classes. Three other items were written to measure the expectation of positive long-term consequences form the major stemming from the career that such a major might lead to. These items formed the "job prospects" scale. Another three items were written to capture the practical aspects of choosing the major and included the ability to get into the classes and graduating on time to form the "practical concerns" scale. An additional item was written to measure the belief that the communication major would not be difficult. One item asked if the participants thought the major did not require much math and another asked the same about writing. Finally, two items were written to measure descriptive (focused on friends) and injunctive norms (focused on parents). This measurement model was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (Gerbing, 2012; Gerbing & Hamilton, 1994; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Model fit was determined by examining the root mean squared error (RMSE) which can be interpreted similarly to RMSEA. The data were consistent with the model (RMSE = .06). See Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and reliability estimates for all measures.

Trait Measures. Communication apprehension in the sub-sections of public speaking, interpersonal communication, small group, and classroom discussion was measured using McCroskey's (1982) PRCA-24. The sub-area of meetings (large groups) was adapted to reflect communication apprehension in the classroom rather than meetings. Negatively phrased items were reverse coded. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm the factor structure of the PRCA-24. The overall model was not consistent with the data (RMSE = .45). Extensive model testing did not produce a model consistent with the data. Closer examination of the error matrix suggested that within each of the four factors, the negatively worded items were not correlating with the positively worded items. Therefore, only the positively worded items that indicated the presence of each anxiety were maintained. That model was a closer fit with the data (RMSE = .06).

Writing apprehension was measured using Daly and Miller's (1975) writing apprehension instrument. The twenty-six items in this scale are intended to represent a single factor of writing apprehension. Although the initial estimate of reliability was adequate (α = .79), an examination of the inter-item correlations indicated that the alpha calculation was benefitting from the large number of items. The data were not consistent with the measurement model (RMSE = .16).

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Factors
Predicted to be Associated with Communication Major Choice

	# items	M	SD	alpha
Comm Major Intent	1	3.54	2.70	-
Benefits from Classes	6	5.05	1.22	.90
Job Prospects	3	4.57	1.42	.90
Practical Concerns	3	4.60	1.16	0.71
Not Difficult	1	4.00	1.44	-
No Math	1	4.53	1.80	-
No Writing	1	4.02	1.62	-
Descriptive Norm	1	4.05	1.98	-
Injunctive Norm	1	4.63	1.71	-
PRCA Group Pos Items	3	4.68	1.47	0.77
PRCA Class Pos Items	3	4.53	1.54	0.89
PRCA Interpersonal Pos Items	3	4.71	1.48	0.89
PRCA Speaking Pos Items	3	4.1	1.55	0.85
Lack of Enjoyment in Writing	9	4.37	1.19	0.87
Writing Anxiety	9	4.66	1.30	0.89
Math Anxiety	4	4.18	1.83	.90

The error matrix suggested that there were two separate factors that were labeled *writing anxiety* and *lack of enjoyment in writing.* Additionally, nine items had to be dropped as they produced unacceptably high errors. Confirmatory factor analysis was consistent with model fit for this model (RMSE = .06).

Math anxiety was measured using 9 items from Betz's (1978) math anxiety scale. An initial confirmatory factor analysis showed that initial item structure proposed by Betz proved to be a poor fit for the data (RMSE = .19). Examination of the error matrix suggested that the negatively worded items were contributing to the error so only the positively worded items were retained. This model was consistent with the data (RMSE = .01).[1]

Results

Initially, the relationships between the predictor variables and the students' predicted likelihood of adopting a major in communication are examined. Then the predicted interactions between skills required for the major (writing and math) and anxieties associated with those skills are then regressed onto communication major likelihood.

[1] The full measurement model with the reduced multi-item measures was also tested with AMOS and the results were consistent with model fit (CFI = .92, RMSEA = .05).

Predicting Communication Major Likelihood with Direct Effects

To determine which perceptions and communication anxieties are associated with intending to choose the communication major the participants' estimate of the likelihood they will choose to be a communication major was regressed on benefits from classes, job prospects, practical concerns, belief the major is not difficult, descriptive norm, injunctive norm, and the positive PRCA scales. The predictors explained a substantial portion of the variance $R^2 = .19$, $F(10, 391) = 9.09$, $p < .001$ (see Table 2 for a model summary). Benefits from classes and job prospects both emerged as substantial and statistically significant predictors. The other perceptions of the major, normative concerns, and the PRCA subscales were neither substantial nor statistically significant predictors.

Table 2
Predictors of Intention to Graduate with a Communication Major

Predictor	β	*p*
Benefits from Classes	0.25	< .001
Job Prospects	0.24	<.001
Practical Concerns	-0.06	0.31
Not Difficult	0.00	0.97
Descriptive Norm	0.03	0.53
Injunctive Norm	0.02	0.74
PRCA Group Pos Items	0.05	0.46
PRCA Class Pos Items	0.01	0.86
PRCA Interpersonal Pos Items	-0.12	0.11
PRCA Speaking Pos Items	0.07	0.26

Interactions between Expected Skills and Anxieties

It was predicted that the perceptions that major does not require substantial amounts of writing and that it does not require substantial amounts of math would be associated with choosing the major but only for those students who possessed high levels of anxiety about those skills. To test these hypotheses, three regression models were calculated in which all of the predictors were entered simultaneously. First the belief that the major requires little writing, the writing anxiety scale, and their interaction were entered into a regression equation with likelihood of choosing the major as the outcome variable. The only substantial effect was a statistically significant main effect for the belief that the major does not require writing such that the belief was associated with a stronger intent to be a communication major, $\beta = .39$, $p = .02$ and the equation was associated with a small but statistically significant multiple correlation, $R^2 = .04$, $F(3, 408) = 6.31$, $p < .01$. A similar regression equation with the lack of enjoyment in writing scale produced similar results, although the main effect failed to reach conventional levels of statistical significance, $\beta = .31$, $p = .08$ and the multiple correlation was statistically significant $R^2 = .05$, $F(3, 409) = 7.32$, $p < .01$. None of the predictor variables were substantial or statistically significant predictors. These results were not consistent with the hypothesis that the effect of the belief that the communication major required little writing on choosing the communication major would be moderated by writing anxiety.

Next, the hypothesis was tested that the belief that the communication major requires little math would be associated with intention to choose the communication major among those with math anxiety. Intention to choose the major was regressed on the belief the major requires little math, the math anxiety items scale, and the product term to represent their interaction. The variables explained a statistically significant portion of the variance $R^2 = .07$; $F(3, 403) = 10.34$, $p < .01$. The interaction was statistically significant ($\beta = .33$, $p = .05$). A median split was performed to interpret the interaction. For the participants high in math anxiety, the correlation between the belief that the major requires little math and intentions was $r = .26$ ($p < .01$). For the participants low in math anxiety, the correlation was smaller, $r = .15$ ($p = .03$). This finding was consistent with the hypothesis as the relationship was expected to be larger for those higher in math anxiety than those who were low.

Discussion

In comparison to other academic fields, the scholarly study of communication as its own discipline is a relatively recent development (Cohen, 1994). For this reason, the study of communication may be viewed as a less serious pursuit than other disciplines.

Indeed, anecdotal evidence from our majors would suggest that students pick the communication major because it is "easy." These pronunciations can be distressing for instructors who are dedicating their careers to the serious pursuit of knowledge regarding communication processes. However, we take heart that the findings presented here paint a different picture of students' internal perceptions of the communication major. Understanding these perceptions may help the discipline recruit quality undergraduate students as well as begin to reframe how the discipline is perceived within and without the academy.

Who becomes a Communication Major?

Contrary to anecdotal evidence that structural issues such as easy classes or lower requirements are the reasons students express interest in the communication major, we found that variables specifically related to benefits from the major both in the short and long-term were the main predictors of students considering the communication major. Students holding positive attitudes regarding the subject material covered in communication were more likely to express interest in the major. These findings are useful because promotion of interesting content and the rigor of communication coursework may both draw students to the major and at the same time help combat perceptions of communication as an "easy" choice.

In addition, students who chose communication as a major were more likely to hold positive attitudes regarding employment opportunities. This finding fits with students' idea that the purpose of a college education is training for future employment (Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009). Thus, students who have chosen communication as their calling may be more likely to perceive career opportunities in this field. Luckily, for these students research suggests that communication skills and education are important components of many successful careers (for a review see: Morreale, Osborn, & Pearson, 2000; Morreale & Pearson, 2008).

In regards to norms, parental approval of the major was not a significant predictor of intention to graduate with a communication degree. The perception that their friends were communication majors was also not associated with communication major intentions. Students may do what their friends do with regard to the consumption of alcohol (Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen, & Hembroff, 2006), but they appear to choose their major based on their own needs and interests.

Anxieties about the skills needed for communication classes produced an uneven set of results. Regarding the communication anxieties assessed with the modified subscales of the PRCA (McCroskey, 1970) none were substantial predictors of interest in the major. This study was not the first to have difficulty with the factor structure of the PRCA (Hsiao, 2010). Future research might explore constructs related to communication anxiety such as willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1992) and shyness (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982) as research suggests that these traits are highly correlated with communication apprehension (Tevin, Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2010).

There were substantial relationships uncovered between the belief that the communication major does not require writing and interest in the major. This relationship was not moderated by writing anxiety, inconsistent with the hypothesis that this relationship would be stronger for those with high writing anxiety. This finding raises the possibility that the relationship is not due to anxieties about writing but instead is simply due to students' desire to avoid writing in general.

The data were consistent with Baus and Welch's (2008) findings that communication students experience more math anxiety. There was a substantial relationship between the perception that the major did not require math and choosing the major among those with high levels of math anxiety. The finding does suggest that communication may attract students who wish to avoid additional math classes due to anxiety associated with math.

Limitations

As with any research, there are several limitations to this study. First and foremost, this study only looked at students from one university. Although this project represents important exploratory work on the subject of why students choose to become communication majors, the results may be limited to students in introductory communication courses at this university. Further research might collect data from several different types of universities to determine if these impressions are discipline or department specific.

Additionally, even though behavioral intentions are strongly associated with behavior (Kim & Hunter, 1993), it remains uncertain if the factors that cause a student to express an intention to choose the communication major are the same factors that cause them to actually choose the major. Future research examining cross-sectional data comparing communication majors to non-majors may not be valid as communication majors may report more favorable beliefs to justify the effort they have already put into taking classes in the major (Aronson & Mills, 1959). Longitudinal data are required to determine what factors influence major choice over a cohort of students' college career.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that contrary to stereotypes regarding the communication major, undergraduate students in the introductory course are making thoughtful choices regarding communication as a major. Although as a field we should remain aware of and find ways to ameliorate students' math anxieties, these findings should be comforting for communication administrators. Students who view the major as interesting and useful are more likely to choose to major in communication. When attempting to combat negative portrayals of the communication discipline on and off campus, communication administrators can point to these findings of one example where students' intellectual curiosity is the primary driver of their decision to become undergraduate communication scholars. Our job as educators should be to ensure our promotions of our discipline focuses on these positive aspects of the major, as this

may be the best way to both draw in new students as well as maintain the image of the overall discipline.

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Appendix A

Not Difficult

Communication classes are not difficult.

Benefits from Classes

Communication has a wide variety of classes offered.
Communication has classes that will be fun to take.
Communication has classes that will teach me useful skills.
I think the knowledge I will gain from being in Communication will be interesting to me.
I think I will enjoy taking classes in Communication.
It is important for me to understand more about Communication.

Job Prospects

The Communication major will allow me to easily find a job when I graduate.
The Communication major will allow me to find a satisfying job when I graduate.
The Communication major will allow me to find a high paying job when I graduate.

Practical Concerns

The students who choose Communication graduate on time.
The classes that are required for Communication are not filled up so quickly that it is difficult to get into them.
The Communication major does not have a high GPA requirement for admission into the major.

No Math

The Communication major does not require classes that include a large math component.

No Writing

The Communication major does not require a substantial amount of writing.

Injunctive Norm

My parents (or parental figures) would approve of me choosing Communication.

Descriptive Norm

I have friends that have chosen Communication.

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Dialogic Ethics: Leadership and the Face of the Other

Karen Lollar*

Foundational to a relational ethic is the belief that healthy human existence requires respect for others, respect that does not work to reduce their otherness to the sameness that is familiar. It is not enough that the face of another person arouses awareness. What pragmatic action does it require? This article explores the application of a Levinasian ethic on day-to-day practice in the academy. Weaving together short vignettes from daily work practice with principles of ethics from Emmanuel Levinas (1969, 1997), the author concludes with a vision of the possibility of creating a dwelling place based on dialogic ethics as a remedy to the dialogic tension between the face of the other and the needs of the organization.

Keywords: Ethics, Levinas, Face, Dialectic Tension, Other, Bakhtin, Dwelling Place, Dialogue

Ethical Imperative:

It's a modular office, a thoroughly used trailer converted to office space, parked in what once was a parking lot at the periphery of the main campus. They tell me it's temporary but it's my daily reality. It smells like the feral cats who have nested underneath and the exhaust from construction trucks. The loud clatter of trains outside fades into the background as the chatter from students, faculty and staff creates a steady, grating background of noise, laughter and talk. Not a place for reflection certainly and not how I pictured academic life. It is late in the afternoon and the physical and emotional fatigue from a long day is beginning to wrap its rough, abrasive texture around me chafing my soft inner self and leaving me irritable and cold. I want to leave and find a quiet respite filled with the freshness of fall air, but the task list reminds me of the reports that demand my full attention before the day is done. The administrative work engages my logical side and offers the satisfaction of completing works of analysis and planning that contribute to the work of the organization. In the middle of designing a spreadsheet to track enrollments, another face knocks at my open door and pleads for my time and listening ear. The work that I had hoped to get done will have to wait yet another day. I feel a call to my ethical relational self-pulling me from the task at hand and the concomitant need to answer.

Acknowledgement of the Other,[1] face-to-face, is at the heart of a relational ethic. This reflective paper explores some of the possible communicative implications of the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (1969, 1997) and the resulting tensions that arise in the commonplace events and conversations that comprise day-to-day work experience in academic life. My examples stem from the starting premise that the study of communication should be evidenced in our relationships and our daily praxis. A brief

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[1] For Levinas, ethics is a first philosophy beginning with an encounter with another being different from and exterior to the self. By distinguishing that as an encounter with an Other, he emphasizes the lack of sameness that exists and will always exist between each of us. This paper uses the capitalization to indicate that concept of difference and alterity.

introduction to Levinas leads to thoughts on my personal responsibility and answerability. Creating a dialogic dwelling place is proposed as a communicative path to relational ethics.

Foundational to a relational ethic is the belief that healthy human existence requires respect for others, respect that does not work to reduce their otherness to the sameness that is familiar to me. It is not enough that the face of another person arouses my awareness and my conscience but what action does it require? In the day-to-day encounters that frame my lived experience I feel the need to respond in some meaningful way to others using the capabilities I have at my disposal. Those capabilities include the power to ignore, to dismiss with words, to wound, or to welcome the presence of the other to interrupt the personal need of the moment. That person, any person, seeking my attention is an exteriority, an "Other" outside of me and different yet present face-to-face with a voice and a need that calls me. Before I can formulate a response, the face is in front of me calling me to respond. My instinct is self-preservation and the call to a relational ethic does not account for that. "But it is precisely this inevitable centration on the ego—the fact that I am and that what ever appears, appears to me—which is put into question by the appeal of the Other" (Visker, 2003, p. 273). Only later, in the solitude of quiet space am I able to reflect on such an encounter with the Other. On the one hand I feel I am independent, self-sufficient and focused on what needs to get done. On the other hand, I am drawn to a deeper understanding of human responsibility and most urgent, my own responsibility. Reflecting on my responsibilities as self and as department chair I experience a tension between competing demands and competing desires.

Out of the face at my door sounds a voice that pierces the heart, my heart. Philosopher, ethicist, and Talmudic scholar, Emmanuel Levinas (1969, 1997), a student of Husserl and Heidegger, names this moment of ethical encounter "an epiphany." The phrase captures the sense of wonder, awe, and awareness of the presence of the divine, or the infinite, in the encounter where we sense the otherness and *alterity* of another human face. For Levinas, the word, "face," takes on a meaning that signifies deep humanness. It is not the customary use of the word, but a metaphor that signifies the infinite living presence of a human person. Levinas explains, "The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face....The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure. . . . It expresses itself (1969, pp. 50-51). It is in this moment of social interaction that my own sense of "I", my uniqueness as a self, responds. "The face of the other is a metaphor for knowing" (Arnett, 2003, p. 49). What I know is that I care. Levinas and other relational scholars contend that we are called to recognize the other and respond. The big "O" applied to the word, "other," reminds us of the uniqueness and infinite alterity of any other human. When Levinas speaks of the Other, he frequently refers to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. We must assume that Levinas also includes the more familiar others: the spouse, the child, the parent, the friends, the service worker, and the colleague. We presume them to be familiar but they, too, are strangers who call to us for recognition and respect. The call of the Other presents itself in the day-to-day as well as the disaster, and applying Levinas at the most basic and familiar encounter emphasizes his points. Can familiarity reduce to banality? Encounters with those we know and those we do not know both propose specific challenges to our

responsibility to respond to the face of the Other. The unknown, the ugly, the social outcast call us to recognize the inherent worth and value in an Other who is so different as to be intimidating and even frightening. Yet, the familiar faces, the ones we purport to love and support, become invisible to us in their familiarity. According to Levinas, the ethical calls us nonetheless to hear, to see, to be there for the other. The concept for Levinas is so absolute that he leaves us without even the self-serving comfort of the expectation for a reciprocal response. The implications of such a responsibility seem deep and, perhaps profound.

My needs, my wants, my dreams, and my sense of self are all called into question by Levinas's "call of the face." Levinas argues against the traditional Western view that places our own sense of "being" as primary. His argument claims that without responding to the Other, we have no self. Rather, we come into being in our response to the Other (Davis, 1996). This twentieth century ethical view arose in the historical moment of Nazi Germany and the human abuses of that system. Levinas came to believe that the philosophical focus on "being" as primary was problematic. Peperzak explains, "...Being is so intimately united with the universe of beings that it cannot be freed from its totalitarian character" (1991, p. 438). Levinas challenges us at our core belief system of self-importance. Gehrke's words encourage a reflection on the personal application of Levinas, "Only by understanding the tensions between ethics and justice in Levinas's writing and by relating those to his philosophy of communication can we understand the significance of a Levinasian communication ethic" (2010, p. 6). A reading of Levinas challenges us to reflect on relational conflict and suffering in our world today. It challenges us to be conscious of the wholeness of our saying and the specificity of our said because "...the relation between the same and the other—upon which we seem to impose such extraordinary conditions—is language" (Levinas, 1969, p. 39). Such a phenomenological view draws our attention to our lived experience and particularly our communication.

And yet, there is no specific "how to" in reading Levinas; he gives no clear plan of action or implementation. Taking my understanding of the Levinasian ethic to the experience of day-to-day relational encounters shatters the illusion that I usually act ethically or that I am even capable of doing so in every call of the Other. It is a demanding ethical command that requires my mindful response to each encounter with people. It requires giving up the desire for reciprocity. Self-preservation seems to require that I attend to only a limited number of hundreds of possible encounters and that I maintain a public mask in communicative interactions. What I realize is that at every turn, my inability to lay aside my self-focused need for space, time, privacy, recognition, power, and food (metaphorically of all kinds) confronts and humbles me. Levinas scholar, Peperzak observes:

> Another comes to the fore as other if and only if his or her "appearance" breaks, pierces, destroys the horizon of my egocentric monism, i.e., when the other's invasion of my world destroys the empire in which all phenomena are, from the outset, a priori, condemned to function as moments of my universe. (1991, p. 440)

The perspective that our being is contingent on such encounters contradicts the traditional Western cultural view that the self is primary; this confounds and challenges me. I am called to consider my response.

Certainly my response will manifest itself in speech. This is not to deny my emotional and cognitive reactions to the situation in front of me. Speech, both oral and written, is essential in expressing our conscious awareness of one another. In any encounter with the face of the Other, my inner speech may, in fact, be in turmoil weighing possible utterances. The words can respect or the words can dismiss; *they have ethical power*. "One can, to be sure, conceive of language as an act, as a gesture of behavior. But then one omits the essential of language: the coinciding of the revealer and the revealed in the face..." (Levinas, 1969, p. 67).

The ethical power of speech manifests in both the saying and the said. The *said* is information given but "the said is not simply a sign or an expression of a meaning, it proclaims and establishes this as that" (Levinas, 1997, p. 35). The *saying* resonates actively from the face and the voice that announces its presence. It is a full disclosure of the face connoting an exposure to the other that is without pretense or masks. Saying embodies sincerity and transparency (Kearney, 1984). "For Levinas, however, the saying and the said, the act of expression and the thing expressed are never correlative, as noesis [thought] and noema [object of thought], since in the saying there is always the trace of alterity that goes beyond anything that can be measured in terms of its thought content" (Hand, 1989, p. 144). The saying and the said create an ethical tension in relationships. The saying might be experienced in face-to-face conversations or learning communities. The said might include reports, policies, and emails from management.

The said dictates and directs and yet, the face of the Other is present and when I am open and mindful, that presence or saying calls me. Levinas proposes that our purpose is linked to our ability to speak or to "say." He says, "And it is for that that man is a being of truth, belonging to no other genus of being. But is the power to say in man, however strictly correlative to the said its function may be, in the service of being?" (1997, p. 37). If being is integrally linked to a meaningful feeling of connection to other humans then the saying must be felt and the said thoughtfully considered. In my professional world, the Other is present, and yet another voice calls me and demands my attention. The voice resonates from the discourse of management that permeates work in the organization, any organization. Fairclough (cited in Spicer and Bohm, 2007) defines the discourse of management as "a structured set of texts and practices which is produced, distributed and consumed by actors in a way which constructs objects and subjects in the social world" (p. 1667). It is a language of deadlines, numbers, goals, and expectations.

There is a tension between the management role and the demands of Others and exploring it may provide insight. Collinson (2005, p. 1422) avers that "taking a dialectical perspective can facilitate new ways of thinking about the complex, shifting dynamics of leadership." I feel some dialectic tension between the said of the organization (set priorities, create processes, make decisions toward specific ends,and so forth) versus the plea of the face of the Others who have specific needs (social needs, illness, family, time, conflict, and so forth). These competing voices originate at different sites and for different ends. Like Aasland (2007), I realize that management discourse is oriented toward the perspective of what is best for the company that makes the rules. The moral system of the organization also strives for justice, fairness, and legally preserving the organization.

At the same time, organizations need employees and managers who strive for the corporate goals, complete the corporate tasks, and work smoothly together. Becoming part of the organization is totalizing for the individual, but efficient and effective for getting the organization's work done. Jackall in his 1988 book describes these cryptic principles of the moral system for managers in bureaucratic organizations

> striving for success is a moral imperative; (b) rising stars serve to validate the moral system; (c) criteria for success are bounded by the system and can be based in illusion rather than in reality —success is often the result of taking credit for the good and avoiding blame for the bad; (d) self-control, and not necessarily rule-following behavior, is a moral imperative; (e) morality is determined by flexibility and adaptability to changing political realities, and not by strong convictions; (f) bad things must be covered up or reframed in order to protect the system; and (g) morality is a matter of survival and gaining advantage. (Barker, 2002, p. 1113)

Without doubt, no organizational leaders would document these principles in their code system but managers in many places acknowledge their pragmatic value in negotiating the politicized communication in management. The call of the Other is often drowned out by such a call of the organization.

Increasingly management discourse and principles define life in the academy, and the dialectic tension between the call of the Other and the responsibility to the organization intensifies. The saying and the said are in play and the organizational chart provides an example. It solidifies hierarchy and division, "a sophisticated method for establishing, conventionalizing and validating the master/slave relationship" (Barker, 2002, p. 1109). Judged like this, an organizational chart is harsh and unethical in its *saying*; however, in its *said* it serves an informational function. Like other forms of organization, the academy institutionalizes practices that result in subjugation, marginalization, and hegemony but I don't always recognize it in the day-to-day. I certainly don't want to be complicit in it but it becomes invisible in the common activities that comprise academic life. Since the organizational expectations and routines are ubiquitous it is easy to turn a blind eye to the culture of which I am a part and fail to examine and reflect on the tension between the face of the Other and the system of the organization. Organizational wisdom suggests that closing myself to the face of the Other is part of the management responsibility of being just and fair. And yet the face calls me.

Increasingly, we see organizations as systemic organisms and in some ways as an Other in their own right. That suggests that the organization, too, calls us to response. I feel that call in meeting the demands of my role as faculty member and as department chair. The existence of the organization requires my active answerability as the communicative structure that binds multiple individual Others. *The tension is felt when individual needs clash with organizational needs blurring the ethical imperative*. Baxter, an expert in the study of dialectic tension, says, "competing discourses, some more marginalized than others, jockey to emerge as the centripetal center of meaning in the process of intertextual struggle" (2007, p. 122). The struggle is sometimes between the management discourse, the voice of the Other we call the organization, and the individuals that reside in that organization. In Levinasian terms the organization is a third party and I am also in relationship to that third party. Davis explains that "I am made to realize that the Other does not exist merely for my sake, that my neighbour is also a neighbour to the third party, and indeed that to them it is I who am the third party (1996, p. 83). It is this concept that links personal responsibility to individuals to

recognition that we live life in social society. "My relationship with the other as neighbor gives meaning to my relations with all the others" (1997, p. 159).

Responsibility

> *The email I'm reading reminds me that the budget cuts need to be communicated to the adjunct faculty. Like other faculty, my week has been busy with exams, student issues, and meetings. But I am the chair with additional responsibilities both to the organization and to the staff and faculty. Sending the information out to the faculty I rebalance my list of work that needs to be done. I accept the responsibility of communicating the reality of the department in reports to other parts of the organization. I accept that decisions made for the good of the organization might impact individuals; sharing those decisions is a key role in management and I hope that this time it will all work smoothly. I'll revise the schedule and send it on its way. Check it off. My performance evaluation depends on my ability to check it off on time. More importantly, my students and faculty depend on the schedule to plan their lives. It is a meaningful task. The knock sounds at the door and I look up to see a distraught colleague with a copy of my email in hand. I'm conscious of the Other looking at me and needing me. My awareness turns toward the Other in front of me.*

This awareness is a crossroads and I must make choices. I know that the voice and its utterance are addressed to me. I could close myself to the need by being too busy or I could ask someone else to respond. Or, mindful of the saying that is the reservoir for the said, I could turn my complete attention to the Other and respond. I hear the voice. "Whatever my reaction, it will have a meaning that is to a certain extent beyond my control, for it will be an ethical meaning" (Visker, 2003, 274). It interrupts my interiority and my comfortable attention to my own needs.

"The word I means here I am, answering for everything and for everyone. Responsibility for the others has not been a return to oneself, but an exasperated contracting, which the limits of identity cannot retain" (Levinas, 1997. p. 114). It is not for me that I respond but for the Other. There is no guarantee that my response will be valued or correct but I feel called to answer. This is *responsibility*. When I am aware that the call is addressed to me, I can be open to the moment and its demands so that I can focus on possible trajectories or outcomes of what I say and don't say. I hope that my utterance is caring, respectful, and, in some cases impartial and informational, but I do not always correctly anticipate the specific concerns of every addressee. In drawing a said out of my saying I sometimes fail.

Murray notes that "ethics is itself dialogical" (2000, p. 134). When my utterance fails to address the particulars of the person I'm communicating with, I must answer for my own action and my own utterance. I must answer to the Other dialogically. In a culture that privileges the individual and the self, this is a difficult concept to accept. After all, my intentions were good. We might rightfully ask, "From where does that responsibility originate?" According to Levinas, the face of the Other is the phenomenological experience which commands the self to respond. In that encounter with the face, one sees a trace of the infinite and is drawn to respond with openness and care. The face is not just skin for Levinas; *the face is beyond the skin*. "The skin caressed

is not the protection of an organism, simply the surface of an entity; it is the divergency between the visible and the invisible, quasi-transparent, thinner than that which would still justify an expression of invisible by the visible" (Levinas, 1997, p. 89-90). The skin divides between our public self and our deep inner vulnerability. *Skin signifies the face;* it lets us know that a face is present, beyond the skin, yet reflecting for us a need for response. That does not mean we always follow that demand for ethical response. That ethical response requires us to acknowledge the Other without trying to make her/him just like us. "The central difficulty for Levinas is to elaborate a philosophy of self and other in which both are preserved as independent and self-sufficient, but in some sense in relation with one another" (Davis, 1996, p. 41). Failure of understanding is to be expected if the alterity of the Other is preserved. Minimizing such alterity totalizes the Other into sameness and denies the presence of the infinite in them. "The face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, in expression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp" (Levinas, 1969, p. 197).

Levinas proposes that the face is situated at a sort of borderland between infinity and totality: on the one end of the continuum there is a connection to the divine and on the other end all uniqueness is collapsed into sameness. He writes in *Otherwise than Being*, "The face of a neighbor signifies for me an unexceptionable responsibility, preceding every free consent, every pact, every contract," (1997, p. 88). On the other hand, when we focus only on our intention without consideration for the response we are prioritizing our self over the Other. Levinas believes that by privileging the self and seeking to collapse the Other into our understanding, we harm the Other. That harm is what Levinas names as "violence to the Other".

Levinas grounds his philosophy in challenging a Western philosophy that privileges the self and its quest for being (ontology). Ontology seeks the unity, the similarity, and oneness of the experience we humans call being. Levinas points out that to reduce the alterity of the Other through thought, action, or structure is to totalize, to destroy the separate identity of the Other. This concept of violence as Levinas defines it is broader than mere physical battle.

> ...[V]iolence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action. (Levinas, 1969, p. 21)

We totalize without intention. Management responsibility includes planning, organizing, directing, and controlling (Longenecker, 1985) and in carrying out those duties a manager often seeks to minimize differences, inadvertently totalizing the Other. Standardizing curriculum, implementing assessment, and scheduling are all examples of processes within the academy that seek to ensure quality and as an unintended consequence, totalize the faculty. The face of the Other is obscured and diminished.

This is the emotional and cognitive space where Levinas leaves me, leaves me to contemplate how I can understand ethical responsibility in my lived experience both as an ethical person and as a competent manager. *Responsibility is no stranger to any manager.* Levinas notes that "If we call a situation where my freedom is called in question conscience, association or the welcoming of the Other is conscience…The calling in question of oneself is all the more severe the more rigorously the self is in

control of itself" (1969, p. 100). It is time for an examination of my own conscience. My choice to study communication *ethics* presupposes my personal willingness to call my own actions into question and to risk my freedom for the sake of my desire for the Other. In some ways it may be easier to examine my conscience in encounters with those outside my self-conceived social sphere. I can quickly examine the dialogue about "those people" and be taken to task for failing my ethical responsibility. I might share my trepidation about carrying my intentions into real actions in support of the homeless, the panhandler, the bored students, or the strangers; such a discourse would illuminate my own prejudices and self-serving attitudes. But, it may be too painless.

The call to conscience becomes personalized and confronts me even more profoundly when I examine my behavior in those relationships in which I live and work. Presumably in the sphere where I know and care for the Other, I should have little problem in giving myself for their needs. Conflict ensues when my own needs, the demands of assumed roles and the needs of the Other clash. What does it look like when we lay down our own need for the need of those in our workplaces and our homes? How do we recognize our selfishness without abandoning our self? It is my failure to be always ethical at this level that haunts any reflection. Responsibility alludes to the actions we take in a situation. The specific action of "what do I say" can be called answerability.

Answerability

> *"What does this budget cut mean to me? Will I have a class to teach?", the adjunct professor asks. "There will be fewer classes offered this next semester and there will be faculty who are not assigned a class," I reply. I realize that none of us has a guarantee of employment and yet some of us have less risk than others in the system. The situation makes sense from a numbers perspective and the decision is sound organizationally if we are all parts in the creation of a product. I wonder how other chairs deal with the gut wrenching decisions that impact the lives of others. I don't know how to soften such a blow yet...the person before me is in pain and suffering.*

This sounds and looks like a call for action and not reflection. What needs to be done? What should be said? The face evokes three emotional orientations in the self (Levinas, 1997). The first is *responsibility*. Responsibility is a movement toward the Other, a willingness to care for the needs of the Other, and even a willingness to sacrifice one's life for the life of the Other. The second emotional orientation is *guilt*. The self feels guilty for taking the place of the Other, for Being. The responsibility for the Other is contingent on the guilt evoked by the face. The face reveals to the self that she or he has not done enough to alleviate the pain of the other. A final and more significant emotional orientation evoked by the face is *suffering*. The face informs the self about the suffering of the Other. The self is compelled to respond to that suffering. The relationship between the self and the Other is asymmetrical, according to Levinas. The self does not have the right to expect the Other to reciprocate the self's responsibility. The self must be willing to take on the Other's suffering with no strings attached.

Levinas shares a concern for the importance of dialogue and responsibility to the other with Bakhtin. In fact, the call to communicative action may find more specific

direction in Bakhtin (1993) who proposed that we are held accountable for our actions and our dialogue calling the imperative "answerability." Knowing what to do is a challenge; knowing what to say may be even more of a challenge. Uncertainty pulls us towards inaction and silence but there is also the possibility of creativity and transcendence. Although, we cannot physically take on another's suffering, we can answer with comfort and acknowledgement by our openness in dialogue that respects the life and feelings of the person who calls us. There is no ready script for us. We cannot accurately predict the response and there is the moment of creativity and answerability. It is the give and take in the authentic response to what is before us. Bakhtin writes:

> An answerable act or deed is precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgment of my obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness. It is this affirmation of my non-alibi in Being that constitutes the basis of my life being actually and competently given as well as its being actually and competently as something yet-to-be-achieved. (1993, p. 42)

In his essay Art and Answerability, Bakhtin (1990) outlines the role of answerability in life as well as art. Bakhtin writes:

> But what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person? Only the unity of answerability. I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art, so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. But answerability entails guilt, or liability to blame. It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame. (p. 1)

Our decisions cannot be arbitrary because they are connected to experience within the social, political, and artistic worlds. Being answerable means that we are capable of justifying our decisions as a part of our own, presumably, cohesive worldview. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act,* Bakhtin (1993) provides a deeper understanding of answerability. *Utterances*, he argues, demand a response and as such, they form the basis of the ethical relationship between self and Other. I make an utterance in "anticipation of a response." By anticipating a response, I have made myself answerable for my utterance. My utterances are a reflection of who I am and where my guilt is. Bakhtin notes, "There is no alibi in being" (p. xx) and therefore, I cannot claim to not have lived. I am responsible for my words and deeds.

Ethical relationships are formed in dialogue, a specific type of utterance. It is not the monologic script of a speech. It is not the "how to" mode of teaching someone a new skill. "Dialogue, understood as the communicative exchange of agents embedded in a particular historical moment, a particular sociocultural standpoint, and a particular set of experiences, requires us to stand on our own ground while being open to the Other's standpoint" (Arnett, Harden-Fritz, & Bell, 2009, p. 55). Dialogic space in a work environment must be nurtured and revered; dialogue is a learned process of always being open to learning.

Contemplating A Dwelling Place Open to Dialogue

> *Please come in and let's talk, I invite the colleague into my office and offer a chair and my listening ear. I close the window and the door to muffle the noise and create a space for openness. The paperwork sits idly by waiting for my attention to return. The phone rings but I ignore it as I hear the anguish, fear, and longing pour forth from the face sitting with*

> *me. There is no problem I can readily solve and no way to salve the wound, only respect for the story being shared and the person sharing it.*

Ultimately answerability is bound to individual utterances. And yet it is rarely black and white. Each call to response is situated in "the layered, textured, ongoing complexity of changes in the life world" (Arnett, Harden-Fritz, & Bell, 2009, p. 114). Judging the appropriate utterance, distance, and expression from which to respond to the alterity presenting itself in all of her/his vulnerability is a daunting challenge. Such an answerable act recognizes that ethics belong to the moment *and each individual must assume their part with no excuse for not doing what is right*. "A dialogic perspective urges scholars to interrogate discourse for its struggles" (Baxter, 2007, p. 123). Recognition of the dialectic tension is a starting point of sensitivity to voices that may be muted in the struggle. We may have only ourselves to offer in the face of institutional factors beyond our immediate control.

By accepting a management responsibility I have accepted responsibility to be fair and just in how I implement organizational initiatives and how I communicate the impact of organizational decisions. I am answerable as my own ethical self and as the voice of the third party, the organization. Although taking an assigned organizational role may be totalizing in its expectations of minimizing alterity and speaking with the voice of the organization, I have choices in how I engage with the others in my sphere of influence: temporal choices, language choices, and spatial choices. These choices emerge out of the place, the organizational or department climate, in which we stand. Is the place open and free? Does it induce fear? Does it feel hurried? Does it invite the Other to enter and talk?

The nature of the place begins with my own approach to the Other. Adopting a Levinasian ethic compels me to be mindful of each interaction and my response; each utterance and my answerability. Part of the tension between the call of the Other and the call of management discourse stems from mindfulness of my responsibility to my own understanding of ethics. Such mindfulness seeks to put ethics into action. Nielsen (1990), although he does not incorporate, proposes dialogic leadership as ethics in action,

> key to ethics leadership is that in those situations where there may be a conflict or contradiction between what is ethical and what is in the material interest of individuals and/or the organization, there is at least something of a prior ethics truth intention and not singularly a value-neutral, constrained optimizations of organizational objectives. (p. 765)

Approaching leadership from a Levinasian ethic is not value neutral but prioritizes the encounter with the Other.

That encounter with the Other opens the possibility of dialogue. We cannot demand dialogue but we can make temporal, emotional, and physical space for it to emerge. According to Levinas (1969), humans live an embodied existence in physical places where we eat, enjoy, and suffer the natural elements. We construct homes and dwellings, carrying on social and economic activities in daily life. But our dwelling is more than a physical structure; d*wellings are integrally intertwined with the human experience that occurs in them.* Although Levinas argues against a need for dwelling place, his emphasis on an ethic of hospitality inherently infers a welcome into home (Eubanks & Gauthier, 2011, p. 126).

We converse with Others in technical and more dialogic discourse. Yet, it is the encounter with another person that disrupts interiority and connects us to the exterior world calling us to transcend the world in our response. Offering ourselves is an act of hospitality that creates comfort and belonging. Harrist and Richardson (2012) propose that although Western culture has made significant strides in ensuring individual rights, "it has not been as successful in developing appreciation for, among other things, the deep connections that make possible a rich understanding of and meaningful participation in community life" (p. 343).

The workplace is a community in which we can create a hospitable communicative place to provide the human need for a place in space and time, a place to share with others, a place of shelter and nourishment, a place to foster a sense of community, a place to balance lives between the tasks of jobs and true care for one another. I believe that such a place is more than a physical space, it is a *rhetorical space*. The notion of rhetorical space envisions opportunities for particular discourse and engagement with others that is created by the nature and ambiance of a physical space as well as the invitation and hospitality of the people who dwell there. There is a comfort and safety experienced in rhetorical space that encourages dialogic communication. Building such a dwelling place is not only the work of architects and carpenters but of competent communicators.

Hyde (2006) describes the competent communicator as "a linguistic architect whose symbolic constructions both create and invite others into a place where they can dwell and feel at home while thinking about and discussing the truth of some matter" (p. 86). Competent communication mitigates against the dialectic tension between the call of the Other and the call of the Organization.

Levinas says that the relation between the same and the other is accomplished as *conversation* (1969). Such a conversation can reflect the presence of the transcendent as it works to break down the totalizing impact of systems, processes, and roles. This concept of conversation reminds me of Buber (1970), who gives more guidance on speaking ethically with the other. Buber describes our options. We can respond in a way that objectifies the other, diminishing their humanity by treating the person as an "it." Monologic, distant, and centered on the needs of the self, Buber calls this "I–it." Effective for episodes of giving directions, sharing technical information, or ordering fast food, the "I–it" conversation can be demeaning and humiliating when used inappropriately and exclusively. When "I–it" communication is used instead of discussion or used to share bad news, it denies the face of the Other.

When the communication is sensitive, emotional, or personal we can respond in a way that respects and cares for the Other. Buber calls it, "I–Thou." Like the thought in Levinas, the "I–Thou" calls for a complete giving of the self for the Other and this must be done through our speech and thought. The I–Thou relationship is one that recognizes the self but only in its service and availability to the Other. Letting the need to finish a report be put aside to sit and listen to a colleague share a personal issue can be "I–Thou." Conducting department meetings that allow for everyone to share their views can be "I–thou." Something as simple as not answering the phone when a person is sitting with you in your office is offering an "I–Thou" moment. The possibility of dialogue and the creation of a dwelling place are opened by paying attention to the opportunities to acknowledge Others that present themselves throughout a busy workday.

In their book, *The Reach of Dialogue: Confirmation, Voice and Community,* communication scholars Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett describe the basic characteristics of dialogue (1994, pp. 14-15). Dialogue requires a setting aside of the needs of self in order to apprehend the needs of the Other but is intended to respect both self and Other. Levinas might argue that it is not enough, but I believe it is a starting point as an appropriate process in an ethical response to the voice of the Other. Dialogue requires immediacy of presence, an availability to the Other here and now. Dialogue implies being flexible and open to emergent unanticipated consequences. Recognition of "strange otherness" is a dialogical imperative that is consistent with Levinas's call to otherwise than being. The collaboration, vulnerability, and mutual implication imply a shared experience in the dialogic encounter that supports the Levinasian perspective. *Dialogue is a process and part of a temporal flow, it is grounded in history.* The final characteristic attributed to dialogue by the authors is quite reminiscent of the call to conscience and responsibility; *dialogue requires genuineness and authenticity*.

"The dialogic turn takes us to the Otherness of temporality and conviction walking side by side with doubt, vulnerability, and a willingness to learn" (Arnett, Arneson, & Bell, 2006, p. 83). Creating a dialogic dwelling place requires our thoughtfulness and willingness to learn from every encounter and every mistake. Our speech is linked to our thought and our thought links our actions with our words; this inextricably links our thoughts with our actual ethical behavior in discourse. Levinas posits that thought is necessary to move us to the otherwise than being, "Thought and interiority are the very breakup of being and the production (not the reflection) of transcendence" (1969, p. 40). Thought connects us with the Other and that connection is what draws us and where we find life's meaning.

Meaning is found in the acknowledgement of our own humanness and the acceptance of it in others. Drawing from the work of Levinas, Hyde (2006) describes rhetorical competency. He argues that acknowledgment is a life-giving gift, and, as such, is at the heart of the ethical relationship between the self and the Other. Hyde defines acknowledgement as "a communicative behavior that grants attention to others and thereby makes room for them in our lives" (p.1). Hyde notes that we have an ontological impulse to acknowledge others at a deeper level than recognition. In other words, while we might recognize the existence of Others, that recognition does not necessarily mean that we *acknowledge* them. Acknowledgement requires a rhetorical expression of the value of individuals, a means of letting them know that they share a part of you. Similar to Levinas's perspective on responsibility, to refuse to acknowledge Others is to deny a part of the essence of our humanity. By responding to the face of the Other we become more human.

One form of positive acknowledgment suggested by Hyde is that of "home." It is similar to the concept of dwelling place discussed earlier. Hyde argues, "A house that is authentically a home is an abode or dwelling place whose inhabitants ought to know that, no matter how bad things become, here still exists a haven of shelter and forgiveness;" a home is "a place of genuine care and comfort" (p. 98). To invite a person into one's home as in "Make yourself at home," Hyde argues, is a powerful gesture of positive acknowledgment because it demonstrates to others that we are making room for them in our lives. By extending the notions of "home" to our dwelling in the workplace we extend the possibilities of hospitable communication and shelter that promotes peaceful

relationships with the other. *The difficult talk that is required when management discourse clashes with specific human need is more palatable when it emerges from an ethical relationship.* Creating a dwelling place open to dialogue may mitigate the dialectic tension that permeates the demands of professional life as we are bombarded with the Others in our sphere of influence.

Integrating Levinas into Daily Practice

No matter what activity we are engaged in, any moment of face-to-face encounter is a call to ethical response jarring us out of the comfort zone of a self for the self. The radical nature of Otherness as presented by Levinas makes us wary and uncomfortable leaving us little choice but to reconsider our position with the Other in our existence. It matters not whether the Other is attractive, deserving, or appreciative; we must meet their need(s) and respect their presence. Levinas implies a response which is material in nature: give food from our mouths to the other; die for the other; serve the other. But such material examples extend beyond the material as a metaphor. The food from our mouths also include the words given to the Other. When we put aside our own need(s), we have died to ourselves for the Other. When we serve the Other we listen and we embrace the presence of the one in front of us.

Sacred texts from the major world religions echo these commands and tell us to demonstrate our faith by demonstrating behavior that places the needs of the Other over our own selfish interests. We experience the Other through a total communication—verbal and nonverbal—experience: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Serving behaviors require the spoken word, dialogue with the Other, and engagement with the other through speech in spaces that are made into hospitable dwelling places.

Dialogue is a powerful approach for being for the Other. Levinas says, "Speaking, rather than 'letting be' solicits the Other....speech cuts across vision" (1969, p. 195). Passing a homeless man on the street who says "hello" forces his presence into my visual perception and solicits my response. The voice of a student or a faculty member also solicits my response. The message that *communication* is our bridge to the Other is clear. Dialogue is centered as the heart of an ethical, moral, and spiritual relation with the Other. It is in such dialogue that we experience respect, acknowledgment, and care for the needs of the other. It is at this place of discourse that I believe communication scholars can illuminate a path for an ethical response.

Summary

In this article, I shared the experience of two powerful forces: being for the Organization and being for the Other. I propose the importance of building a dwelling place, a home, that integrates dialogic communication to mitigate against the totalizing effects of a bureaucratic structure. It is a start. This brief look at the practical implications of applying Levinasian ideas to life in a management role undoubtedly raises more questions than answers. However, it is at that juncture of philosophy and lived experience where ethics becomes a reality. How should we ethically address the differences in our students? What is our ethical commitment to adjunct, contingent, faculty? How can *new* academic department chairs be prepared to manage the stress of the dialectic tension in the role of chair? The face of the Other is not abstract but personal and known in the day to day and moment to moment of interpersonal encounters. The face calls, "here I am" and I am answerable.

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Slaying the Assessment Dragon: One Department's Efforts to Tame the Beast and Survive as the Knights in Shining Armor

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Assessment looms large across our campuses as an instrument of evaluation, accountability, and development. Communication departments are called on to establish assessment programs for their graduate and undergraduate curriculum programs. Additionally, departments that offer courses in the general education programs are often the first departments approached for assessment of those courses as part of general education assessment. This case study describes the successes and challenges of a communication department's experience in establishing and maintaining a general education assessment program of their Basic Oral Communication course. Preliminary data and analysis is included in reporting the outcome of these efforts.

Key words: Benchmarks in Public Speaking, Case Study, Competencies, General Education, Value Rubric

Assessment is here. Clearly, the role that assessment of curricula has taken at public universities should not be underestimated. As might be expected, those university courses that are requirements for most undergraduate students have garnered the lion's share of early assessment efforts. Nationwide, those courses include critical thinking, mathematics, English composition, information literacy, and public speaking, among others. The need for assessment is heard loudly and clearly across campuses as universities require more and more accountability for productivity, substance, and success in the classroom. University assessment directors are populating administrative staffs and measuring success in the classroom as a function of that accountability. Accrediting bodies and faculty support organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) have shifted their priorities significantly over the past twenty years in response to the demands for the evidence of an institution's effectiveness. Coordination of these efforts, however, currently exists without significant budgetary assistance (Kramer & Swing, 2010). In lieu of financial assistance, university administrative support is called upon to lead successful assessment program implementation often at the expense of other programs (Meyer-Adams, Potts, Koob, Dorsey, & Rosales, 2011).

For many universities, the general education communication competency course is a very visible target for assessment. These courses are often straightforward public speaking courses, but also include interpersonal and hybrid courses. In a mid-size university, it is not unreasonable for there to be 35-50 sections of these kinds of courses offered each semester. As a result, there is a large data source available for assessment. With a coordinated effort, assessment can actually help a communication department transition and grow. However, if faculty members teaching the course are using a variety

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of assignments, methods, and approaches, how can assessment be accomplished? This article addresses that challenge. From identifying criteria for assessment to establishing a process for data collection and analysis to communicating the success of the project to other departments and administration, this paper explores successes and challenges.

Our efforts to implement a department-wide assessment program for the general education-required Fundamentals of Oral Communication (a public speaking course) are the article's focus. As a case study, the description of our process is not intended as a blueprint; rather, individual departments and colleges might read this case study as a narrative that outlines our preliminary data collection, our challenges, our successes, our as-yet unanswered questions, and our future steps as a department. From that, departments that have not yet initiated assessment but have been asked to do so might adapt our process to their local needs. Departments should develop an assessment plan before the utility of such a course is called into question (Hess, 2012).

The Case Study Approach

A case study is both product and process (Stake, 1998). It may be simple or complex, but it is bounded by parameters of time, activity, or purpose. As such, we are able to not only conceptualize what happened in the case—in this example, the assessment implementation process—but also produce a report that summarizes both the efforts and results. Cresswell (1994) describes a case study as a report of a researcher (or researchers) exploring a single entity and gathering detailed information using a variety of data collection methods during a specific period of time. The value of a case study is that it is holistic in its exploration and analysis (Patton, 1990). In this case study, we are exploring the assessment process of a multi-section general education course, Fundamentals of Oral Communication. Data were collected during the 2011-2012 academic year. After identifying three specific and observable behaviors important to the performance of a public speech, faculty rated students using the Dreyfus competency scale (Dreyfus, 1989). The aggregate of that data was then used to assess the success of specific learning outcomes.

While the use of a case approach can serve many purposes, the purpose of this case study fits the definition of an *instrumental* case study that provides specific insight into an issue. The case is secondary to helping us understand the process and results (Stake, 1998). The in-depth evaluation of the details helps us evaluate what was done and the outcomes achieved. Although the primary purpose of this case is instrumental, the case is also intrinsic because we want to understand this particular case. It is of interest not only because it might be typical of other cases, but because of the information that can be gained.

According to Stake (1998), the process of completing a case study includes (1) defining the parameters of the case and identifying what is of interest in the case, (2) selecting an issue to explore, which becomes the research question, (3) looking for patterns in the data, (4) finding overlaps in the data and methods of data collection to allow for interpretation, (5) conceptualizing alternative interpretations, and (6) making claims based on those interpretations. These steps help organize the details of the case into a substantive artifact with purpose. That purpose can either be for the researcher's own benefit or for helping others understand the process.

Once the details of the case are collected and reviewed, interpreting those details can be accomplished by looking for patterns in the data and by comparing those patterns

with what was predicted. The researcher can also engage in explanation building by looking for causal links or by looking for alternative explanations. Finally, the research might also try to identify trends or changes over time (Cresswell, 1994; Patton, 1990). In this case, we looked at how the data changed from the Fall to the Spring semester and drew conclusions to explain those changes. Understanding the process and product of assessment efforts in a multi-sectional general education course (such as Public Speaking) is best accomplished using the case study approach. This approach not only helps identify particulars of this specific event, but also clarifies the process for others.

Context of Eastern State University

Eastern State University (a pseudonym) is a member of the State System of Higher Education (also a pseudonym). The Board of Governors oversees the State System which includes a total of 14 public universities. The Council of Trustees is the local governing body for Eastern State University. The Officers of Administration for the university are the president and members of the president's cabinet. In 2011, enrollment at the university included over 10,000 students. The university employs 365 tenured/tenure-track instructional faculty and boast a favorable 20:1 student-faculty ratio. Eighty-eight percent of our tenured and tenure-track faculty have doctorates or terminal degrees. The university is accredited by Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and approved by the State Department of Education (Eastern State University, 2012). Eastern State University adopted a new general education program in the Fall of 2011, of which oral communication is a core requirement for all majors across campus. Unfortunately, the university recently closed its Center for Teaching and Learning as a result of budget cuts. The loss of this resource is significant when faculty are unfamiliar with how to establish an assessment program for general education.

This oral communication requirement is fulfilled through the Department of Communication Studies and Theatre; overwhelmingly, students meet the oral communication requirement by enrolling in Fundamentals of Oral Communication (COM010). The department offers approximately 90 sections of this course per academic year with a cap of 25 students per section. Serving over 2200 students per year, the course is taught by tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty. The communication studies faculty consists of 20 members, all of whom actively teach the basic course. Typically, five to six adjunct faculty teach four sections of COM010 a semester, accounting for almost half of the sections. All full-time faculty teach four courses per semester and this load frequently includes one or two sections of the oral communication course. Despite the prevalence of the basic course in the curriculum, there are no common course materials such as a common textbook or common final exam. Faculty members are required to consult the master syllabus that does stipulate that three speeches are required, one of which must be the persuasive speech presentation. Specifically, one of the objectives on the master syllabus includes a "demonstrated ability to present an extemporaneous speech, which has a central idea, significant purpose, and a clear-pattern of organization with appropriate supporting evidence and reason." The Fundamentals of Oral Communication course is a typical public speaking course. It is not a hybrid course attempting to introduce students to the discipline.

Getting the Assessment Process Started

In Fall 2009, the University hired an assessment director. In anticipation of

assessment grant-funded opportunities, several faculty agreed that it would be a good idea to collect some preliminary data to establish the Department of Communication Studies and Theatre as a campus leader in assessment. The first and second author had significant prior experience in assessment in communication effectiveness, and communication competence in medical education, respectively. These experiences helped frame assessment as a conscious effort to measure our claims and demonstrate the significance of a course that the university requires of every student. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to improve and further develop the course.

The assessment office at our university soon began offering grants to faculty members interested in spearheading assessment efforts for core requirement General Education courses. At our university, those courses included our Fundamentals of Oral Communication course, Mathematics, English Composition, and Wellness. In order to make a better case for one of these competitive grants, five members of our faculty decided to participate in some preliminary data collection by measuring three cognitive qualities through the final examination as well as three behavioral qualities collected through the final persuasive speech assignment in their courses. Most basic communication courses consist of both skill and knowledge components. Not only do students need to know what good communication is, they also need to be able to demonstrate that knowledge in a practical way. Behavioral aspects of a student's success are demonstrated through a classroom presentation: the persuasive speech. Selecting basic criteria for success is accomplished for multiple sections of the same course by identifying and exploring what is at the heart of demonstrating good communication skills. In our faculty discussions, some of these behavioral qualities included the requirement of "oral footnotes," adhering to time requirements, and declaring persuasive intent in the introduction of the speech.

Collectively, the enrollment figures for those sections assessed during this preliminary data collection in Fall 2010 totaled over 300 students, or approximately 27% of the total number of students enrolled in the course that semester. Overall, students met the minimum criteria approximately two-thirds of the time. With this baseline data, we applied for and received a modest grant. The grant was structured to provide stipends for interested faculty members to (1) observe digitally recorded student speeches in order to "calibrate" our understanding of what effective eye contact is and whether a student's thesis for the persuasive speech assignment has a persuasive intent; (2) identify additional observable behaviors for future assessment projects; and (3) refine a rubric for our local expectations and purposes. Other components of the funding enabled us to purchase sophisticated digital recording equipment, pay student workers to provide support (converting existing videotape to digital, and so forth.) for the project, and travel to a conference to present our findings.

Meanwhile, the second author was invited to join a multi-disciplinary group of university faculty and administrators that were attending an AAC&U conference with a focus on assessing General Education courses. At this "Institute on General Education and Assessment," campus teams were provided "with opportunities to refine and advance general education programs and their assessment." Among other benefits, conference presenters provided a thorough description of the AAC&U's Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric development and use. These rubrics were developed along with representative members of appropriate associations so,

for example, the Oral Communication VALUE rubric was constructed along with multi-institutional representation arranged through the National Communication Association. In addition to providing rubrics for intellectual and practical skills (i.e., critical thinking, quantitative literacy, and oral communication), VALUE rubrics are also available for assessing aspects of personal and social responsibility (i.e., civic engagement, intercultural competence, and ethical reasoning) and integrative and applied learning.

Summer 2011 Grant Work

Armed with the AAC&U's Oral Communication VALUE rubric, our team of five met for six hours a day for three days in order to observe digitally-recorded student speeches with the purpose of "calibrating" our understanding of significant observable behaviors. An observable behavior was defined as a behavior that can be perceived through one of the senses and can be described using action words. Observable behaviors, then, do not include feelings or intentions. In the world of assessment, in order to have measurable data, behaviors must be observable. After watching dozens of speeches performed at various levels of skill and complexity, we began with the VALUE rubric for oral communication and converted it for our local interests and foci. In our approach to assessment, we decided that we would rather record micro-behaviors associated with delivering a speech, rather than assess a speech in its entirety. One step we took in this conversion was to utilize components of the Dreyfus (1989) model for skill acquisition. This model employs labels—novice, advanced beginner, competent, and proficient—rather than the AAC&U number system of 1-4 that, we believed, in a university environment, would be too easily translated to the letter grade system associated with grade point averages. That is to say, demonstrating advanced beginner behaviors in the category of eye contact, for example, does not equate with a "C" in our use of the rubrics. Additionally, our rubrics added a category that indicates that a student did not attempt a behavior at all. We felt strongly that we needed to differentiate between students who performed a behavior in the novice category as opposed to students who did not even attempt such a behavior. For example, a student who reads a speech and does not make eye contact at all would be categorized in a category titled "not observed" when compared to a student who makes minimal eye contact but who does, at least occasionally, glance up from his or her outline or manuscript.

Moving Forward with the Faculty

When the faculty reconvened at the beginning of Fall 2011, we presented them with two documents and an invitation to identify those components of the VALUE rubric that—collectively—we thought might be a good place to begin a department-wide effort of assessing the Oral Communication course. The first document we presented to them was the AAC&U VALUE rubric for Oral Communication. This was followed by the second document, our local adaptation of the rubric. We invited feedback and encouraged discussion about the specifics of each. While some faculty members unambiguously articulated a preference for their own rubrics, others recognized that our general education requirement course—Fundamentals of Oral Communication—had to produce results in order to remain a requirement for virtually every Eastern State University undergraduate. Furthermore, the members of our assessment team made it very clear that individual faculty were invited and encouraged to adapt the descriptions of observable behaviors on the rubric to their specific assignments and rubrics. What we wanted to

measure—at least in part—was how students in *our* classes responded to guidelines. Understanding how students respond to constructive feedback, we reasoned, must include a component that acknowledges the tendency for some students to be unclear about expectations.

Once the rubrics were constructed and tested, it was necessary to convince the faculty not only of the importance of the data collection and the relevance of the process for the program, but also the need to teach behaviors associated with public speaking in an explicit manner. The autonomy of the professoriate and the values of academic freedom often get in the way of assessment. Individual faculty do not, as a general rule, like to be told what or how to teach or what to measure. Therefore, it was important that faculty could identify with the outcomes as something they deemed important and already accomplished in their normal instruction. Assessment efforts often fall short if faculty see it as something "extra" to do that will eventually just find its way to a file cabinet. To ensure the participation of as many faculty in the process as possible, the faculty was asked to submit the three to five most important observable behaviors in the final presentation that students give in the Fundamentals of Oral Communication class, in this case, the persuasive presentation. Using a consensus model, the behaviors that were most frequently cited as important were identified. These behaviors included stating the central idea of the presentation, making eye contact, and citing sources using "oral footnotes" to substantiate the claims made.

Another concern expressed by faculty, both in our case and heard generally (at the AAC&U conference, for example), is how the assessment data might be tied to them and used to evaluate their teaching. This concern is very real. Assessment practices, therefore, must be framed in terms of program development rather than individual evaluation. Anonymity in this case was achieved by each faculty member totaling the results for each section taught on a separate tally sheet, and submitting them to an envelope in the main office. (In the future there may also be a way for submissions electronically that also do not tie the results to a faculty member.) Anonymity must be assured if participation of all faculty members is to be achieved. During the last two weeks of classes data was collected from participating faculty.

In Fall 2011, 30 of 49 sections (61%) reported data for 670 students. The three behavioral criteria selected by faculty for assessment of the final persuasive speech—clearly stating the central idea, maintaining eye contact, and including oral footnotes—were assessed using "not observed) plus four levels of the Dreyfus scale: 0-Not Observed, 1-Novice, 2-Advanced Beginner, 3-Competent, and 4-Proficient.

This Fall data provided a baseline. This baseline would allow us to assess (1) ease of data collection, (2) evaluate faculty participation, (3) identify areas for improvement, and (4) set a target for closing the loop and measure anticipated growth. "Closing the loop" means interpreting the evidence and using that interpretation to generate ideas for improving the quality of teaching, learning processes, and outcomes (Ohia, 2011).

The data collection guidelines allowed faculty to establish their own criteria for each of the behaviors outcomes. For example, instructors utilized their own specific criteria for oral footnotes; there were no departmental guidelines established for the number or format of these citations. However, through conversations with the faculty it was revealed that citations were expected to be complete (whether two were required or ten), easily discernible, and demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of the material in order to

achieve the level of proficient. By comparison, a novice level of oral footnotes was defined as "citations are occasionally included and might be incomplete." Advanced beginner and competent levels occupy the definitions "in-between" as defined by the instructor and informed by the rubric.

We determined that the preliminary target for success for each observable behavior would be 70% of participants achieving advanced beginner level or higher. Of the three observable behaviors, stating a central idea achieved the highest level of success with over 85% of participants achieving advanced beginner or higher. This was followed by maintaining eye contact in which 75% of the students demonstrated acceptable skill. Finally, the ability to include oral footnotes was achieved by just over 60% of the students and provided us with the target for improvement.

What the Fall Data Told Us

Over the winter break we began to explore the data collected in Fall 2011. Also over the break, we were contacted by the Director of Assessment to describe our process and share our preliminary findings at a university workshop held in January. The university workshop also featured a representative from the AAC&U who would be delivering a keynote address. While preparing for the workshop, we discovered that during freshman orientation, first-year students are assigned either College Composition (the introductory writing course offered by the English Department) or Fundamentals of Oral Communication for their first semester depending on their verbal SAT scores. Students with higher verbal SAT scores were assigned College Composition while students with lower verbal SAT scores were assigned Fundamentals of Oral Communication. And then for the Spring semester, these assignments are reversed. This policy, we hypothesized, would have an impact on assessment results. What improvement might we see in from Fall to Spring in concepts that both courses cover? Specifically, because both courses forefront the value of central messages and source citation, we might expect students who have already completed College Composition to perform better in the Spring than students who come into Fundamentals of Oral Communication directly from high school. We thought continuing with our data collection would help us answer this research question.

During the university assessment workshop, we shared our results in one of the breakout sessions. Our breakout session was well attended because departments at our university are looking for ways to expeditiously and efficiently implement assessment programs. As a result of the discussion during the session, faculty began to see ways in which departments might work together on similar competencies. For example, the idea of a central message is evident in composition and oral communication, as well as in language studies. If all three departments included this behavior, whether through speaking, writing, translating, or identifying, how might we then more holistically assess a student's knowledge? These questions gave us a focus for further research questions and data collection for the future, as well as possible collaboration.

At the beginning of Spring 2012, the data from Fall were shared with the department faculty along with our observations and conclusions from the university assessment workshop. One of the first observations made about the Fall data was the 61% faculty participation rate. While this was a strong showing, it was unclear why some faculty members perceived it to be a voluntary participation. The chair removed ambiguity by declaring that participation for Spring would be 100%. The process was

further refined so that submission of the tally sheets would be directly to the department chair, who would collect results in an envelope as well as to continue to keep the results anonymous and confidential but mandatory. She would know who did and who did not turn in their tallies without knowing specific results. We also discussed the need for an informal discussion at a future faculty meeting about ways to better teach oral footnotes. We also confirmed that we would measure the same three observable behaviors during the last speech of the semester.

Second Time Around—The Spring Data

In Spring 2012, participation by faculty was 100% with data reported for 38 sections or 870 students. As indicated in Table 1, Spring semester results show an increase in the proficient category of all three observable behaviors.

Table 1
Comparison of Competency Levels for Observable Behaviors Achieved

	Clearly Stating Central Message (Fall 2011)	**Clearly Stating Central Message (Spring 2012)**	**Maintaining Eye Contact (Fall 2011)**	**Maintaining Eye Contact (Spring 2012)**	**Including Oral Footnotes (Fall 2011)**	**Including Oral Footnotes (Spring 2012)**
Proficient (4)	19.1%	43.1%	17.3%	20.2%	17.2%	37.7%
Competent (3)	40.6%	23.6%	28.6%	31.3%	22.2%	20.4%
Advanced Beginner (2)	27.7%	22.4%	29.3%	27.9%	19.9%	17.5%
Novice (1)	9.2%	7.7%	19.3%	13.4%	21.9%	16.7%
Failure (0)	3.4%	3.2%	5.2%	7.1%	18.1%	7.7%

Using the benchmark of 70% of students achieving Advanced Beginner, Competent, or Proficient as success, Table 2 compares the percentage of students reaching the benchmark for each behavior.

Table 2
Percent of Students Achieving Benchmark in Two Sequential Semesters

Behavior	Percent of students achieving Dreyfus Levels 2, 3, or 4 in Fall 2011	Percent of students achieving Dreyfus Levels 2, 3, or 4 in Spring 2012
Clearly Stating Central Message	87.4	89.1
Maintaining Eye Contact	75.2	79.4
Including Oral Footnotes	59.3	75.6

Using the same benchmark of 70%, the assessment indicates that the target was reached in all three behaviors. Additionally, the percent of students achieving the proficient level increased in all three behaviors: stating a central message went from 19.1% to 43.1%; eye contact went from 17.3% to 20.2%, and including oral footnotes went from 17.2% to 37.7%.

The reasons why the number of students who achieved our definition of proficient increased from Fall to Spring include several possibilities. First, some of the improvement should be attributed to faculty interventions. We had one faculty

brainstorming session where we discussed various classroom activities designed with the expressed intent of improving student comfort and confidence with including oral footnotes. Even though no formal discussion about how to improve teaching central message and eye contact occurred among faculty (at least not in the form of a faculty meeting), understanding how the data looks after collection may have influenced how instructors taught the behaviors during the second semester. Second, Fundamentals of Oral Communication is taken in the Spring by freshmen who entered college with higher verbal SATA scores and have a semester of college experience. They know how to use the library, what to expect from a college professor, and how to study. Also, students who flunk out during the Fall semester are not part of the sample. Therefore, we would expect students to perform better during the second semester. Furthermore, and as suggested earlier, Spring semester Fundamentals of Oral Communication students have already taken College Composition where the ideas of central message and citing sources are introduced and then reinforced in Fundamentals of Oral Communication.

All faculty had provided input on the behaviors to be measured and were aware of them during the Fall semester, but seeing the data and interpreting it makes it more concrete. Whether purposely or not, knowing that central message, eye contact, and oral footnotes would be measured in the final speech may have influenced how the instructor approached the teaching and assessment of that behavior. If the behaviors continue to be measured in Fall 2012 and the percentages remain at the level of Spring 2012, we might attribute the increase to faculty performance. If they revert back to the Fall 2011 levels, our hypothesis about student experience might be more correct. Regardless, because students reached the 70% benchmark in all behaviors in the Spring, we will need to raise the benchmarks and/or add new behaviors for assessment.

Challenges Encountered

While identifying specific course and programmatic goals for assessment is one challenge, fitting into the university assessment plan is another. Often, university assessment committees will have a standard formula or rubric that they want departments to use for consistency. At first, our university assessment committee asked us to holistically categorize students' oral communication skills as four, three, two, or one without wanting these numbers to be thought of as A, B, C, or D. They did not understand that a student could excel in one area of the speech while failing in another. For example, a student might be extremely charismatic with proficient delivery skills and yet not demonstrate the use of appropriate sources or communicate a central message. Attaining a level of competence in oral communication, in our view, is not the average of all behaviors. Furthermore, facts and figures from that type of data collection do not allow us to identify where changes in curriculum or instruction need to occur. As a department, we needed to convince the university assessment committee that the behaviors we were assessing were more relevant and helpful for developing the course and program as well as student skills. We also needed to adapt their reporting form to include each of our three behaviors as well as a "not observed" category. Nonetheless, when the university assessment committee presented our data at a university forum (along with the data of other departments) they merely averaged our totals.

Another challenge is maintaining buy-in from the faculty as well as from the department chair (the chair in our department serves a three-year term). Some faculty may see assessment as an opportunity for scholarly activity (Wang & Hurley, 2012). For

others, participation in data reporting can be intimidating and a spirit of ongoing improvement needs to be encouraged as data are collected and ideas for teaching strategies exchanged. As scholars and learners, faculty should always want to learn new ways to improve their teaching and student outcomes, but in an era of budget crisis and other university demands, faculty need to feel as though their way of doing things in the classroom is not threatened. Continuous discussion among members of the faculty on defining objectives and behaviors and contributions for improvement need to be considered. Faculty need to feel part of the process as well the results, even if they are not the ones compiling and analyzing the data or publishing the results.

Finally, our process is challenged by the moving target of success. Benchmarks and behaviors will need to be refined and adjusted yearly. This can become confusing for faculty as they continually try to identify the goal. Once a benchmark is reached it is time to change either by raising what is defined as an acceptable standard or by adding additional observable behaviors (such as vocal delivery, the use of transitions, or choosing effective language). If behaviors for assessment change, original behaviors need to be periodically checked to be sure we are continually meeting the benchmark after the behavior is no longer the subject of assessment.

Lessons Learned

One of the reasons for our perceived success is that we did not try to measure everything. In fact, we chose one speech and three behaviors that represent of what we want students to be able to do by the end of a sixteen-week course in public speaking. The reader will recall that we started really small when five of us identified this project as both useful for our department and necessary for the university. Starting small allowed us to reconsider what we wanted to measure, especially with the input of our faculty colleagues who were not members of our assessment team. As we consider the many competing demands of faculty we wanted our plan to be achievable; that is, we did not want our assessment goals to be thought of by faculty colleagues as extra work and we wanted them to see its relevance.

Making assessment relevant to department faculty means seeking their participation in the decision-making process. First, we shared our preliminary data with faculty and we then asked for their participation in thinking through the selection of observable behaviors. Using a consensus model we asked faculty to identify three to five observable behaviors that are typical in a persuasive speech. The combined results of that inquiry meant that every faculty member had at least one of their suggestions show up in our final total of three. Consensus models of decision making reveal the results so that faculty members who did not have one of their suggestions selected in the final tally can see that others united around another behavior. Second, the relevance of assessment to faculty becomes apparent when the chair shares the department report with the university assessment committee. It is hard for a faculty member to dismiss the importance of assessment when a local entity is demanding participation. Hess (2012) notes that faculty involvement in teaching the public speaking course and an effective assessment plan is essential not only for the growth of a department, but even for that department's vitality on campus.

Closing the loop means interpreting the evidence and using that interpretation to generate ideas for improving results. It is not enough to simply report results to the faculty. Because we did not achieve our definition of success for the inclusion of oral

footnotes in the Fall semester, we enjoyed a spirited brainstorming session early in the Spring semester where we interpreted those results through our local lens. Some faculty members defined their expectations as more rigorous than others. Others revealed that they did not weigh the oral footnotes component of the persuasive speech assignment as much as their peers. We also shared ideas for how to teach oral footnotes. All of these aspects of unpacking the results meant that, as a faculty, we were dialogic and respectful of differences. We also recognized that with the success of central messages and eye contact, we could move to other observable behaviors—such as vocal delivery, completing an audience analysis, or demonstrating more complex organizational patterns—if we felt we were ready to do so.

Our assessment team (all tenure-track professors) understood completely that we were not going to get much in the way of data if we could not assure anonymity. Even with a couple of naysayers among our tenured faculty (who were worried that the data could be used to terminate adjunct faculty) our team was able to collect over 60% of the possible data in that first semester. Once the data was presented to the faculty in the Spring, faculty members were able to see how the data was used and how the numbers were reported for the department as a whole without regard to any individual section or faculty member. Having a department chair that was able to articulate both the need of this data as well as its relative harmlessness was crucial to the 100% participation in the Spring.

The second author's participation at the AAC&U national conference in June 2011 and the first author's participation at a regional Faculty of the Future conference in May 2012—both at the university assessment director's invitation—are indicative of the university's recognition that we are assessment leaders on this campus. One big reason for this recognition is that we can talk the talk. The language of assessment is not overly complex but it does contain some key concepts (i.e., observable behaviors and formative versus summative assessment) as well as a familiarity with learning scales (e.g., the Dreyfus Scale). This has been crucial in our communication (which has included both dialogue and debate) with the university assessment committee.

Discussion—More Dragons to Slay

This case study is limited by several factors. First, the data and process is limited by the structure of the case study. The data measure one department's experience with assessment in the general education course. It is not necessarily reflective of other courses or programs. The case study approach does, however, tell the story of the process of how this department was successful in starting an assessment program that won favor at the university.

The data also only reflect two semesters of student performance. While initial lessons learned are important, the sustainability of the program has not been tested. The story is still unfolding with additional chapters to be written and more dragons to slay.

Finally, it is difficult to measure specific behaviors when the department does not require a common textbook, and thus a common interpretation of rubric definitions is non-existent. Arriving at common interpretations for observable behaviors would enhance the claims made about the assessment of competence. If all faculty were teaching from the same textbook, definitions would be more consistent. It should also be noted that a number of textbook publishers offer all kinds of bells and whistles that could enhance assessment—from grading software to digital cameras—to departments that

commit to one of their offerings. But this is not a point we are ready to belabor, neither in our department nor in this article.

Two components are useful in the expansion of assessment criteria of the basic course: (1) successful buy-in from departmental, college, and university stakeholders, and (2) university support. Administrators with a focus on assessment were impressed with our results because we were able to demonstrate that results can be achieved without radically altering what faculty already do in their classes. Colleagues within the department who are interested in participating are encouraged to offer suggestions. Finally, institutional officials have provided resources.

Assessing student knowledge and skill in one section can be challenging enough. That challenge is often multiplied when multiple sections are taught by many faculty. How do the university and department assure consistency and individuality across sections? Once criteria are selected, the implementation of data collection for assessment needs to be precise, objective, and easily collected so that it can count as data. Communication among faculty is crucial and working collaboratively helps meet these challenges. The rewards can win favor at all levels of the university.

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Chairs Mentoring Faculty Colleagues

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Many academics struggle to manage the changes that come with suddenly being responsible for chairing a group of peers. As in skilled classroom instruction, leading an academic unit invokes specific structural, strategic, tactical, and interpersonal abilities. New chairs often quickly have to add ways of thinking and acting that are beyond the precise expertise that got them to that point in the first place. With our focus on understanding process, communication scholars may be better equipped than some others to understand this role shift's dynamics, but often we struggle as mightily as our chemist or engineering or nursing peers to convert those understandings into practices that helpfully develop without overwhelming or harming either our colleagues or ourselves.

Key Words: Mentoring, Faculty, Peers, Communication, Relational, Interpersonal

This article is meant to spur discussion about relational and interactional aspects of leading an academic unit. Its focus on such mentoring leaves aside for others some key, more impersonal departmental leadership components such as strategic planning. What is known about how we can be productively involved in regular interactions as chairs with our colleagues? Hoped-for reactions might include noting important omissions or situational circumstances, applying these principles to particular problems, or spotlighting particular practices as key, among many other possibilities. This article consults applied and conceptual literature to form a starting point for that discussion.

Key Needs

Skilled community participants are continually learning to recognize and negotiate the norms, conventions, and traditions of a group (Merriam, 1982; Nicholls, 2002). Engaging these patterns successfully means getting conversant with the shared symbolic systems members use to signal, comprehend, and shape their community's key meanings and ethics.

Joining an academic department means having to navigate a lot of new learning, much of it not part of professional training up to that point. Most new faculty arrive with some teaching and perhaps publication experience, but lack experience in advising, obtaining research funding, and most aspects of working within a collegiate culture's system (Li, Hemami, Brown, Sohn. Willett, & Lee, 2005). Faculty from less privileged societal positions often face special constraining/enabling circumstances that often are less apparent to colleagues from less marginalized standpoints (Jackson-Weaver, Baker, Gillespie, Ramos Bellido, & Watts, 2010; Smith, 2000). And senior faculty face their own evolving challenges and goals (Garvey, 2011); needs for mentoring are not limited to early-career faculty members.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Faculty Career Enhancement (FCE) program names three key issues requiring faculty guidance, time, and space across a career arc. These include the need for faculty professional and personal balance; the need for intellectual and social community; and the need for experimentation, risk-taking, and innovation (Chang & Baldwin, 2008). Successful mentoring is one means by which department chairs can help their colleagues reflect about and address these and other needs.

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Mentoring

Mentoring others differs from manipulating, informing, hectoring, or befriending them. Mentor relationships are a type of instructional connection distinguished by individualized professional and personal (not impersonal) contact and a focus on guiding professional and personal growth, resourcefulness, and self-efficacy (Golian & Galbraith, 1996; Zimmerman & Paul, 2007). Skilled mentoring involves psychosocial components such as challenging, counseling, and role modeling for a protégé, as well as professional activities like exposing protégés to new situations, sponsoring their work, and protecting them from threats (Kram, 1985; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). It works best as a mutually active relationship built on trust, constructive criticism, development, and support (Blandford, 2000). Mentoring relationships rely on communication skill and perceptions of mutual respect; they need not be formal or official to achieve their outcomes (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Protégés should feel mentors' investment in their progress toward goals.

It is pragmatically helpful to think of mentoring as a type of instructional communication accomplished with peers. Learners in many situations are more motivated to interact with instructors they perceive as mentors, and more readily accept criticism, attend to instruction, work harder, strive for mastery, and cope with difficulties when they perceive supportive instructional relationships (Bippus, Kearney, Plax, and Brooks, 2003; Darnon, Muller, Scharager, Pannuzzo, & Butera, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). And supervisory communication abilities themselves help shape participants' role perceptions. In classroom contexts, skillfully communicating feedback helps learners feel they are being mentored rather than subjected to some kind of lesser instructional treatment (Kerssen-Griep, Trees, & Hess, 2008). Adroit instructional communication over time is within a chair's power to develop, and it helps chairs earn that "mentor" perception from colleagues.

Structured Mentoring

Some mentoring opportunities are built into the formal structure of a faculty position relative to a department chair. Formal frameworks can by their nature give participants permission to discuss important knowledge, goals, and needs. As one example among many, (Massaro, 2010) advocated meeting one-on-one with faculty to discuss perceptions, strengths, and priorities. She suggested these four prompts:

- What is your perception of our department?
- What strengths do you bring to what we are about and the students we are here to serve?
- What are your priorities for the next year?
- What departmental priorities are most important for our advancement and academic excellence?

Any mandated feedback situation offers a venue for mentoring, of course, such as teaching observations, annual self-assessment consultations, and rank and tenure file preparation meetings. While much relational mentoring takes place informally—and even tacitly—using university-required frameworks for interacting can bring about helpful conversations that might be more awkward to create in purely informal interactions.

Informal Mentoring

Aside from required interactions, new faculty take a great deal of learning from informal interactions with more established group members including faculty peers, administrators, and students. The applied literature is rich with advice about interactional insights faculty would

benefit from gleaning through those encounters. Synthesizing several such articles (Chang & Baldwin, 2008; Danielson & Schulte, 2007; Jackson-Weaver et al., 2010; Massaro, 2010; Mills, 2009; Nicholls, 2002; Li et al., 2005; Seelig, 2009) offers a variety of hoped-for relational mentoring outcomes.

Faculty expectations. Some of that guidance centers on mentors learning and helping faculty develop and adjust their own expectations. Mentors can help faculty peers gain clarity about their strengths, interests, and values, as well as where those fit within what the department hired them to do, so they can deliver it. It is important to re-open this particular conversation over time as faculty and university expectations evolve (Massaro, 2010). Seelig (2009) in particular advocated getting mentees to craft their role's "story" with intention so they will be proud to tell it later; to think about how others' long-term perceptions could be shaped by current actions.

Finding one's place. Some mentoring guidance moves beyond helping individuals' reflective self-work to focus on guiding faculty's fit within existing structures. It is important to help faculty understand the nuances of their institution's and department's missions, for example, so they can further those missions in meaningful ways through their work (Chang & Baldwin, 2008; Mills, 2009; Nicholls, 2002). Mentors coming from more privileged cultural positions have to find ways to understand and empathize with the many ways their colleagues' experiences are impacted by their race, sex, sexuality, age, and so on **(**Jackson-Weaver et al., 2010; Sorcinelli & Austin, 2006). In this situation and many others, listening intentionally is perhaps the key communication ability chairs need to develop. Mentoring well also means confronting one's own biases or fears about particular identities and finding ways to talk openly about them and their implications. Most concretely, mentors aid their colleagues' progress through the rank and tenure process by helping them increase their visibility in the field through grant applications, publications and talks at conferences and organizations, and service as a reviewer or disciplinary organization officer (Li et al. 2005).

Teacher preparation. Beckerman (2010) argued that successful faculty mentoring programs should revolve around classroom teaching. Skillful department chair guidance can help faculty peers regularly interrogate their own instructional practices to determine how well their personally-applied theories and values align with currently accepted knowledge about teaching and learning. She advocated a faculty mentoring curriculum including four key components: (1) review of current educational theory; (2) developing a variety of teaching techniques toward mastery; (3) collegial networking, and (4) the reciprocal process of testing theory, and regular examination of teaching practices in light of this knowledge. Chairs' in-class observations then can offer formative guidance framed by this knowledge, not just summative feedback at prescribed faculty evaluation intervals. This attention benefits both parties in exposing for regular discussion all parties' tacit knowledge about teaching and learning (Nicholls, 2002). It also increases the chances that colleagues will be able and willing to similarly mentor coming generations of their teaching colleagues, which is an excellent cultural outcome for a functional department (Beckerman, 2010).

Connecting with others. Some interactional mentoring advice addresses everyday communication principles to encourage among faculty wider rules for conduct that transcend the academic setting but clearly have relevance there. Encourage faculty to respect everyone's time and effort, and to avoid burning bridges or creating antagonistic relationships within academia's small world, no matter how tempting (Mills, 2009; Seelig, 2009). Communication principles key

to achieving that outcome include picking ones battles, owning ones mistakes, focusing on others' brilliance rather than ones own, and "never lying" in encounters with others (Mills, 2009). Others name a healthy sense of humor as a facilitator of such good practices and rarer than it should be in academe, so important to encourage by action and guidance.

Staying current. Chairs should consider adding at least two types of resources to their reading diets. Applied research summaries offering advice, reviews, and higher education trends can be found on several professional sites, including the "Chairs' Corner" of the National Communication Association's website (NCA: http://www.natcom.org), the Association of American College and Universities (AAC&U: http://www.aacu.org/), and the Tomorrow's Professor electronic mailing list and archive (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/postings.php) based at Stanford University. Complement those materials by checking in with up-to-date research on organizational socialization (e.g., Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011; Taormina, 2009) and communicating social support (e.g., Bodie, Burleson, & Jones, 2012). Doing so periodically gives communication chairs richer explanatory bases needed for the theory-based problem-solving techniques they offer others and try themselves.

Maintain Boundaries

Finally, hold two parameters firmly in mind to moderate and guide all involvement in colleagues' development. First, faculty are chairs' peers, not subordinates, and need to be treated accordingly. Aside from occasional assessment or disciplinary encounters mandated by administrative structures, skilled department chairs most often are mentoring as if beside rather than above their colleagues. Nicholls (2002) argued for mentoring as a means to encourage systematic critical reflection rather than impose evaluation. That stance affects what sorts of power bases and techniques chairs tap to earn influence with their peers. Artfully done from "alongside," mentoring encounters thus become means to open conversations about mentors' and colleagues' skills and knowledge, which otherwise might remain tacit and unexplored for both parties.

Second, effective mentoring means faculty members ultimately must be equipped to make their own way rather than forever feel addicted to a chair's guidance. Although misbehaving faculty understandably draw much of a chair's attention and energy, most colleagues in fact work hard and collegially and will learn the most by watching, questioning, and doing, rather than only listening. Chairs must listen more often and at least as well as they talk. Think about moving through stages of mentoring with each colleague, allowing peers to move into different relational roles as appropriate (Nicholls, 2002). Still, mentoring efforts might pay off very slowly, or not at all. Remember that mentoring also is a powerful tool for professional development and learning for the mentor.

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Preachers, Politicians and People of Character: A Rationale for the Centrality of a Public-Speaking Course in the core Curriculum

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Administrators in colleges and universities across America continue to debate the relative advantages of education designed to develop vocational skills and education committed to the liberal arts. This essay demonstrates that public speaking as the basic communication course bridges the divide. That course provides a necessary vocational skill for a host of professions, and in addition strongly supports liberal arts by bringing instructional units in self-discipline, critical thinking, listening, and academic preparedness to the core curriculum.

Key Words: Public Speaking, Basic Communication Course, Listening, Self-Discipline, Critical Thinking, Academic Preparation

The Battle for the Core

Historian, James Truslow Adams (1929) wrote, "There are obviously two educations. One should teach us how to make a living and the other should teach us how to live" (p. 321). Today a curriculum–development war rages between proponents of the two. The core curriculum of America's colleges and universities has become the battlefield.

Skill development, once the exclusive bailiwick of the vocational school, now dominates the curriculum of many colleges and universities. As a result "higher education is job training" (Donoghue, 2008, p.12). However, even in the resultant trade-school environment, the core curriculum ideally remains the last bastion of true liberal-arts education. President Carol Quillen of Davidson College speaks for many liberal-arts educators when she says, "we won't change our curriculum based on what we would perceive as a transitory need for a particular skill" (Weber, 2012, p. A3).

In spite of Quillen's assurances however, there is evidence that many schools are adjusting their core curriculum to meet the ever-growing demand for occupational skills. One faculty member reported on the problem in a letter to the editor of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. "It has gotten so bad that, at the college where I teach, a two-course speech requirement for communication majors was eliminated. (They are too busy learning to communicate, like, with the media, dude.)" (Somers, 2004, p. B-18).

His institution is not alone. Changes in "general education courses are defended on the grounds that they provide the subjects or the skills necessary to help fulfill not broad human ends but the functions necessary for some narrow human identity such as professional or civic competence" (Glanzer, 2010, p. 384). Anthony Kronman (2007), Sterling Professor of Law and former Dean of Yale Law School writes, "I have watched the question of life's meaning lose its status as a subject of organized academic instruction and seen it pushed to the margins of professional respectability in the humanities, where it once occupied a central and honored place…" (p. 7).

This latest view of core curriculum forces educators to develop a different type of course. The newest core courses offer enormous breadth in a host of disciplines, but very little by way of the traditional in-depth instruction that impacts how a student will ultimately live. Ironically, evidence suggests that such an approach to core curriculum is failing to meet graduates' needs for either skill- or character-development. One observer of post-secondary education recently

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offered "best luck" to graduates noting, "Even with a degree in hand, they'll need it. A college diploma just doesn't mean what it used to" (Neal, 2012, p. A-5).

One reason that the typical college degree has lost meaning lies in the fact that the environment into which students graduate is evolving so rapidly that the job-training skills learned in freshman and sophomore core courses have very little relevance to the job market they enter a mere four years later. Yet, in order to provide adequate instruction time for students to master these soon-to-be irrelevant skills about how to make a living, how to live is increasingly minimized in many core curriculums.

The Communication Department as Battlefield

As the battles rage across the university, communication departments have vacillated concerning what ought to be included in the basic communication course "…which the department has or would recommend as a requirement for all or most undergraduates" (Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999, p. 3). A series of eight studies conducted periodically since 1968 has gathered data concerning the nature of this basic course as it is taught in two- and four-year colleges and universities (Gibson, Gruner, Brooks, & Petrie, 1970; Gibson, Kline, & Gruner, 1974; Gibson, Gruner, Hanna, Smythe, & Hayes, 1980; Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1985; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1990; Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999; Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006; Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010). The most recent of these studies reveals that the use of public speaking as the basic course has slipped to only slightly more than one-half of responding institutions. In many schools the traditional public speaking course is being replaced with skill-development courses that are perceived as having more contemporary relevance.

From his perch atop this band wagon, one communication faculty member recently described public speaking as a "very narrow skills course with practical value only for would-be preachers and politicians." That statement, though increasingly popular, demonstrates two significant misperceptions. The first is a failure to recognize the relevance of public speaking to the contemporary job market. A plethora of data indicates the need for rhetorical skills in occupations and professions ranging from A to Z. Public-speaking skills remain important to accountants (Showers & White, 1999; Molina, 2011), architects (Ress, 2012), art teachers (Vieth, 2012), attorneys (Cohen, 2011), bankers (Kocherlakota, 2010), chemical engineers (Resetaritis, 2011), college professors (Covill, 2011), computer scientists (Vardi, 2011), dental hygienists (Gilman, 2012; Fried, 2012), funeral directors (Boyd, 2000), immunologists (Hafler, 2011), librarians (Vanburen, 2010), litigators (Wisotsky, 2011), mechanical engineers (Sullivan & Wircenski, 2010), medical doctors (Rosenfield, Smaggus, & Detsky, 2011), medical writers (Wasson-Blader, 2010), non-profit executives (West, 2011), nurses (MacKay, 2011), pharmaceutical reps (Baum, 2011), pharmacists (DeCoske & White, 2010), psychologists (Feldman & Silva, 2010), scientists (Schatz, 2012; Dean, 2009), and zookeepers (Crosby, 2001). Hence, the public-speaking course plays a vital role in the how-to-make-a-living curriculum by teaching a job skill that is necessary regardless of an individual student's career choice.

However, more problematic than simply overlooking an opportunity to develop potential job skills, is the fact that the "preachers and politicians" mindset fails to recognize the value of a strong public-speaking course in teaching students' how to live. An effective public-speaking course, required university wide, strategically places four valuable character traits in the core curriculum.

1. Self-Discipline in the Core

Since the earliest days of communication research scholars have observed "profound discomfort" stemming from what was once referred to as stage fright (Lomas, 1944; Clevenger, 1956; Clevenger, 1959). In one survey only 28 percent of participants said they were afraid of dying, but 42 percent admitted that they were terrified at the prospect of standing up to speak in public (Lucas, 2012, p. 9). Fear of public speaking consistently ranks atop the Gallup poll of American's greatest apprehensions. James McCroskey, who devoted a lifetime to the study of communication anxiety (CA), maintained that "70 percent of the people in the U.S. report experiencing CA when they have to give a public speech" (2009, p. 158). The traumatic physiological effects of public-speaking anxiety include sweaty palms (Clements & Turpin, 1996), increased heart rate (Behnke & Carlile, 1971), and trembling (Behnke, Beatty, & Kitchens, 1978).

A common response to this near-universal fear is avoidance (McCroskey, 1997). Yet every semester thousands of public-speaking students force themselves to muster the self-discipline required to walk through the door of a public-speaking classroom. Most of these tough it out long enough to trek to the lectern three or four times during the semester for the purpose of addressing an audience of their peers. Such courage in the face of anxiety both derives from and serves to strengthen self discipline.

Idealists argue that "individuals who enroll in communication courses do so in order to improve their presentational skills and to increase the enjoyment that they derive from their communication performances" (Witt & Behnke, 2006, p. 167). Enrollees are more realistically simply facing their fears for the purpose of meeting the minimum requirements associated with gaining an undergraduate degree. Either way, public-speaking students not only learn a skill with practical value in contemporary professional life, but their presence in the course also serves to develop personal self-discipline. A strong public-speaking course puts self-discipline in the core curriculum.

2. Critical Thinking in the Core

Critical thinking—or evaluative thinking—involves the ability to recognize the relationship between ideas. Socrates taught critical thinking to his students. In fact, the *Socratic Method*, which encourages argument between opposing viewpoints in order to discover truth, also serves the purpose of enhancing critical thinking. Plato *and* Aristotle also taught critical thinking, encouraging students to recognize that often things are not as they appear on the surface.

Today, critical thinking is a nearly universal goal of colleges and universities, but is rarely demonstrated as an outcome (Burbach, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004; Shroeder & Shroeder, 1995; Freely & Steinberg, 2009). Is it any wonder? Students in many classrooms are forbidden to express an original idea and seldom encouraged to provide evidence in support of a claim (Goodlad, 1984).

By contrast the typical public-speaking class not only allows but requires precisely those activities. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, and Louden (1999) discovered that "participation in public communication skill building exercises consistently improved critical thinking" (p. 18). The simple act of developing a speech typically involves critical thinking. In order to make a speech clear and convincing, a speaker must first gather information on a topic. That evidence must be evaluated in the organizational phase of speech building so that the speaker can select the data which best supports the thesis and delete the information which is less effective. "In this process,

he or she does a lot of critical and analytical thinking. As a result, these abilities get enhanced" (Zhang & Shi, 2008, p. 13).

Fritz and Weaver (1984) offer four critical thinking skills that apply to rhetoric as a liberal art, and explore strategies for teaching these skills in a basic public-speaking class. Additional research suggests that adding argumentation to the basic course could even further enhance the relationship between public speaking and critical thinking. Colbert and Biggers (1985) reported that "50 years of research correlates debate training with critical thinking skills" (p. 237). Similarly, Keefe, Harte, and Norton (1982) write, "researchers over the past four decades have come to the same general conclusions. Critical thinking is significantly improved by courses in argumentation and debate and by debate experience" (p. 33).

With or without a debate component, evidence suggests the importance of a strong public-speaking course, since such a course demonstratively assists colleges and universities in their goal of adding critical-thinking skills to the core curriculum.

3. Effective Listening in the Core

"Communication isn't just for speaking and writing. The forgotten part of it for most people…is listening" (Axley, 1996, p. 77). Listening involves a significant portion of the communication process for nearly every American. In one study, "The average adult spent far more time listening than reading, writing, or speaking on a daily basis" (Janusik, 2002, p. 5). In particular, college students spend 55.4 percent of their total communication time, which amounts to seven-hours and forty-one minutes per day engaged in listening (Emanuel, Adams, Baker, Daufin, Ellington, Fitts, Himsel, Holladay, & OKeowa, 2008).

But, in spite of the prevalence of the activity, the need for more effective listening persists. When asked to rate their listening ability only 5 percent of people reported seeing themselves as excellent, while 85 percent recognize that their listening is average or worse (Atwater, 1992). The tragedy of this self report is magnified by research suggesting that a large percentage of people overestimate their listening ability (Axley, 1996, p. 77).

The dearth of listening ability has taken a serious toll in America's workplace. In one survey, "eighty percent of responding executives rated listening as the most important skill in the workforce" (Salopek, 1999, p. 58). Even technical skills polled less important. But in the same study, "listening skills were also rated by 28 percent of executives as most lacking in the workforce" (p. 58).

People are not born with the ability to be good listeners. They must work to develop the skill. One logical place to work on an individual's, and thus America's, listening problem is in a public-speaking classroom. In the typical public-speaking lab students present a series of speeches in front of their classmates who serve one another as audience. Hence, in a lab section comprised of twenty-five students, an individual participant engages in listening to speeches twenty-four times as many minutes as delivering speeches. Perhaps the basic course should be renamed "Listening Lab." Regardless of the name, an introductory public-speaking class is the optimal forum for practicing listening skills.

Most basic courses already include an instructional unit on listening (Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999).When the basic course is public speaking rather than a communication hybrid, the structure of that unit changes, allowing time for students to not just understand the listening theory, but then follow-up by practicing the listening skill. "Most theorists agree that an individual who has competency in a skill can demonstrate both the cognitive and behavior aspects of that skill" (Rhoades, Watson, & Barker, 1994, p. 35). As a result a strong public-speaking course places a unit on more effective listening skills in the core curriculum.

4. Academic Preparation in the Core

Henriques & Kusse (2011) discovered that only one-half of the students who began a four-year bachelor's degree program actually receive that degree within six years. At least one of the reasons for the low retention rate in colleges and universities lies in the lack of academic preparedness among entry-level students. Without the skills needed to survive the more rigorous than secondary school course work, many students abandon the effort and leave college during their freshman year or before their sophomore year begins.

The public-speaking classroom provides the ideal forum for developing the educational preparedness of entry-level students. A typical public-speaking class prepares students for assignments in other courses such as those that require research, group presentations, or listening to lectures.

Researching is precisely the same activity whether the eventual finished product is a speech, a proposal, or a written report. Therefore, when a public-speaking assignment forces students to do research it requires them to practice one of the most common pedagogical activities found in education.

Similarly, the development of presentational skills is marvelous preparation for other classroom assignments, since pressure to adopt more active-learning techniques has caused many faculty members to assign an increasing number of group projects. Often these projects include a presentation component. The skills mastered in a public-speaking course support these presentations across the curriculum.

Graduates of a public-speaking class are also more adequately prepared for classes built around the traditional lecture method. Covill (2011) discovered that college students do not share their instructor's negative view of the lecture method. Further, many disciplines seem to favor a lecture approach in spite of the general movement toward more active-learning. As a result, in many courses the primary means of student evaluation remains testing over material presented in a series of class lectures. The listening skills honed in a public-speaking class give the graduate of that course a distinct advantage over less-adequately-prepared counterparts.

At most universities the public-speaking course is offered at the 200 level or below. As a result, the course, taken in proper sequence, prepares students for academic pursuits across disciplines and throughout their collegiate experience. Public-speaking class places academic preparedness in the core.

Conclusion

Public speaking instruction remains the best opportunity for a communication department to support its university's core curriculum. Institutions that require in the core curriculum either a traditional public-speaking class or a strong public speaking component in a communication hybrid require their students to receive instruction in self-discipline, critical thinking, listening, and academic preparedness. In addition, effective public-speaking courses go well beyond training would-be preachers and politicians to the important task of shaping people of character for every walk of life. In fact a public-speaking course is one of the few courses that is basic to both educations—how to make a living, and how to live.

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