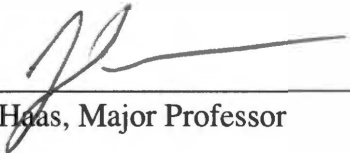


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michelle Epstein Garland entitled "Assessing the Impact of the Interpersonal Communication Course." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.



John Hoas, Major Professor

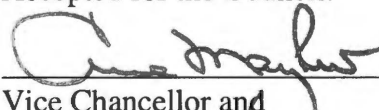
We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance.



Michelle Violanti

Dorothy Bowles

Accepted for the Council:



Vice Chancellor and
Dean of Graduate Studies

Thesis
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Assessing the Impact of the Interpersonal Communication Course

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Masters of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Michelle Epstein Garland
August 2006**

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Andrew Garland; parents, Annette Martin and Merv Epstein; siblings Kirsten Dinkins and Adam Epstein; and grandparents, Aretha and Philip Cantrell and Elaine and William Epstein, who have provided me with continuous love, support, and inspiration. They have always encouraged me to follow my dreams, and without their help, this achievement would not be possible.

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In addition, I would like to extend my gratitude to my family and friends whose support and encouragement guided my journey and made this goal achievable. I would especially like to thank my husband, Andrew Garland, and my parents, Annette Martin and Merv Epstein, for never letting me give up and for believing that I could do anything.

Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory investigation was to identify a strategy for the assessment of the interpersonal communication course. As envisioned, the assessment process focused on key elements of the course: knowledge of concepts, theories, and research findings; development of interpersonal skills through verbal and written activities; and understanding of a range of interpersonal contexts. Through a course-embedded assessment procedure, the review process examined students, faculty, and the course itself through various forms of formal and informal, direct and indirect methods.

Findings revealed an increase in communication apprehension and decrease in interpersonal communication motives from the beginning of the term to the end. Relational communication perceptions were found to be similar for self and partner evaluations. Skills identified by the instructor were attained but were not found to have any significant relationship to final grades or course evaluations. Similarly, course evaluations and final grades were not found to be significantly related. These elements along with the faculty questionnaire provided insight into improving the impact of the Interpersonal Communication course.

Further analysis and future research directions are discussed.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Literature Review.....	4
Discipline Specific Assessment.....	7
Course Assessment.....	9
Student Assessment.....	11
Assessment and Interpersonal Communication.....	12
III. Methodology.....	13
IV. Results.....	21
Research Question 1.....	21
Personal Report of Communication Apprehension.....	21
Interpersonal Communication Motives.....	23
Relational Communication	25
Behavioral Skills Assessment.....	27
Research Question 2.....	29
Research Question 3.....	29
V. Discussion, Limitations, and Future Research.....	34
VI. Conclusion.....	41
List of References.....	43
Appendices.....	50
Appendix A: Course Syllabus.....	51

Appendix B: Instrument (ICM).....	54
Appendix C: Instrument (PRCA).....	58
Appendix D: Instrument (RCS).....	61
Appendix E: Instrument (RCS modified).....	64
Appendix F: Course Evaluation Survey.....	67
Appendix G: Faculty Questionnaire.....	71
Vita	73

List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (PRCA).....	22
Table 2. PRCA: Comparing Pre and Post-Test Scores.....	23
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (ICM).....	24
Table 4. ICM: Comparing Pre and Post-Test Scores.....	25
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics (RCS and modified RCS).....	26
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics (Behavioral Skills Assessment, Scenario).....	28
Table 7. Descriptive Statistics (Portfolio).....	30
Table 8. Descriptive Statistics (Course Evaluation).....	32
Table 9. Correlations: Course Evaluation Survey	33

Chapter I

Introduction

Assessment in higher education has been the target of increasing interest in recent years (Rice, Stewart, and Hujber, 2000; Robbins, 2001; Baughin, Brod, and Page, 2002; James, 2000; Gallagher and Slater, 1994; Healy, 2000; Schmitz and Whitworth, 2002; Allen 2002; Lopez, 2004; Allen, 2004; Palomba and Banta, 1999; Hernon, 2004; Seybert, 2002; Hay, 1992; Gerretson and Golson, 2004; Stiggins, Backlund, and Bridgeford, 1985). A variety of assessment-related topics have been explored in the literature such as faculty evaluation tools (Rice, Stewart, and Hujber, 2000; Robbins, 2001), student evaluation tools (Baughin, Brod, and Page, 2002; James, 2000), and assessment strategies (Gallagher and Slater, 1994; Healy, 2000; Schmitz and Whitworth, 2002). Much of the research on these topics has been in support of institutional and/or program assessments. While an impressive body of literature exists about program or institutional assessment, strategies that center on course assessment have received limited attention. Interestingly, less is known about the outcomes associated with courses than with the outcomes associated with programs or institutions.

One issue that has been particularly problematic in assessing program or course outcomes involves skills development in areas such as communication, problem solving and critical thinking. As Schelfhout, Dochy, and Janssens (2004) note, colleges are often criticized for producing students who have mastered a body of knowledge but possess limited skill sets. Several studies have appeared in the literature that seek to assess skill development across a range of different skill sets and disciplines (e.g., Aloï, Gardner, and Lusher, 2003; Boulet, Murray, Kras, Woodhouse, McAllister, and Ziv, 2003; Clerehan,

Chanock, Moore, and Prince, 2003; Eder, 2004; Wallace and Clariana, 2005).

However, this research has met with limited success in assessing actual skills but has focused instead on outcomes such as the results on standardized tests. The goal of this investigation is to assess the impact of the interpersonal communication course by examining the assessment process in a skills-oriented communication course.

Specifically, this exploratory study assessed key elements of the lower division interpersonal communication course: knowledge of concepts, theories, and research findings; development of interpersonal skills through verbal and written activities; and understanding of various interpersonal contexts.

The need for assessment strategies in the interpersonal communication course that addresses behavioral skills is not a new idea. For example, Allen (2002) argued:

Valid and reliable assessment instruments developed to test specific learning objectives are needed, particularly in response to small group and interpersonal communication basic course objectives. Additionally, valid and reliable mechanisms for assessing performance of specific communication skills are needed (Allen, 2002, p. 37).

Selecting the appropriate combination of objectives, students, and resources for course assessments remains a difficult task (Johnson et al., 1993). Traditionally, scholars have employed one of three options for assessment processes: to adopt an existing assessment measure, to adapt an existing assessment measure to meet the specific needs, or to develop a new (local) assessment measure. Moreover, using “several methods to assess multiple objectives [provides for] the greatest validity in the least time,” with increased effectiveness when the multiple methods are used at several points throughout [the semester] (Johnson, McCormick, Prus, & Rogers; 1993; p 163).

“Because the long-range purpose of educational assessment is to assist teaching and learning, colleges need models and developmental processes that yield immediate and relevant information about how education occurs” (Obler, Slark, & Umbedenstock, 1993, p. 211). For these reasons, the need for exploration into combinations of measures and processes is imperative.

The goal of this exploratory investigation was to assess the impact of the interpersonal communication course by examining the assessment process in a skills-oriented communication course. As part of this process, the three options identified by Johnson et al. (1993) were utilized. The project employed learning objectives as the jumping off point followed by evaluation of the extent to which they are achieved. Allen (2004) defined a learning objective as “a clear, concise statement that describes how students can demonstrate their mastery of a program goal” (p. 169).

This manuscript is organized around the following key issues: review of literature; methodology; results; discussion, limitations and future research; and conclusion. More specifically, this project examined previous research in the assessment arena, with a focus on the key issues in such research, followed by an exploration of holes in the current research and areas in which further research is necessary. Upon identifying the assessment need, a research design for assessment procedures was identified and explained. The results, organized around each research question, were presented followed by the discussion of all results. Implications of the findings as well as areas for future research were presented followed by an overview of this exploratory investigation.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

According to Palomba and Banta (1999), “assessment is the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development” (p. 4). Allen (2004) expanded the definition of assessment as “a framework for focusing faculty attention on student learning and for provoking meaningful discussions of program objectives, circular organization, pedagogy, and student development” (p. 4). Regardless of the definition, scholars agree that the focus of assessment must be on the student (Lopez, 2004; Allen, 2004; Palomba and Banta, 1999). Similarly, Banta, Lund, Black, and Oblander assert that “assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly states purposes” (1996, p. 17).

Researchers (Allen, 2004; Hernon, 2004; Seybert, 2002) have proposed different methods or steps for assessing student learning. For example, Allen (2004) identified six basic steps to assess student learning (p. 10).

1. Develop learning objectives.
2. Check for alignment between the curriculum and the objective.
3. Develop an assessment plan.
4. Collect assessment data.
5. Use results to improve the program.
6. Routinely examine the assessment process and correct, as needed.

Other researchers use both formal and informal methods for assessment. For example,

Hernon (2004) identified direct and indirect methods of assessing student learning.

Direct methods include capstone course evaluation, course-embedded assessment, tests, portfolio evaluation, and paper/thesis/dissertation evaluation (p. 299). Indirect methods include surveying, curriculum and syllabus evaluation, and external reviewer evaluation (p. 300). These methods are also seen in Seybert (2002). Many of these methods were utilized in this exploratory investigation. These methods, or steps, include developing learning objectives; checking the alignment between the curriculum and the objectives; developing an assessment plan; collecting assessment data; as well as using portfolios, course evaluations, and surveying.

Still others have looked to identify specific elements of effective student learning assessment. According to Virginia Commonwealth University's Quality Enhancement Guide, WEAVE, there are nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning.

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the program it seeks to improve has clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.

7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.
There is a compelling public stake in education.

Thus, there appears to be wide consensus in the literature that a need exists for assessment across the educational curriculum. This focus on the assessment process ranges across academic disciplines, and interest in the assessment process extends to communication educators. For example, Hay (1992) looked specifically at communication departments' emphasis on assessment. For this study, surveys were sent to chairpersons of 1,153 communication departments to explore ideas of the "status of assessment on that particular campus," "assessment of general education outcomes, particularly in relation to the development of oral communication knowledge and abilities," "assessment practices and policies within the department of communication," "constituencies outside the communication department that also had interest in student oral communication skills," and "demographic information on the institution and department" (pp. 249-250). Results indicated that assessment is a priority on a majority of the campuses surveyed but that the communication departments were often not involved directly with the assessment process. That is, the assessment process at many institutions across the country is directed by campus-level administrative units.

The communication literature on assessment tends to be organized around discussions of programs, courses, and students. The following section summarizes the body of literature relevant to the current project.

Discipline Specific Assessment

While the literature broadly discusses assessment, the National Communication Assessment (NCA) website does provide discipline specific information. NCA defined assessment as “a process by which faculty and administrators evaluate the worth of one of their main activities: educating students. More specifically, assessment is a program of planned activities that includes tools and measurement devices which, when applied, evaluate student learning.” With this in mind, NCA lays out the following general criteria for assessing oral communication.

1. Assessment of oral communication should view competence in oral communication as a gestalt of several interacting dimensions. At a minimum, all assessments of oral communication should include assessment of knowledge (understanding communication process, comprehension of the elements, rules, and dynamics of a communication event, awareness of what is appropriate in a communication situation), an assessment of skills (the possession of a repertoire of skills and the actual performance of skills), and an evaluation of the individual’s attitude toward communication (e.g., value placed on oral communication, apprehension, reticence, willingness to communicate, readiness to communicate).
2. Because oral communication is an interactive and social process, assessment should consider the judgment of a trained assessor as well as the impressions of others involved in the communication act (audience, interviewer, other group members, conversant), and may include the self-report of the individual being assessed.
3. Assessment of oral communication should clearly distinguish speaking and listening from reading and writing. While some parts of the assessment process may include reading and writing, a major portion of the assessment of oral communication should require speaking and listening. Directions from the assessor and responses by the individual being assessed should be in the oral/aural mode.

4. Assessment of oral communication should be sensitive to the effects of relevant physical and psychological disabilities on the assessment of competence (e.g., with appropriate aids in signal receptions, a hearing impaired person can be a competent empathetic listener).
5. Assessment of oral communication should be based in part on atomistic/analytical data collected and on a holistic impression.

When assessing oral communication competency, specifically in regard to speaking and listening, both general as well as relational skills competencies are desired. NCA reports on the work of Morreale & Rubin (1997) to describe such skills:

I. General Skills

1. Identify and adapt to changes in audience characteristics.
2. Incorporate language that captures and maintains audience interest in message.
3. Identify and manage misunderstandings.
4. Demonstrate credibility.
5. Demonstrate competence and comfort with information.
6. Recognize time constraints of a communication situation and know how to operate within them.
7. Manage multiple communication goals effectively.
8. Demonstrate attentiveness through nonverbal and verbal behaviors.
9. Adapt messages to the demands of the situation or context.

II. Relating to Others

1. Manage and resolve group conflicts effectively.
2. Approach and engage in conversation with new people in new settings with confidence.

3. Negotiate effectively.
4. Allow others to express different views and attempt to understand them.
5. Effectively assert themselves while respecting others' rights.
6. Convey empathy.
7. Understand and value differences in communication styles.
8. Be open-minded about and receptive of another's point of view.
9. Motivate others to participate and work effectively as a team.
10. Understand and implement different methods of building group consensus.
11. Set and manage realistic agendas.
12. Lead meetings effectively.
13. Understand and adapt to people from other cultures, organizations, or groups.
14. Identify important issues or problems, draw conclusions, and understand other group members.

While both skills areas are important to interpersonal communication, particular emphasis is placed on relational skills. Absent from this discussion, however, is a clear methodology for assessing skill sets.

Course Assessment

Studies regarding course assessment have explored planning and evaluation processes, skills and knowledge attainment, and elements that hinder successful assessment. One such study, by Healy (2000), emphasized knowledge, skills, and

attitudes in evaluation. She identified learning objectives as the base of the learning design followed by identification of “the direct and indirect ways that change or learning should occur” (p. 62). A typical research design would follow: hypotheses, instruments, subjects, methods, and data analysis.

However, assessment can be hindered even with an effective design. Schmitz and Whitworth (2002), examined self-assessment strategies while identifying factors that limit self-discovery. For example, they suggest that structural problems are obscured by “defensive routines” used to protect elites (p. 135). For this study, anonymous surveys of undergraduate and graduate students, focus groups of undergraduate and graduate students, and web-based surveys of faculty were administered to illustrate how the blockages might be avoided. They found that the collaborative effort increased involvement and provided research questions that might have otherwise been ignored.

“The use of classroom assessment also ultimately focuses faculty – both individually and in departments – on revitalizing the curriculum itself” (Obler et al., 1993, p. 222). Furthermore, “working collaboratively and reviewing the curriculum through the eyes of students have helped teachers...identify content gaps, sequencing problems within and between courses, and the exclusion of cultural perspectives” (Obler et al., 1993, p. 222)

Regardless of the research questions posed, planning is a key element in the evaluation process. Gallagher and Slater (1994) looked at balancing micro and macro planning in evaluation processes. For this study, macro planning emphasized knowledge, attitudes and skills; performance is simulated on practice domains; and personal competence in the practice domain. Micro planning emphasized individual or small

group tasks. Using a Micro/Macro Dynamic Grid, evaluation processes can be determined based on positive and negative consequences of the planning choice. The study implies that a balance between micro and macro planning provides the best results.

Student Assessment

Student assessment studies focus on skills attainment and effective assessment measures. For example, James (2000) provided a framework for skills assessment in higher education through an initiative titled TransLang, which explores “transferable skills development” (p. 353). The focus is on four skill features: “communication skills, cognitive skills, subject skills and self-management” (p. 356). The key to this assessment process is the threshold judgment, as all skills will be evaluated on a pass/fail/good level: it emphasizes skills attainment as a process rather than an outcome. This idea individualizes the process of evaluation as students achieve different thresholds.

Another measurement tool is examined by Baughin, Brod, and Page (2002). They examined primary trait analysis (PTA) as an effective assessment tool. This rubric scale method allows the students to see what grade will be assigned for different levels of work in specific terms. PTA allows students to understand the objectives and evaluation criteria for each assignment upfront. This also makes the evaluation process less subjective. Because PTA is an ongoing process, it provides “a basis for modifying assignments, determining class focus, and establishing department and institutional goals” (p. 75).

Student assessments also include performance evaluations. According to Johnson et al. (1993), “performance simulations...offer more validity than written tests and more practicality than performance appraisals” (p. 158). Examples of such simulations include

in-box exercises and role playing. Portfolios are also identified as a type of performance evaluation and are attributed with considerably more authenticity than written tests (Johnson et al., 1993). One benefit of the portfolio is that it “can be used to assess virtually any skills but has the significant advantage of providing longitudinal data” (Johnson et al., 1993, p. 159).

Assessment and Interpersonal Communication

While the topic of assessment continues to be the focus of research, little, if any, recent research has been directed toward assessment of the interpersonal communication course. The bulk of the studies appearing in the literature that involve interpersonal communication instruction are more than twenty years old (e.g., Bochner and Yerby, 1977; Glaser, 1983; Pearce, 1977; Ritter, 1977). Moreover, this research directs attention toward course content and instructional practices but does not address assessment. One could argue that advancing the quality of the interpersonal communication course in the communication curriculum will be problematic without appropriate assessment tools.

Though the elements of course evaluation have been identified and researched separately, a strategy for marrying these elements to provide an effective tool for an assessment of the interpersonal course as a whole is needed. With this in mind, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How is an interpersonal communication course effectively assessed?

RQ2: What role does the portfolio play in the assessment process?

RQ3: What role does student evaluation play in the assessment process?

Chapter III

Methodology

Based on the previous research, a strategy utilizing multiple direct and indirect measures with an emphasis on students' attainment of knowledge and skills was chosen. The strategy under girding this project to assess the interpersonal communication course was guided by several objectives:

- Effective course evaluation requires the combination of course, faculty, and student assessments.
- Learning objectives must be identified for any assessment to be valuable.
- Evaluation of skills attainment is the overarching goal in assessing any course.
- The results must provide insight to the improvement of course strategies to improve skills attainment and the achievement of all learning objectives.

The strategy for assessment centered on the need for collaboration of all participants, including current students and faculty, using both traditional and performance measurements. Furthermore, all direct involvement came from within the communication studies program.

A course-embedded assessment process was utilized. Following that seen in Gerretson and Golson (2004), four steps will be taken in the assessment process.

1. Aligning course objectives with desired learning outcomes
2. Creating rubrics to assess outcomes
3. Testing the assessment process
4. Refining assessment

Beyond the four steps, elements within the course were evaluated as a whole



Figure 1. Bloom's Taxonomy.

following the taxonomy developed by Bloom in 1956. The taxonomy is a categorization of levels of intellectual behavior vital to learning, as seen in Figure 1.

The first concept associated with Bloom's taxonomy is knowledge. Knowledge "involves the recall of specifics and universals, the recall of methods and processes, or the recall of pattern, structure, or setting" (p. 201). The knowledge category includes knowledge of specifics, knowledge of terminology, knowledge of specific facts, knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics, knowledge of conventions, knowledge of trends and sequences, knowledge of classifications and categories, knowledge of criteria, knowledge of methodology, knowledge of universals and abstractions in the field, knowledge of principles and generalizations, and knowledge of theories and structures. Comprehension is the second category and is the "lowest level of understanding" (p. 204). This category includes translation, interpretation, and extrapolation. The third category is application defined as the "use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations" (p. 205). Analysis is the fourth category defined as the

“breakdown of a communication into its constituent elements or parts such that the relative hierarchy of ideas is made clear and/or the relations between the ideas expressed are made explicit” (p. 205). It includes analysis of elements, analysis of relationships, and analysis of organizational principles. The fifth category is synthesis or the “putting together of elements and parts so as to form a whole” (p. 206). This category includes production of a unique communication, production of a plan or proposed set of operations, and derivation of a set of abstract relations. Evaluation is the final category defined as “judgments about the value of material and methods for given purposes” (p. 207). It includes judgments in terms of internal evidence as well as judgments in terms of external criteria.

Participants for the student evaluation processes included 72 undergraduate students in three sections of the basic interpersonal communication course. A copy of the course syllabus is in Appendix A. One faculty member was assigned to the three sections of the course and completed all of the grading. The use of one faculty member ensured the standardization of the grading process. All assessments were administered by the author.

Students were assessed based on portfolios, compiled throughout the semester, as seen in Allen (2002), which included a grading sheet, tests, the research paper, journal entries, class connections, two Interpersonal Communication Motives (ICM) measures, two Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) measures, an original and modified version of the Relational Communication Scale (RCS), and any other assignments for which a grade was assigned.

The ICM and PRCA measures were utilized with a pre-test/post-test strategy to assess change in each area. The basic ICM examined motives for which students talk based on several categories including pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation and control. According to Rubin, Perse, and Barbato (1988), “cronbach alphas for the 28-item ICM were as follows: Pleasure, .89; Affection, .85; Inclusion, .84; Escape, .77; Relaxation, .81; and Control, .75” (p. 212). For the purpose of this study, two other sections were added: school and career.¹ These sections were added as they were assumed to be a motive not only in personal interaction but also for taking the course. Both the school and career motives signify an importance of interpersonal communication motives beyond internal rewards. The overall reliability for this ICM study was .628.

The basic PRCA measured communication apprehension in contexts including public speaking, dyadic interaction, small groups, and large groups. According to Beatty (1994), taken from McCrosky, Beatty, Kearney, and Plax (1985), “alpha reliability estimates for all 24 items ranges from .93 to .95. Reliability estimates for the individual composites are only slightly lower” (p. 293). Beatty also asserted that construct and criterion-related validity have been supported through published studies, citing McCrosky and Beatty (1984); Beatty (1987, 1988); Beatty, Balfantz, and Kuwabara (1989); Beatty and Friedland (1990). A section on communication apprehension connections with technology was added for the purpose of this study.² The technology section was added because use of power point and other communication technologies have become

¹ See Appendix B

² See Appendix C

commonplace in the communication classroom as well as in courses curriculum wide.

The overall reliability for this PRCA study was .921. Reliabilities for the individual composites were as follows: group .773, meeting .810, dyadic .815, public .897, technology .842.

The original and modified RCS were used as a skills comprehension measure with a post-test strategy. The RCS measured interpersonal interaction for the following characteristics: immediacy/affection (intimacy I), similarity/depth (intimacy II), receptivity/trust (intimacy III), composure, formality, dominance, equality, and task orientation. According to Burgoon and Hale (1987), different versions of the RCS result in coefficient alphas for the eight dimensions ranging from .42 to .88. The variances were found to range between 24% and 57%. Using the original measure (see Appendix D), students were evaluated by a peer. Using the modified measure (see Appendix E), students were evaluating themselves. A Cronbach's alpha of .683 for the RCS and a Cronbach's alpha of .766 for the modified RCS were found in this study.

For focus on skills attainment, a sample of volunteer students stratified by section participated in an outside of class activity at the end of the semester. Each student was videotaped participating in an interpersonal scenario developed for this study. The scenario required students to be paired and engage in a five-minute discussion to prepare to introduce the other person. Each student was coded for competence of eye contact, self-disclosure, active listening, and interruptions. These factors were identified as the behavioral objectives of the course by the instructor. Results were used to assess connections between nonverbal components and levels of competence as well as connections between verbal components and course objectives.

Research question one employed the scenario measure which focused on skills attainment. Research question two employed the portfolio measure, which included the pre and post ICM, pre and post PRCA, post RCS and modified RCS, and grades. Research question three employed the course evaluation survey and the faculty questionnaire.

Coding procedures consisted of an analysis of the first and last 30 seconds of the scenario. These time segments were chosen to provide time for both students to participate in each time slot and to provide for comparison of changes in the four areas from the beginning of the scenario to the end. A point was given for self-disclosure for any biographical information, feelings, ideas, or "I" messages presented. A point was recorded for eye contact any time the gaze was averted. A point was recorded for interruptions anytime an interruption of the partner's speaking turn occurred. A point was recorded for positive active listening any time the participant leaned in or began to nod or give a verbal cue such as "right," "okay," or "yeah." A point for negative active listening was recorded any time the participant leaned back, put their head on their hand, or swiveled in their chair. The points for each category were then summed, by adding the positive dimensions and subtracting the negative dimensions, for a first 30-second score and a last 30-second score. A training process occurred for coders, and 20 percent of the videotaped first scenarios were assessed to establish intercoder reliability. A Scott's Pi score of .8765 was found.

Performance measurements, though necessary, are costly in terms of time and money. However, whatever method is chosen, Stiggins, Backlund, and Bridgeford (1985) identified four important characteristics for performance assessment.

First, students are called upon to apply the skills and knowledge they have learned. Second, performance involves completion of a prespecified task according to prespecified criteria in the context of real or stimulated assessment exercises. Third, whatever task or product is required by the exercise must be observable and measurable. And fourth, the performance must be directly observed and rated by a trained, qualified judge (p. 137).

These characteristics were met through the previously identified research methods.

All of the previously mentioned participants were utilized for the course assessment. Course assessment was adapted from the research method of Schmitz, et al. (2002) which included a confidential survey of interpersonal communication students and a faculty questionnaire. Survey questions for students focused on the course material, course content, course structure, assignments, learning objectives, faculty evaluation, and course participation.³ Demographic questions were included. Analysis was run on the course evaluation student survey. A Cronbach's alpha of .736 was found for this measure.

The faculty questionnaire asked about the course strategies, challenges, theoretical and practical applications, interaction with students, use of group-work, and presentation opportunities. It also included questions regarding ways to increase student interest and improve the course overall.⁴ This was administered to the faculty member only.

Results of the student assessments were to evaluate the following learning objectives, which were identified by the instructor for the interpersonal communication course:

³ See Appendix F

⁴ See Appendix G

- The student will gain knowledge of concepts, theories, and research findings in interpersonal communication.
- The student will participate in written and verbal activities designed to develop and improve interpersonal skills.
- The student will understand various contexts in which interpersonal communication occurs.

The first objective was assessed based on the student assessment methods, with particular focus on test results, journal articles, and class connections. The second objective was assessed based on journals, class connections, scenario measures, and the research report. The third objective was assessed based on test results and all assignments.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this exploratory investigation was to identify a strategy for assessing the impact of the interpersonal communication course. The discussion of the results of the study will be organized around the three research questions.

Research Question 1

Research question one explored ways in which the interpersonal communication course can be effectively assessed. A number of factors were examined including skills, perceptions, and predispositions of students. Specifically, a pre-test (beginning of the semester) / post-test (end of the semester) strategy was employed to assess student perceptions of their motives for interpersonal interaction and perceptions of communication apprehension. A third measure that involved perceived communication skills of the self and other was administered at the end of the term. In addition, interpersonal skills were assessed at the end of the term through participation in an interpersonal scenario.

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for the measure of communication apprehension (PRCA). As noted in Table 1, analysis of the PRCA revealed an overall mean score for the pre-test measure of 78.24 with a standard deviation of 15.99 and a range of 62-127. The overall mean score for the post-test was found to be 82.62 with a standard deviation of 15.86 and a range of 42-120. That is, the overall mean score increased, indicating that overall apprehension increased over the course of the term. The standard deviations remained relatively consistent. Similar results were found for the means and standard deviations of the subcategories or

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (PRCA).

	mean (pre-test)	Mean (post-test)	st. dev. (pre-test)	st. dev. (post-test)	range (pre-test)	Range (post-test)
Overall	78.2444	82.6226	15.98743	15.86145	62-127	42-120
Group	19.8788	21.7164	4.60941	4.96901	6-30	6-30
Meeting	19.8983	20.8906	4.10086	4.52196	12-30	10-30
Dyadic	20.2097	21.4063	4.26629	4.66231	10-30	11-30
Public	17.3725	18.1288	5.32526	5.75099	6-30	6-30
Technology	16.4769	17.0769	3.94140	4.21422	8-24	7-24

dimensions of communication apprehension. The scores for the various dimension of the measure ranged from a minimum of 16.48 and maximum of 20.21 with a minimum standard deviation of 3.94 and maximum of 5.33 and range of 6-30 in the pre-test to a minimum of 17.08 and maximum of 21.72 with a minimum standard deviation of 4.21 and maximum of 5.75 and range of 6-30 in the post-test. The group dimension received the largest increase in apprehension mean with an increase of 1.84. The technology dimension, however, received the smallest increase in apprehension mean with an increase of .6. The technology dimension received the smallest range of scores for both the pre-test and post-test with a 16 point and 17 point range respectively. Similarly, the technology dimension received the smallest standard deviation for both the pre-test and post-test. Descriptive statistics relating to the PRCA can be found in Table 1.

In order to fully explore changes in the study variables, a series of t-tests were employed to examine levels of communication apprehension from the beginning of the term to the end of the term (see Table 2). Analysis of the pre-test and post-test measures

Table 2. PRCA: Comparing Pre and Post-Test Scores.

	t score	df	p<
Overall	-1.742	32	.091
Group	-2.598	60	.012
Meeting	-1.670	51	.101
Dyadic	-1.508	53	.138
Public	-.912	40	.367
Technology	-1.996	57	.051

for communication apprehension revealed a t-score that approached significance ($t = -1.742$, $df\ 1/32$, $p < .091$). Interestingly, analysis revealed that the dyadic score also increased and approached significance from the beginning of the semester to the end of the term ($t = -1.508$, $df\ 1/53$, $p < 1.358$).

Interpersonal Communication Motives. Tables 3 presents the descriptive statistics for another of the measures employed to address research question one. As reported in Table 3, analysis of the overall Interpersonal Communication Motives (ICM) mean score decreased from 20.37 with a standard deviation of 2.53 and range of 20.65-34.68 in the pre-test to 17.19 with a standard deviation of 2.67 and range of 16.53-35.00 in the post-test. That is, the overall score decreased indicating that motives for interpersonal communication decreased. Additional analyses revealed that not all of the subscales for this measure decreased. The pleasure mean score increased from 3.83 with a standard deviation of .61 and range of 2.5-5 in the pre-test to a 3.86 with a standard deviation of .58 and range of 2.5-5 in the post- test. All other dimension scores decreased. Descriptive statistics relating to the ICM can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (ICM).

	mean	Mean	st. dev.	st. dev.	Range	range
	(pre-test)	(post-test)	(pre-test)	(post-test)	(pre-test)	(post-test)
Overall	20.3656	17.1903	2.53362	2.66531	20.65-34.68	16.53-35.00
Pleasure	3.8250	3.8601	.60829	.58124	2.50-5.00	2.50-5.00
Affection	4.1302	4.0746	.52934	.66773	3.00-5.00	2.60-5.00
Inclusion	3.5231	3.4440	.68426	.88637	2.00-5.00	1.00-5.00
Escape	3.0654	3.0522	.78471	.97365	1.00-4.75	1.00-5.00
Relaxation	3.4692	3.2985	.71740	.91622	1.50-5.00	1.00-5.00
Control	2.4718	2.4564	.99981	.87514	1.00-5.00	1.00-5.00
School	3.9000	3.5261	.75234	.70996	1.50-5.00	2.25-5.00
Job	3.9656	3.6806	.63301	.79243	2.60-5.00	1.60-5.00

Table 4. ICM: Comparing Pre and Post-Test Scores.

	T score	df	p<
Overall	9.105	57	.000
Pleasure	-.142	60	.888
Affection	.803	58	.425
Inclusion	.862	60	.392
Escape	.144	60	.886
Relaxation	1.165	60	.249
Control	.047	59	.963
School	4.454	60	.000
Job	2.720	60	.009

In order to fully explore changes over the course of the term, a series of t-tests were employed to examine interpersonal communication motives from the beginning of the term to the end of the term (see Table 4). For the pre-test and post-test measure of interpersonal communication motives, significant differences in self-reports of motives from the beginning of the semester to the end of the term were observed ($t = 9.105$, $df = 57$, $p < .000$). That is, participants reported fewer motives for interpersonal interaction at the end of the term than at the beginning of the term.

Relational Communication. In the development of the Relational Communication Scale (RCS), the authors identified the use of this measure as “to verify the extent to which actors and observers make the same attributions about communication events” (Burgoon & Hale, 1987, p. 40). Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the RCS and modified RCS measures. Analysis of the RCS total score revealed a mean of

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics (RCS and modified RCS).

	RCS mean	RCS (m) mean	RCS st. dev.	RCS (m) st. dev.	RCS rae	RCS (m) range
Overall	15.9726	16.8430	2.82976	3.15164	9.33-22.92	7.37-22.56
Immediacy	.9569	1.0168	.62823	.63523	-0.56-2.56	-0.33-2.56
Similarity	4.9045	4.8636	.86575	.89660	2.60-6.80	3.00-7.00
Receptivity	5.6949	6.0308	.68691	.65211	4.17-7.00	4.67-7.00
Composure	2.5419	2.6537	.97737	.87911	0.00-3.80	-0.20-3.80
Formality	-2.7121	-3.0746	.89421	.85835	-4.33--1.00	-4.33--1.33
Dominance	.6432	.5282	.89672	.85013	-1.67-3.17	-1.50-2.50
Equality	2.4923	3.000	1.37324	1.44698	-1.00-4.33	-0.67-4.33
Task Orienta-	1.5373	1.3433	.99073	1.18132	-1.00-3.75	-1.00-4.00

15.97 with a standard deviation of 2.83 and range of 9.33-22.92. Descriptive statistics relating to the RCS can be found in Table 5. Similar results were found for the modified RCS. Descriptive statistics for the modified RCS total score revealed a mean of 16.48 with a standard deviation of 3.15 and range of 7.37-22.56. As a whole, students were found to rate themselves more favorably in all subcategories except similarity and equality than they were rated by their counterparts. Descriptive statistics relating to the modified RCS can be found in Table 5.

To further assess the results of the RCS and modified RCS, a univariate general linear model was run for the RCS score and course sections and the modified RCS score and course sections. No significant difference was found between sections for either the RCS ($F=1.18$, $p<.889$) or the modified RCS ($F=1.65$, $p<.20$). That is, students in each section score themselves and others in the similar ways. This supports the conclusion that students have a consistent way of operationalizing concepts of interpersonal communication.

Behavioral Skills Assessment. In order to assess skills outcomes, a content analysis based on the skills objectives identified by the course instructor was employed. The skills analyzed included eye contact, self-disclosure, interruptions, and active listening. All analysis was based on the end of term video-taped scenario. Descriptive statistics for the behavioral skills assessment can be found in Table 6.

Results of a regression analysis revealed no discernable pattern or predictive power between the scenario score, which was calculated by summing the scores of the four dimensions, and final grades ($r = -.03$, $p < ns$). That is, final grades cannot be predicted by skills attainment based on the results of this investigation. Results of a

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics: Behavioral Skills Assessment, Scenario.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Total Score	5.88	6.09	-5-22
Score (first 30 seconds)	3.1395	3.79	-3-11
Score (second 30 seconds)	2.74	3.92	-5-13
Active Listening- good (first 30 seconds)	4.49	2.33	0-10
Active Listening-bad (first 30 seconds)	2.74	1.48	0-6
Eye Contact (first 30 seconds)	3.33	2.12	0-9
Interruptions (first 30 seconds)	.02	.15	0-1
Self-Disclosure (first 30 seconds)	4.74	2.71	0-10
Active Listening- good (second 30 seconds)	5.23	3.34	0-14
Active Listening-bad (second 30 seconds)	2.56	1.35	0-5
Eye Contact (second 30 seconds)	2.93	1.96	0-7
Interruptions (second 30 seconds)	.02	.15	0-1
Self-Disclosure (second 30 seconds)	3.02	1.92	0-8

univariate general linear model for behavioral skills scores and final grade revealed some differences, but the differences were not statistically significant ($F=1.27$, $p<.25$).

However, the results were in the anticipated direction.

Research Question 2

Research question two explored the use of portfolios in the assessment process.

The analysis of the portfolios revealed a significant amount of missing data. For example, test grades were missing in approximately 40 of the portfolios and class connections were missing in approximately 39 portfolios. Missing journal grades ranged from 2-39 with four journals missing more than half of the entries. Of the information provided by students, journal grades, calculated by the sum of the components, ranged from 21-405 with an average of 214.26. That is, while students are turning in a portfolio, the majority of the items are missing. Descriptive statistics relating to the portfolios can be found in Table 7.

Research Question 3

Research question three explored the role of student evaluation in the assessment process. In order to explore student perceptions of the value of the course, course evaluations were compared to both skills attainment through scenario grades and final grades. Results of the descriptive statistics of the course evaluation revealed a range of 129-224 with a total mean score, calculated by summing the dimension scores, of 176.69 and standard deviation of 20.54. Study effort and participation received the lowest means while faculty; objectives; and course content, material and structure received the highest means. Feedback quantity, objectives, and faculty had the smallest range of scores with a range of 11 while feedback quality had the largest range of scores with a range of 16.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics: Portfolio.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Missing Data (out of 61)
Test 1	63.33	9.40	38-88	40
Test 2	82.5	7.30	69-96	41
Report	89.30	9.23	58-100	5
Journal 1	5.0	.19	4-6	7
Journal 2	4.91	.40	3-6	7
Journal 3	5.51	1.19	2-6	2
Journal 4	4.57	1.10	0-5	8
Journal 5	4.95	.23	4-5	6
Journal 6	5.03	.18	5-6	31
Journal 7	4.98	.14	4-5	9
Journal 8	4.65	.53	3-5	18
Journal 9	4.91	.29	4-5	27
Journal 10	4.91	.35	3-5	14
Journal 11	4.28	1.36	2-8	22
Journal 12	4.81	.52	3-5	25
Journal 13	5	.0	5-5	26
Journal 14	4.90	.50	2-5	22
Journal 15	4.75	.78	2-5	17
Journal 16	4.84	.37	4-5	17
Journal 17	4.64	.49	4-5	39
Journal 18	8.36	2.45	4-10	36
Journal 19	9.74	.98	5-10	34
Connection 1	8.91	2.11	5-10	38
Connection 2	8.70	2.24	5-10	38

Table 7. Continued.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Missing Data (out of 61)
Connection 3	9.09	1.97	5-10	39
Connection 4	9.09	1.97	5-10	39
Connection 5	9.09	1.97	5-10	39
Total	214.26	113.54	21-405	0

Descriptive statistics relating to the Course Evaluation can be found in Table 8.

A result of the demographic analysis revealed 18 males and 39 females. Of these, two were freshmen, 16 were sophomores, 25 were juniors, and 14 were seniors. Also of these 57 students, one was American Indian/Native American, six were Black/African American, 49 were White/Caucasian/Anglo American, and one was other. The remainder of the students left this section blank.

A correlation analysis of the course evaluation dimensions revealed scores ranging from .13 to .86 (see Table 9). Strongest relationships were found for objectives and course content, material, and structure (.86); exams and learning and course content, material, and structure (.83); objectives and faculty (.75); faculty and course content, material, and structure (.69); feedback quality and feedback quantity (.61); and objectives and feedback quality (.61). Interestingly, the weakest relationship was found for faculty and study effort (.13). Other weak relationships included participation and feedback quality (.24), study effort and feedback quantity (.26), study effort and exams and learning (.27), study effort and feedback quality (.28), and participation and faculty (.28). A correlation matrix can be found in Table 9.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics (Course Evaluation).

	Mean	St. Deviation	Range
Study Effort	14.64	3.37	9-23
Assignments	17.29	2.51	11-24
Feedback Quantity	17.11	2.42	12-23
Feedback Quality	17.93	3.27	9-25
Feedback Use	17.41	3.02	10-25
Exams & Testing	15.86	3.10	10-23
Course Content, etc.	19.71	2.88	12-25
Objectives	19.64	3.17	14-25
Faculty	20.61	2.30	14-25
Participation	15.49	2.97	6-21
Overall	176.69	20.54	129-224

Table 9. Correlations: Course Evaluation Survey.

	Study Effort	Assignments	Feedback Quantity	Feedback Quality	Feedback Use	Exams & Learning	Course Content, Material, Structure	Objectives	Faculty	Participation
Study Effort	1.00	.32**	.26	.28**	.57*	.27**	.33*	.30**	.13	.53*
Assignments	.32**	1.00	.53*	.54*	.50*	.45*	.50*	.55*	.49*	.35*
Feedback Quantity	.26	.53*	1.00	.61*	.41*	.55*	.46*	.53*	.48*	.33*
Feedback Quality	.28**	.54*	.61*	1.00	.41*	.35*	.50*	.61*	.58*	.24
Feedback Use	.57*	.50*	.41*	.41*	1.00	.36*	.49*	.47*	.35*	.33*
Exams & Learning	.27**	.45*	.55*	.35*	.36*	1.00	.83*	.46*	.46*	.38*
Course Content, Material, Structure	.33*	.50*	.46*	.50*	.49*	.83*	1.00	.86*	.69*	.40*
Objectives	.30**	.55*	.53*	.61*	.47*	.46*	.86*	1.00	.75*	.33*
Faculty	.13	.49*	.48*	.58*	.35*	.46*	.69*	.75*	1.00	.28**
Participation	.53*	.35*	.33*	.24	.33*	.38*	.40*	.33*	.28**	1.00

* p<.01 **p<.05

Chapter V

Discussion, Limitations, and Future Research

The purpose of this exploratory investigation was to identify a strategy for the assessment of the interpersonal communication course. The discussion section will be organized around the research questions. Taken together, the results suggest that skills assessment continues to be problematic for educators. Though few, if any, studies have examined the interpersonal communication course and learning outcomes, the findings in some cases were surprising. For example, the results of the pre-test/post-test assessment of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) suggest an increase in communication apprehension over the course of the term. It is clear that our understanding of skills assessment across the skill set spectrum in the interpersonal course is limited. Therefore, a continued examination of predispositions and how they are affected by instruction is needed. Moreover, a standardized way for getting at skills to minimize the need for time and resources is also essential.

Research question one explored ways in which the interpersonal communication course can be effectively assessed. Results revealed that communication apprehension went up while number of motives individuals use to communicate interpersonally went down. This suggests that through the interpersonal course, students modified their perceptions of the uses to which interpersonal communication can be applied and have possibly acquired newfound concerns about interpersonal interaction. Based on this notion, students' understandings of the tools that are and are not effective in interpersonal communication were attained.

The reasons for the increase in both the overall levels of communication apprehension as well as in the dyadic apprehension dimension of the measure are unclear. One explanation is that apprehension could be heightened by increased awareness of what we do when we interact and the expectations others have for us, especially for those in an introductory communication course. This heightened apprehension might stem from changes in the awareness of the challenges and responsibilities commonplace in interpersonal interactions. As the faculty member reported, complexity of human interaction was one of the elements identified for knowledge attainment. A second explanation may be that the measure may not be well suited to assessing apprehension as it relates to the interpersonal communication course. Discussions with the instructor of the course suggest that students tend to become more (not less) comfortable interacting with others in the class over the course of the term. A third possible explanation may be that the students did not take the self-report measures seriously and provided misleading responses.

To date, no studies have explored the relationship between the interpersonal communication course and an increase in communication apprehension. While these results are not expected to be commonplace, further investigation in this result is necessary. Overall, the findings from this preliminary investigation suggest that while the uses perceived for interpersonal communication come to be modified, communication apprehension in terms of course outcomes may need to be addressed.

Results of the Relational Communication Scale (RCS) and modified RCS indicate that students may have mastered knowledge of relational communication to a degree that allowed for similar judgments and understandings across the course sections. This

supports the original goal of the RCS measure, “to verify the extent to which actors and observers make the same attributions about communication events” (Burgoon & Hale, 1987, p. 40).

Results of the behavioral skills measure leave the impression that students exit the course reasonably skillful in the addressed areas: they employ active listening, maintain eye contact, avoid interruptions, and engage in appropriate self-disclosure. However, because this is a first attempt in addressing skills attainment, no generalizations can be made. The data, nonetheless, can serve as a benchmark for future research. While the method of assessment is time and labor intensive, it does serve as a guide for the development of future measures. It is clear that a standardized way of capturing and measuring skills is needed, and the method of assessment used in this exploratory investigation serves as a jumping off point.

Research question two explored the use of portfolios in the assessment process. Results revealed that portfolios have no predictive power in determining final grades. The reason for this is unclear. One possible reason is that students were not found to have turned in completed portfolios. Many students were missing one or more of the necessary components: journal grades, test grades, research report grade, class connection grades, and number of absences.

The usefulness of portfolios has been established. For example, Karlowicz (2000) asserted that “portfolios provide documentation of complex sets of skills, and hence curricular outcomes, not necessarily validated by other evaluation techniques” (p. 83). One significant benefit is student self-reflection or increased self-awareness (Karlowicz, 2000). Similarly, Pierce and O’Malley (1992) identified portfolios as a way of looking at

student accomplishment in relation to goals or objectives and a method for observing student reflection and self-monitoring. That it, the portfolio provides students the capability of examining their progress in knowledge attainment and skills acquisition over the course of the semester. However, these benefits lead directly to the source of the problem.

The problem centers on the responsibilities of the students as they are required to gather and maintain the portfolio components. Therefore, the process of portfolio compilation should be modified to increase its value to students. Under the current system no consequences are received for submitting incomplete portfolios. Moreover, students should be more involved in the portfolio process, setting their own standards for performance and objectives for the portfolio. This is similar to contract learning and would therefore increase the value of the portfolio to the student. The increase in value would in turn provide for a more complete submission of materials. Further exploration is needed in the area of portfolios. Future research might also consider a content analysis of journal text for a clearer focus on skills and knowledge attainment.

Research question three explored the role of current students in the assessment process. Like that of the Healy (2000) study, the emphasis was on knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Furthermore, like the study of Gallagher and Slater (1994), performance simulation was utilized and competence was examined. Results of the course evaluation survey revealed the highest mean scores for faculty; objectives; course content, material, and structure. This finding suggests that student have a positive perception of the course itself and the faculty member's contribution to it. In contrast, results revealed the lowest mean scores for study effort and participation. This finding suggests that students

perceive little study effort and participation necessary to succeed in the course. With this in mind, more should be required of students in these areas. As the faculty member identified the classroom layout as a constraint to participation, this is one thing that the faculty member or department might try to address. Further analysis into an alternative classroom setup might reveal a change in these perceptions. Furthermore, no predictive power was found for course evaluation scores in relation to final grades or scenario grades. This finding suggests that student perceptions have little if any bearing on final grades or skills attainment.

This exploratory investigation set out to assess the impact of the interpersonal communication course. While this was a first attempt to establish such an assessment method, several conclusions can be made. First, the combination of student, faculty, and course assessments are imperative as an overall assessment is not attainable with focus on the individual components alone. Second, the use of multiple direct and indirect measures as well as traditional and performance measurements allows for both corporeal and perceptual data to be collected. Third, centering the assessment process on course objectives provides direct results for knowledge and skills attainment, which reveals whether or not the course does what it sets out to do. In this case, it does, and, similarly, students perceive that it does. Fourth, the portfolio system must be expanded to include objectives so that students can monitor their own progress.

While a combination of measures is the ideal, much can be gained from the individual measures as well. Based on the learning objectives identified by the instructor, the scenario measure is the preferred method. While the course evaluation and self-report measures do provide insight into the perceptions of the course, self, and others, a scenario

measure provides for an evaluation of both skills and knowledge attainment. While the scenario employed in this exploratory investigation looked specifically at skills, other scenarios would work to get at knowledge. For example, a scenario in which the students engage in an interview with the assessor would provide insight into knowledge attained in the course if given guided questions, such as

- What does it mean to be an effective communicator?
- What verbal and nonverbal elements are necessary to be an effective communicator?
- In your opinion, what is the most valuable of the interpersonal communication tools you learned about in this course?
- In what ways have your interpersonal communication skills improved and/or changed because of this course?

For knowledge of individual elements of the course, more specific questions could be asked. For example, to get at assertiveness the assessor might pose the following question: “If you were going to your boss to ask for a raise, what interpersonal communication techniques would you use?” For insight into conflict strategies, the assessor might ask, “If you and your roommate were in a fight, what interpersonal communication techniques would you use to mitigate the conflict?”

Portfolios would be the second choice of methods. While the current process does not support the effectiveness of this tool, an improved implementation of the measure would provide for an evaluation on knowledge attainment through tests and other graded assignments. However, skills attainment would only be evaluated based on student perception of attainment based on written assignments and activities.

Assessment of skills and knowledge attainment is within reach. While this exploratory investigation does not necessarily provide the best way to assess skills attainment, it is a first step by which other means can be developed.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

While the first four steps of the assessment process have been taken, as identified by Allen (2004), the final two steps remain: using the results to improve the program and routinely examining the assessment process and correct as needed. Based on this assessment, areas for improvement in the impact of the interpersonal communication course include mitigation of communication apprehension over the course of the semester, increased involvement of the faculty member and students in regard to portfolio assembly, change in the classroom setup to encourage oral participation, and more rigorous requirements for students in terms of study effort and participation. While three of the four steps of the course-embedded assessment process as identified by Gerretson and Golson (2004) were met, refinement of the assessment processes is still required.

Student evaluations followed many characteristics of those identified by Virginia Commonwealth University, including assessment as multidimensional, integrated, and showed in performance over time, and a goal-oriented process (based on learning objectives) with particular attention focused on outcomes. However, for the assessment to be most beneficial, an ongoing assessment process is necessary.

Following Bloom's taxonomy (1956), knowledge and comprehension were assessed through PRCA, ICM, and test, assignment, and journal grades; application was assessed through scenarios; analysis was assessed through the RCS and RCSM; synthesis was assessed based on the research project and final grades; and evaluation was assessed through the CES. While these assessments do provide insight to the various areas, an overarching instrument to measure all elements of the taxonomy has not been identified.

Taken together, the need for individual course assessment is apparent. By focusing on the key elements of the interpersonal communication course, an effective assessment centered on student-learning is attainable. Through the various research methods, all elements of the interpersonal communication course are accounted for. Moreover, all of the initial objectives of the investigation were met. Most importantly, skills attainment and achievement of learning objectives were realized.

Based on the overall assessment results, the course will be re-vitalized for improved skills attainment, more effective teaching strategies, and clearer, more specific learning objectives that will be the core of the curriculum structure. From this structure, course content and material and class assignments and activities will be designed to effectively produce the desired learning outcomes.

The benefit of this research design is its universality. The assessment method can be used not only within the communication curriculum but in skills courses curriculum wide. To this point, assessment of skills courses has been limited. From this exploratory investigation, a new area of research designed to focus on skills assessment across the curriculum can be born.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Course Syllabus

COMMUNICATION STUDIES 220 – INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**Tentative Syllabus – Spring 2006**

Marty Miller, 293 Communication Building

W 1/11	Scope of course; explain syllabus
F 1/13	Building synergy
M 1/16	<i>Holiday-Enjoy!</i>
W 1/18	Building synergy
F 1/20	Discuss Ch 1
M 1/23	Discuss Research Project
W 1/25	Discuss Ch 1
F 1/27	Discuss Ch 2
M 1/30	Discuss Ch 2
W 2/1	Discuss Ch 2
F 2/3	Discuss Myers-Briggs
M 2/6	Discuss Myers-Briggs
W 2/8	Discuss Ch 3
F 2/10	Discuss Ch 3
M 2/13	Discuss Ch 3
W 2/15	Review for first test
F 2/17	Test #1-Chapters 1-3 and Myers-Briggs material
M 2/20	Discuss Ch 4
W 2/22	Discuss Ch 4
F 2/24	Discuss Ch 4
M 2/27	Discuss Ch 5
W 3/1	Discuss Ch 5
F 3/3	Discuss Ch 6
M 3/6	Discuss Ch 6
W 3/8	Discuss Ch 6
F 3/10	Read Ch 7 for today; compare and contrast verbal messages and nonverbal messages
M 3/13	Discuss Ch 7
W 3/15	Discuss Ch 7
F 3/17	Discuss Ch 7 and review for Test #2
M 3/19-24	<i>Spring Break-Enjoy!</i>
M 3/27	Test #2-Chapters 4-7

Assessing the Impact of the Interpersonal Communication Course 53

W 3/29	Discuss Ch 8
F 3/31	Discuss Ch 8
M 4/3	Discuss Ch 8
W 4/5	Discuss Forgiveness
F 4/7	Discuss Ch 9
M 4/10	Discuss Ch 9; Research Project due for 10:10 Class
W 4/12	Discuss Ch 10; Research Project due for 11:15 and 1:25 Class
F 4/14	<i>Holiday</i>
M 4/17	Discuss Ch 10
W 4/19	Discuss Ch 12
F 4/21	Discuss Ch 12; last day for Class Connections
M 4/24	Discuss Ch 12
W 4/26	Review possible points for the term
F 4/28	Evaluations

EXAM SCHEDULE: 10:10 Class: Wednesday, May 3 at 10:15-12:15
11:15 Class: Thursday, May 4 at 12:30-2:30
1:25 Class: Tuesday, May 9 at 5:00-7:00

TEXT: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION: Relating to Others, 4th edition by Beebe, Beebe and Redmond

OFFICE HOURS: MWF 9-9:30 a.m. and by appointment

ASSIGNMENTS AND POINTS

Test #1-Chapters 1-3 and Myers-Briggs	75 points
Test #2-Chapters 4-7	100 points
Test #3-Chapters 8-10 and 12 – exam week	100 points
Journals, 5 points each	90-100 points
Research Report	100 points
Class Connections, 4 per student	40 points

JOURNAL REQUIREMENTS: All journals should be neat and legible. Please put the date, the journal number, and the topic on each journal entry. You will have approximately 20 journals this term, and they are worth five points each. I do not accept late or make-up journals *for any reason*.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Your attendance and participation are very important in this class. You may have three absences *for any reason* without penalty (This includes athletic activities, college meetings or activities as well as illness). More than three absences will lower your final grade by 2% per absence. Please plan your term carefully and keep track of your absences.

Appendix B: Instrument (ICM)

Interpersonal Communication Motives

Name (Print) _____

Instructions: Here are several reasons people give for why they talk to other people. For each statement, please circle the number that best expresses your own reasons for talking to others.

If the reason is EXACTLY like your own reason, circle a 5.

If the reason is A LOT like your own reason, circle a 4.

If the reason is SOMEWHAT like your own reason, circle a 3.

If the reason is NOT MUCH like your own reason, circle a 2.

If the reason is NOT AT ALL like your own reason, circle a 1.

“I talk to people...”		Exactly 5	A lot 4	Somewhat 3	Not Much 2	Not at all 1
<u>Pleasure</u>						
1.	Because it's fun	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Because it's exciting	5	4	3	2	1
3.	To have a good time	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Because it's thrilling	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Because it's stimulating	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Because it's entertaining	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Because I enjoy it	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Because it peps me up	5	4	3	2	1
<u>Affection</u>						
9.	To help others	5	4	3	2	1
10.	To let others know I care about their feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	To thank them	5	4	3	2	1
12.	To show others encour- agement	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Because I'm concerned about them	5	4	3	2	1

Inclusion

14.	Because I need someone to talk to or be with	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Because I just need to talk about my problems sometimes	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Because it makes me feel less lonely	5	4	3	2	1
17.	Because it's reassuring to know someone is there	5	4	3	2	1

Escape

18.	To put off something I should be doing	5	4	3	2	1
19.	To get away from what I am doing	5	4	3	2	1
20.	Because I have nothing better to do	5	4	3	2	1
21.	To get away from pressures and responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1

Relaxation

22.	Because it relaxes me	5	4	3	2	1
23.	Because it allows me to unwind	5	4	3	2	1
24.	Because it's a pleasant rest	5	4	3	2	1
25.	Because it makes me feel less tense	5	4	3	2	1

Control

26.	Because I want someone to do something for me	5	4	3	2	1
27.	To tell others what to do	5	4	3	2	1
28.	To get something I don't have	5	4	3	2	1

When at School

29.	Because it will be important for success in my major	5	4	3	2	1
30.	Because it will help me build relationships with fellow students	5	4	3	2	1
31.	Because it will help me build relationships with faculty members	5	4	3	2	1
32.	Because it will help my grades	5	4	3	2	1

When Considering My Career

33.	Because it will be important in my profession	5	4	3	2	1
34.	Because it will help me build relationships with fellow employees	5	4	3	2	1
35.	Because it will help me build relationships with superiors	5	4	3	2	1
36.	Because it will help me to get a promotion	5	4	3	2	1
37.	Because it will help me earn more money	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C: Instrument (PRCA)

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

Name (Print) _____

Instructions: This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning your feelings about communication with other people. Please indicate after each numbered question the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling whether you strongly agree (5), agree (4), are undecided (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly, just record your first impression.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I dislike participating in group discussions.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Generally I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express my opinion at a meeting.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.	5	4	3	2	1
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I have no fear speaking up in conversations.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	5	4	3	2	1
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	5	4	3	2	1
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	5	4	3	2	1

18.	I am afraid to speak up in conversations.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	I have no fear of giving a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
21.	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
22.	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	5	4	3	2	1
23.	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	5	4	3	2	1
24.	While giving a speech I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	5	4	3	2	1
25.	Using email to talk with my friends is a new experience for me.	5	4	3	2	1
26.	Most people know more about computers than I do.	5	4	3	2	1
27.	I feel uncomfortable using a computer to talk with my friends.	5	4	3	2	1
28.	My friends are better able to use a computer to talk with friends.	5	4	3	2	1
29.	I feel confident that my presentations will be effective when using a computer and computer projector.	5	4	3	2	1
30.	I welcome the use of a computer and computer projector during my presentations.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix D: Instrument (RCS)

Relational Communication Scale

Instructions: Below is a series of statements about the conversation you just completed with your partner. For each one, please circle a number from 1 to 7, depending on the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. A 7 means you strongly agree, a 6 means you agree, a 5 means you agree somewhat, a 4 means you are neutral or unsure, a 3 means you disagree somewhat, a 2 means you disagree, and a 1 means you strongly disagree. You may circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. Please complete all items.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral or Unsure	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<u>Immediacy/Affections (Intimacy I)</u>							
1. He/she was intensely involved in our conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. He/she did not want a deeper relationship between us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. He/she was not attracted to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. He/she found the conversation stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. He/she communicated coldness rather than warmth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. He/she created a sense of distance between us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. He/she acted bored by our conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. He/she was interested in talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. He/she showed enthusiasm while talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Similarity/Depth (Intimacy II)</u>							
10. He/she made me feel he/she was similar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. He/she tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. He/she acted like we were good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. He/she seemed to desire further communication with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. He/she seemed to care if I liked him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Receptivity/Trust (Intimacy III)</u>							
15. He/she was sincere.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. He/she was interested in talking with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. He/she wanted me to trust him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. He/she was willing to listen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. He/she was open to my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. He/she was honest in communicating with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Assessing the Impact of the Interpersonal Communication Course 63

Composure

21. He/she felt very tense talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. He/she was calm and poised with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. He/she felt very relaxed talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. He/she seemed nervous in my presence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. He/she was comfortable interacting with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Formality

26. He/she made the interaction very formal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. He/she wanted to discussion to be casual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. He/she wanted to discussion to be informal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Dominance

29. He/she attempted to persuade me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. He/she didn't attempt to influence me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. He/she tried to control the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. He/she tried to gain my approval.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. He/she didn't try to win my favor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. He/she had the upper hand in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Equality

35. He/she considered us equals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. He/she did not treat me as an equal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. He/she wanted to cooperate with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Task Orientation

38. He/she wanted to stick to the main purpose of the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. He/she was more interested in social conversation than the task at hand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. He/she was very work-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. He/she was more interested in working on the task at hand than having social conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Instrument (RCS modified)

Relational Communication Scale (modified)

Instructions: Below is a series of statements about the conversation you just completed with your partner. For each one, please circle a number from 1 to 7, depending on the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. A 7 means you strongly agree, a 6 means you agree, a 5 means you agree somewhat, a 4 means you are neutral or unsure, a 3 means you disagree somewhat, a 2 means you disagree, and a 1 means you strongly disagree. You may circle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. Please complete all items.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral or Unsure	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strong Agree
<u>Immediacy/Affections (Intimacy I)</u>							
1. I was intensely involved in our conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I did not want a deeper relationship between us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I was not attracted to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I found the conversation stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I communicated coldness rather than warmth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I created a sense of distance between us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I acted bored by our conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I was interested in talking to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I showed enthusiasm while talking to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Similarity/Depth (Intimacy II)</u>							
10. I made him/her feel I was similar to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I acted like we were good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I seemed to desire further communication with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I seemed to care if he/she liked me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Receptivity/Trust (Intimacy III)</u>							
15. I was sincere.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I was interested in talking with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I wanted him/her to trust me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I was willing to listen to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I was open to his/her ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I was honest in communicating with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Composure

21. I felt very tense talking to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I was calm and poised with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I felt very relaxed talking to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I seemed nervous in his/her presence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I was comfortable interacting with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Formality

26. I made the interaction very formal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I wanted to discussion to be casual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I wanted to discussion to be informal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Dominance

29. I attempted to persuade him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I didn't attempt to influence him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I tried to control the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I tried to gain his/her approval.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I didn't try to win his/her favor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I had the upper hand in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Equality

35. I considered us equals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. I did not treat him/her as an equal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I wanted to cooperate with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Task Orientation

38. I wanted to stick to the main purpose of the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I was more interested in social conversation than the task at hand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I was very work-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. I was more interested in working on the task at hand than having social conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F: Course Evaluation Survey

Course Evaluation Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Amount and distribution of study effort</i>					
1. I do the same amount of study each week, regardless of whether an assignment is due or not.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can be selective about when I study and learn and still do well.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I only study things that are going to be covered in the assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have to study regularly if I want to do well in the course.	1	2	3	4	5
5. In this course, it is possible to do well without studying much.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Assignments and learning</i>					
6. I learn more from doing the assignments than from studying the course material.	1	2	3	4	5
7. In completing the assignments, you can get way with not understanding and still get high marks.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The assignments give very clear instructions about what you are expected to do.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I work on the assignment, it is not at all clear what would count as a successful answer.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The assignments are not very challenging.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Quantity and timing of feedback</i>					
11. In this course, I get plenty of feedback on how I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The feedback comes back very quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I get things wrong or misunderstand them, I don't receive much guidance in what to do about it.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would learn more if I received more feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Whatever feedback I get comes too late to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Quality of feedback</i>					
16. The feedback helps me to understand things better.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The feedback shows me how to do better next time.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Once I have read the feedback, I understand why I received the grade I did.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I often don't understand some of the feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I can seldom see from the feedback what I need to do to improve.	1	2	3	4	5

What you do with feedback

21. I read the feedback carefully and try to understand what the feedback is saying.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I use the feedback to go back over what I have done in the assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The feedback does not help me with any subsequent assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The feedback prompts me to do back over material covered earlier in the course.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I tend to only read the marks.	1	2	3	4	5

The examination and learning

26. Preparing for the exam(s) was mainly a matter of memorizing.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Doing the exam(s) brought things together for me.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I learned new things while preparing for the exam(s).	1	2	3	4	5
29. I understand things better as a result of the exam(s).	1	2	3	4	5
30. I'll probably forget most of it after the exam(s).	1	2	3	4	5

Course content, material, and structure

31. The atmosphere of the classroom was conducive to learning.	1	2	3	4	5
32. The materials for this course were relevant and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
33. The content of the course was relevant and useful.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The evaluative and grading techniques for this course were consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
35. The opportunity to practice what was learned was provided.	1	2	3	4	5

Learning objectives

36. The specific objectives for this course were explained clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
37. The responsibilities and requirements of the students were clearly explained.	1	2	3	4	5
38. The specific objectives for this course were achieved.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Explanations of underlying rationales for new techniques or skills were provided.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Evaluation of student performance was related to important course goals.	1	2	3	4	5

Faculty evaluation

41. The professor was very knowledgeable about the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
42. The professor was well-prepared for the course.	1	2	3	4	5
43. The professor motivated me to learn the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
44. The professor was available outside of class time for help.	1	2	3	4	5
45. The professor was an effective instructor.	1	2	3	4	5

Participation

46. I had to put an above average amount of work into this course.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I had to put an above average amount of effort into this course to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I was more involved in this course than most of the other students.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I spent more hours per week on this class than any other.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Of the hours I spent of this course, I would consider them valuable in advancing my education.	1	2	3	4	5

A. Please circle the most appropriate

a. Male Female

b. Freshman Sophomore
Junior Senior

c. American Indian/Native American

Asian American/Pacific Islander

Black/African American

Hispanic/Latino/Mexican
American

White/Caucasian/Anglo American

Other

Appendix G: Faculty Questionnaire

Faculty Questionnaire

1. Please identify your goals for this course.
2. What strategies do you utilize to achieve your goals for the course?
3. What, if any, challenges do you face teaching this course?
4. What kinds of constraints associated with the course (e.g. number of students, classroom, etc.) do you face?
5. What theoretical and/or practical applications are applied to this course?
6. What percentage of your time on the job would you say is spent interacting with students?
7. Do you use group work in your class? If so, in what ways? For what purpose? If not, why?
8. Do student get presentation opportunities in your class? If so, what is the benefit? If not, why?
9. What measures do you use to evaluate student success in this course?
10. What advances in skills do students obtain from this course?
11. What advances in the body of knowledge about interpersonal communication do students obtain from this course?
12. In an ideal world, how could the goals of the course be further advanced?
13. What changes, if any, would you make to the course to improve/maintain student interest?
14. What changes, if any, would you make to the course for overall improvement?

Vita

Michelle Epstein Garland was born February 23, 1981, in Anderson, South Carolina. She attended T. L. Hanna High School where she excelled in academics and was active and held many leadership positions in academic clubs, athletic teams, and service organizations. After high school, Michelle attended the College of Charleston where she was a member of the Golden Key National Honor Society, Public Relations Student Society of America, and Communication/Public Relations club for which she served as president her senior year. As a senior she was presented with the Outstanding Media Studies Student Award and Outstanding Service Award through the Communication department and was recognized as a Super Senior, one of the top 15 seniors at the College for academics, leadership, and involvement. In 2003, she graduated with a degree in Communication. After one year in College Admissions, she returned to school to pursue her Masters degree at the University of Tennessee. While in her Masters program, she worked as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, presented papers at the annual meetings for the Southern States and National Communication Associations, and was second author for a chapter in an assessment handbook. Michelle graduated in 2006 with a Masters of Science in Communication. Currently, Michelle is employed at the University of Tennessee as a lecturer in Communication Studies.

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