

Communication Apprehension in the Classroom:
A Study of Nontraditional Graduate Students at Ohio University

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This dissertation titled
Communication Apprehension in the Classroom:
A Study of Nontraditional Graduate Students at Ohio University

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ABSTRACT

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Communication Apprehension in the Classroom: A Study of Nontraditional Graduate Students at Ohio University

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A common practice in colleges and universities throughout the United States is to make verbal communication and class participation a requirement for academic success. However, for some students this type of verbal communication in the classroom can produce physical and emotional anxiety that can profoundly affect their ability to succeed in the academic arena. Research in the field of communication apprehension has been ongoing for many years with elementary, high school, and traditional aged college students. However, little research has been conducted on communication apprehension as it relates to nontraditional aged college students. For this study the research field of participants was narrowed down to nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University. Using face-to-face interviews and a Likert-type survey instrument over the course of two years this study revealed that the biggest obstacle in verbal communication for nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University is due to the lack, or perceived lack, of a graduate vocabulary. From this finding more research is encouraged to drill down to the root of this vocabulary barrier.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family that has supported me throughout my educational endeavors. To my father, Bill, I thank you for always being proud of me. To my husband, Ronald, I thank you for everything you did for me to make my journey easier. To my son, Jason, I thank you for being a wonderful son and always being so proud of me. To my sister, Suzette, I thank you for your friendship, your encouragement, and your unwavering support. And finally, to my beloved mother Antoinette, together we have traveled down this yellow brick road and we have finally reached the Emerald City. I would have never taken that first step if you had not held my hand and walked with me. Your love, devotion, and inspiration are what gave me the strength to make this journey and I will be forever grateful to God for giving me the wonderful gift of you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Communication refers to the use of sounds and language to relay a message. It serves as a vehicle for expressing desires, ideas and concepts and is vital to the processes of learning and teaching. Communication apprehension is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. Although some people desire to communicate with others and see the importance of doing so, they may be impeded by their fear or anxiety. People who do not have appropriate communication skills or lack sufficient vocabulary skills tend to develop communication apprehension. Most people who are communication apprehensive, however, are neither generally skill deficient nor different from others in the general culture. Typically, they are normal people who are simply afraid to communicate for fear of being negatively perceived by others.

With this general outline as a starting point, this chapter will first define communication apprehension more precisely, briefly review the status of nontraditional graduate students, as they become the focus of this exploratory analysis, and consider the role of communication proficiency and vocabulary in the context of educating this population. Following this overview of the major components of the study, the nature and scope of the study, background rationale for the analysis, statement of the problem, purpose and significance will be covered. A brief overview of the methodology, chapter sequence, and potential limitations will close this chapter.

Communication Apprehension

Ever since human beings began communicating with one another there have been individuals who suffered from some form of communication apprehension. In the early

twentieth century, communication apprehension was viewed by researchers as the fear of public speaking. However, by the 1950s and 1960s, researchers realized that communication apprehension encompassed many other types of communication situations, as McCroskey and Richmond (1982a) stated:

The early research generally employed the constructs of "speech fright" and "stage fright" and was focused on the anxiety experienced by public speakers and actors. As the field of communication evolved, more scholars directed attention to communication in contexts other than public speaking. With this evolution came awareness that many people experience anxiety in settings that do not involve the formal presentation of speeches, such as communicating in meetings, communication in small groups, and communicating with one other individual. (p. 458)

The evolution of the communication apprehension construct has opened the doors for new and interesting areas of research. This research has been conducted under a variety of labels that have included, but are not limited to, communication competence, social-communicative anxiety, reticence, and shyness. In addition, new fields of research have opened up in areas that include, but have not been limited to, psychology, physiology, and education.

In the field of education, research has discovered that communication apprehension can have a negative impact on student achievement and retention. Kim (2008) found a direct correlation between academic achievement and communication apprehension: "Communication apprehension has a direct relation with cognitive performance and various academic achievements such as overall grade point average,

standardized achievement scores, and grades earned in small classes in junior high and college (p. 2). These anxieties can be compounded for students in classrooms when teachers evaluate students on their communication participation and proficiency. This is especially true at the college level when instructors require students to participate in classroom discussion, present papers, and structure small group activities to increase debate. It is this required classroom participation that can leave communication apprehensive students far behind their peers.

Although communication apprehension in the classroom is not a new phenomenon, most studies have focused solely on communication apprehension in young children, high school students, or traditional aged college students. These studies have excluded a large segment of the college population of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century: nontraditional students. In order to better gauge the importance of this group, the following is a brief introduction to this population of students.

Nontraditional Students

Every institution has its own definition of what a nontraditional student is, but generally speaking a non-traditional student would be a student usually over the age of 24 or 25; a student who previously has attended college and is returning to college after taking a break for personal or professional reasons; or a student who graduated from high school and went directly into the work force and is now attending college for the first time. Cross (1980) defined a nontraditional student as an "adult part-time learner who carries full-time adult responsibilities in addition to their study."

According to a United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics report (2002), nontraditional students make up 73 percent of all

students enrolled in undergraduate programs, and 39 percent of all undergraduate students are 25 years or older. In graduate programs, data from the Council of Graduate Schools/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees show that both part-time and full-time graduate students enrollment increased over the past two decades. Among the 452 institutions that responded to the survey in both 1989 and 2009, part-time graduate enrollment increased 15% between 1989 and 2009, translating to an increase from 485,870 part-time enrollees in 1989 to 568,745 in 2009. During the same time full-time graduate enrollment increased 41% from 424,554 full-time enrollees to 724,220.

With this as a general assessment of the important role this group plays in higher education, the following sections return to the importance of their maintaining proficiency in communication, especially in interacting with instructors and others in graduate courses. An understanding of the importance of proficiency in communication, and more precisely, an understanding of the at times arcane vocabulary that is used in many technical fields of study are key variables in impacting the ability of nontraditional students to succeed.

Communication Proficiency

Communication proficiency includes components such as fluency, accuracy, accent, vocabulary, and comprehension. Good communication skills function as a bridge that synchronically and diachronically connects students as individuals with an enormous knowledge base and resource of information. However, nontraditional students may need additional help developing their vocabulary skills. Mary Allen (2000) explained that nontraditional students may need additional assistance from instructors:

Define abstract words (e.g., altruism, anomie) when you first use them, and point out word roots. For example, correlation deals with how two variables co-relate, i.e., relate together (just like cooperate is to operate together) and bivariate means two variables (just like bicycle means two wheels). Written and spoken English will be important in students' academic and professional lives. (p. 4)

However, when good communication skills are not readily accessible to an individual, cognitive and educational outcomes can suffer. Childhood poverty merits attention here; Powers (1996) has cited numerous studies that show childhood poverty to be highly correlated with poor performance in academics, lower IQ scores, and an increased risk of dropping out of school.

Childhood Poverty

Katherine Jones (2007) presented an article that uncovered the effect poverty had on children. In her article she stated numerous studies had shown childhood poverty to be highly correlated with poor performance in academics, lower IQ scores, and an increased risk of dropping out of school. Roth (2010) states that growing up poor can affect brain development. In an article featured on the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette website Roth added:

Studies emerging from around the nation are showing that growing up in a low-income household can have a direct impact on the organization and function of the brain. Living in a poor home has been linked to people having trouble forming memories, difficulty focusing attention, hypersensitivity to stress, problems with delaying gratification and even being stifled in overall intelligence (p. 1)

Poverty's effect on childhood academic achievement is directly related to how and where they are raised. Alix Spiegel (2011) conducted a study that found that children

of professional families are talked to three times as much as the average child in a welfare family: "It was no wonder that the underprivileged children they saw at their preschool could not catch up and often lagged behind once they went to school. They simply weren't getting the experience with language provided to their peers."

According to Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, and Collins (2009) childhood poverty is more abundant in rural areas of the United States than the urban areas. This sentiment was echoed by The World Resources Institute (2005) that stated some 75 percent of the poor live in rural areas. Research has shown that individuals who are raised in rural environments are more lacking in communication skills than their urban counterparts. Richmond and Robertson (1977) advanced the theory that children who were raised in a rural environment were more likely to develop higher levels of communication apprehension than their urban counterparts simply because they are typically exposed to fewer adults, and therefore less likely to encounter situations where effective communication was necessary. Less exposure to communication situations for children have led researchers to estimate that these individuals heard about 600 words an hour while a child in a professional home heard about 2,100. Hart and Risley (1995) stated, "Children in professional families are talked to three times as much as the average child in a welfare family" (p. 2). They estimated that by the age of 4, children of professional parents had heard on average 48 million words addressed to them while children in poor welfare families had heard only 13 million.

Vocabulary

When most people are exposed to the word "vocabulary," their minds automatically drift back to their school days, when long lists of exhaustive, multisyllabic

words were posted on a blackboard and the expectation was that students would: A) look up every definition for each word in an old-smelling dictionary, and then B) use those words in individual sentences. This approach did not result in mastery of the words, nor did it enhance our *working* vocabularies, for the most part. Instead, such a task served as mere *busy work* so that our teachers could then finish grading papers or making lesson plans.

Fortunately for today's students, teachers have been given much better tools with which to teach new words and their meanings. However, for the students of yesterday, that dull perception of vocabulary lingers in our minds. After all, no one wants a laundry list of terms and phrases that could easily be replaced with something more concise.

Five, Ten And Twenty Dollar Words

David McMurrey (n.d.) described the use of big words as pompous and unnecessary. He stated that when these words are used unnecessarily, they cause comprehension problems for readers. Scholars estimate that there are over a million words in the English language and that an average educated person knows about 30,000 of those words. David McMurrey believes that educated people know so few because millions of these words are highly specialized (p. 2). Highly specialized words can be found in professional or graduate vocabulary. This *jargon* is the specialized or technical language of any trade, fellowship, organization, class, profession, or even hobby. "Etiolate," "reticuloendothelial," "ethology," and "oneiromancy" are jargon words-- though they seem everyday fare to botanists, microbiologists, animal behaviorists, and those who study dream divination. The problem is that professionals may fail to adjust their technical language to those different audiences. In fact, if they are not using jargon

indiscriminately, they may even be using it deliberately, trying to impress or intimidate non-specialists. Some audiences even call this type of communication gobbledygook because of the long stretches of pretentious, often unintelligible words.

Scope Of Study

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate the following research questions:

1. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communicating in group discussions?
2. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communication in the classroom?
3. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during interpersonal communication?
4. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during public communication situations?
5. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of perceived inefficient vocabulary skills?
6. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of their seating arrangement in the classroom?
7. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in an impoverished household?
8. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in a rural environment?

9. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they began their undergraduate college career at a nontraditional age?

Data was collected through guided interview questions, field notes, and an online survey instrument.

Background Of The Study

I selected this topic for several reasons. First, since the early 1980s communication apprehension has been studied by a multitude of renowned researchers, a list of which would be too great to include in this paper. However, some of the most published researchers would include James McCroskey, John Daly, Virginia Richmond, Steven Payne and Judee Burgoon. These researchers individually and collectively reported on the negative effect communication apprehension have on an individual's academics and social life. However, their research focused on communication apprehension among preschool, elementary, high school, and traditionally aged college students. To date, there has been no research studies conducted on communication apprehension among nontraditional college students.

The second reason I selected this topic was because over the past twenty years nontraditional students are a more visible part of college campuses across the United States. Unfortunately, many of these students are admitted based on life experience and other evidence of success. Most have never taken college admissions examinations such as the ACT, SAT, or GRE to determine their ability to perform in college level academics. These examinations, if required, would provide an effective evaluation of a nontraditional student's ability to: 1) analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize

information obtained from it, analyze relationships among component parts of sentences, and recognized relationships among words and concepts; and 2) measure critical thinking and analytical writing skills, specifically a student's ability to articulate and support complex ideas clearly and effectively.

The final reason I selected this topic was because studies have emerged from around the nation showing that growing up in a low-income household can have a direct impact on the organization and function of the brain. Living in a poor home has been linked to people having trouble forming memories, difficulty focusing attention, hypersensitivity to stress, problems with delaying gratification and even being stifled in overall intelligence (Roth, 2010).

Statement Of The Problem

The problem is that prior research on communication apprehension in the classroom has focused on young children, high school students, or traditional aged college students. To date there has been no research on communication apprehension in the classroom involving nontraditional graduate students. In addition, there have been no studies on nontraditional students and any relationship between communication apprehension, childhood poverty, and the extent of an individual's vocabulary competency.

Purpose/Significance Of The Study

Communication apprehension is a pervasive, multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied at multiple levels by multiple researchers. However, these studies have not investigated any relationship between communication apprehension in nontraditional graduate students, childhood poverty, and extent of vocabulary. The purpose of this

mixed methods research was to study communication apprehension in nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University.

Methodology

This study involves masters and doctoral level students who were: (a) born before January 1, 1965; (b) admitted and matriculated to Ohio University on or after Fall quarter 1999; and (c) volunteered to participate in the study. I used a report generated by the Ohio University Registrar's Office listing the names of those who fit the first two criteria. I contacted them via email to solicit their willingness to participate in the interview portion of my research about communication situations. The email explained that I was a doctoral student conducting research on communication apprehension in nontraditional graduate students and I would like to interview them as part of my research.

This study utilized a mixed methodology approach by supplementing the qualitative research with a survey. During the qualitative phase interviews were conducted, analyzed, and reported. Using the data for the qualitative phase of the research an online survey was developed. The online survey incorporated the Personal Report of Communication apprehension (PRCA-24) that was developed by Dr. James McCroskey and added sixteen new items that focused on group discussion, class participation, and other communication situations. In addition, a biographical section was added to the PRCA-24 to collect data about the participants' economical and residential conditions as a child. The updated PRCA-24 resulted in a forty question pool of items that was administered in an online, five-choice response format.

Chapter Development

This study is presented in five chapters. The first chapter presented an overview of the study. The second chapter contains a review of available literature addressing the evolution of the communication apprehension constructs, communication apprehension assessments, and how communication apprehension affects individuals in various situations. Chapter Three contains a detailed description of the methodology, identification of the population studied, and research instruments used. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data collected, and Chapter Five includes the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

Limitations

Previous research on communication apprehension has been conducted in classroom or other controlled settings. The current research depended on volunteer individuals who were contact through their Ohio University email accounts. Therefore, it was more likely that individuals who did not experience communication apprehension would be receptive to participate in this study. In addition, independent and dependent variables of the present study were measured through self- report methodology that. Therefore, common method bias is a concern. To reduce the possibility of common method bias, face-to-face interviews were conducted along with the processing of the survey instrument. These measures, along with field notes, have offered support for the validity of the communication apprehension measure.

Definition Of Terms

Class Participation

Class participation is when an instructor will stand before a class and present information for class discussion, with the expectancy that you participate.

Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is an individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.

Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency that is commonly used as a measure of reliability in scores for a sample of examinees.

Exploratory Data Analysis

Exploratory data analysis is considered initial research and is conducted before more conclusive research is undertaken. When done properly exploratory research helps determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of participants for future study.

Frequency Distribution

A frequency distribution is a summary of how often different scores occur within a sample of scores.

Graduate Vocabulary

Graduate vocabulary is the correlation between vocabulary and intelligence. To have a graduate level vocabulary means that an individual has reading, comprehension, and communication skills.

Group Discussion

A group discussion is a form of classroom activity where students are broken into smaller groups so that more intimate discussions can take place between the participants.

Impoverished Child

An impoverished child is a child born into poverty that may experiences: academic difficulties, lack of parental involvement in their upbringing, a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, hunger, and/or homelessness.

Interpersonal Communications

Interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving information between two people.

Methodological Triangulation

Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods in a research study.

Non-Traditional Student

A nontraditional student is an adult learner who is pursuing a college degree either full-or part-time.

Oral Communication

Oral communication is words spoken by mouth by an individual in a direct face-to-face communication between two or more people.

Other Conversation Situations

Other conversation situations would include parties, interviews, asking for directions, etc.

Professional Jargon

Professional jargon is terminology used within a particular field, profession, or group that creates a barrier to communication with those not familiar with the language of the field.

Public Conversation

Public conversation is having to speak in front of any other group or groups of people.

This could take the form of a speech, presentation, or any form where the participant must speak or read orally.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

For nearly a century researchers have focused their attention on issues surrounding speech communication and oral communication anxiety. Daly (1991) stated, "One of the most studied topics in the field of speech communication is the tendency on the part of some people to avoid, and even fear, communicating orally" (p. 3). Research focused on communication anxiety began to surface in scholarly journals in the early 1900s, but according to McCroskey (1997b) this early research focused primarily on public speaking and stage fright. It was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that significant advance into other areas of communication anxiety was seen. These other areas of communication anxiety were given a plethora of labels, as Daly stated, "Working under a variety of rubrics such as stage fright, speech anxiety, communication apprehension, reticence, and social anxiety, scholars have spent considerable time and effort describing the phenomena as well as developing means for its assessment". Most early researchers studying communication anxiety use these labels interchangeably, but future researchers made arguments for distinguishing them one from another.

Early studies in oral communication anxieties were pioneered by researchers interested in the field of communication studies. A list of these researchers would be too extensive to list, but would include Howard Gilkinson (1942), Gordon Paul (1966), James McCroskey (1977a), and Gerald Philips (1968). In fact, McCroskey's definition of communication apprehension is still the most widely used definition in communication apprehension literature. McCroskey (1977b) defined communication apprehension as, "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication

with another person or persons (p. 78). It was through research conducted by individuals like McCroskey and others that helped bridge the communication anxiety construct between communication studies and other fields of study. In the field of education interest in the communication apprehension construct became such a hot topic among administrators and counselors that between 1970 and 1997 Richmond, Martin, and Cox (1997) listed over 1,280 entries in a bibliography of publications and papers in the area of communication apprehension. It is also interesting to note that the underlying theme of these articles has been the negative effects that these constructs can have on academic and social success.

Evolution Of The Communication Apprehension Constructs

A review of scholarly journals using only the term *communication apprehension* would yield few results. This is because over time scholarly research on communication apprehension has fallen under a variety of terms. Although the majority of research articles historically used communication anxiety terms interchangeably it is important in research to make a distinction between them. What follows is an overview of other terms associated with communication anxiety.

The term *reticence* was first advanced by Gerald Phillip (1968) to describe an individual who presented communication apprehension as follows:

He is reluctant to discuss ideas and problems with others and seems inordinately intimidated by super-ordinates. He rarely asks questions, does not socialize well, and physical upsets are often associated with his attempts to communicate. Though he may be able to handle minimal communicative requirements, face-to-face contact with others normally

threatens him. He does not anticipate success in communicative transactions involving speech. He may be defined as a person from whom anxiety about participation in oral communication outweighs his projection of gain from the situation.

Shyness is another term used as a communication apprehension construct. This construct was first advanced by Philip Zimbardo in 1977, but his definition was described as "fuzzy" at best. Paul Pilkonis, Carol Heape, and Robert Klein (1980) captured a clearer version of the term in the following definition:

We define shyness as a tendency to avoid other people, to fail to respond appropriately to them (for example, by being unable to look them in the eye or being afraid to talk to them), and to feel nervous and anxious during interactions with them. In behavioral terms, shy people are characterized by avoidance of social interaction, and when this is impossible, by inhibition and an inability to respond in an engaging way; they are reluctant to talk, to make eye contact, to gesture, and to smile. (p. 250)

The construct of shyness is very prominent in much of the communication anxiety literature. In fact, researchers have assigned degrees to shyness; McCroskey and Richmond (1988) identified at least five different types:

- The Skill Deficient. People tend to do what they do well and avoid doing what they do poorly. Many people in our society have low communication skills. As a result, these people are shy in situations where they believe (either correctly or incorrectly) that their skills are insufficient to communicate effectively.

- The Social Introvert. Some people have a very high need and desire to be with other people (social extroverts), while others prefer to be alone most of the time (social introverts). Introverts behave in a shy manner because they have little motivation to interact with other people. Unlike individuals who are skill deficient, introverts are likely to show considerable variance in the degree of shy behavior they exhibit. In circumstances where they have little motivation to communicate, they will appear shy. In other circumstances, when more motivation to communicate is present, it will appear they are not shy at all.
- The Alienated. Most people in any environment attempt to conform to the norms and values of the people in that environment. Each individual has needs and desires similar to the other individuals in that environment. The individual communicates in order to meet those needs and desires. Some people, however, do not share the norms and values of the other people in their environment. They do not have the same needs and desires. We refer to these people as "alienated" from the other people. Alienated individuals typically behave in a shy manner. In another environment they might not behave this way, but in the given environment they see little need to communicate because they perceive no benefits that they would obtain by communicating.
- The Ethnically/Culturally Divergent. Each ethnic and cultural group has its own ways of behaving. Similarly, ethnic and cultural groups communicate in very different ways, sometimes even in different languages or dialects. In some groups, such as the general white North American culture, talk is highly valued. In others, much less value is placed on talking to others. Most people within any ethnic or

cultural group quickly learn the communication norms of their group. The problem arises when one moves into an ethnically or culturally different group. The person, while possibly being a very effective communicator in her or his own group, is divergent from the other group members. Not only does the outsider have difficulty understanding what he or she should do to communicate effectively, the group members may have considerable difficulty figuring out how to adapt to the divergent person. Under such circumstances the ethnically or culturally divergent person is very likely to behave in a shy manner, but such shyness is restricted to circumstances in which the individual is with person of a different ethnic or cultural background. (pp. 344-345.)

One important note here is that McCroskey and Richmond's definition of skill deficient is referring to an individual's interpersonal competency in specific types of social situations and not a lack of vocabulary skills. This distinction will become important during research.

Communication competence is a term that describes the problem associated with individuals being "ineffective" communicators. McCroskey (1980) referred to this construct as, "the implication is that the person's behavior is dysfunctional because the person lacks communication skills" (p. 110). However, describing communication competence as "the elusive construct," McCroskey (1984a) elongates his previous definition to state, "communication competence requires not only the ability to perform adequately certain communication behaviors, it also requires an understanding of those behaviors and the cognitive ability to make choices among behaviors" (p. 264). Communication competence skills involve what society deems normal and reciprocal

such as being an active speaker and listener. This activity requires both the listener and speaker to be able to understand each other. Recent research on communication competence has been conducted by using a self-reporting scale. This self-reporting scale is very reliable with some exceptions, as McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) stated:

In the case of communication competence, self-report scales may be very useful if we want to know how communicatively competent a person thinks he/she is. If we want to know how competent the person actually is, such scales may be totally useless, because the person very likely does not know. Many people think they are very competent communicators, when in fact they are not. Others believe they are lacking in competence, when in fact they are very adequate communicators. (p. 110)

Being aware of the difference between communication performance and perceived communication competence is an important factor in research. To that end McCroskey (1984a) identified the following four steps that must occur to achieve communication competence:

For a person to behave consistently in a manner that can be characterized as communicatively competent, four things must occur. First, the individual must acquire certain, modest behavioral skills that are well within reach of all normal individuals in our society. Most children, although not all, will have acquired these skills by the time they leave elementary school. Second, the individual must acquire a moderate level of cognitive understanding of the communication process and the situational constraints placed on communication behavior. In the absence

of systematic training, few individuals will acquire these cognitive skills. With the help of a well-designed basic course, however, most individuals can acquire these cognitive skills, at either the secondary or college level. Third, the individual must develop a positive affective response toward communication. While many children enter elementary school with such positive effect, many others do not develop it in their entire lives. Finally, competent behavior must become a habituated, selective response of the individual. Skills that are learned but not used tend to be lost.

Theoretically, then, the communicatively competent individual is the product of a learning environment which permits the development of appropriate behavioral and cognitive skills, shapes a positive affect for communication, and provides opportunities for use and reinforcement of those abilities. (pp. 266-267)

The next two constructs could be described as opposite sides of the same coin.

The first term is the *unwillingness-to-communicate* construct. This term was advanced by Judee Burgoon (1976): "This predisposition represents a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication". Within the unwillingness-to-communicate construct are four subsets, including anomia, alienation, introversion, and self-esteem. The first subset, anomia, represents individuals who have a problem with word finding, which Burgoon describes: "Anomies have failed to adopt or internalize society's norms and values, with the result that they feel insecure, powerless, alone, socially isolated, and alienated from society; they tend to view life as valueless or meaningless" (p. 60). This is similar to McCroskey and Richmond's use of the term skill deficient and would

encompass the same types of individuals. The second subset, alienation, represents individuals who Burgoon described as having the perception of being denied communication by others, negative attitudes toward communication, less reported interactions with parents, peers, teachers and administrators, and actual withdrawal from communication (p. 60). The individuals who display either of these two subsets would be considered to view communication as a negative experience. The next two subsets are centered on the personal evaluation of the individual. The introvert is characteristically quiet, timid and shy, which may be an indication of anxiety about communication. Alternatively, such individuals may have less use for communication. The introvert's tendencies toward withdrawal, introspection, inner-direction, low dependency on the evaluation of others and low sociability (compared to extroverts) imply that the introvert places less value on communication. (p. 61)

The subset of self-esteem plays an important role because the individual with low self-esteem have little faith in their own opinion, as Burgoon stated:

People with low self-esteem tend to be maladjusted and to display defensive behaviors. Research on conformity and persuasibility demonstrates that the person with low self-esteem is more persuadable and more conforming, which may be due to individuals with low self-esteem having less faith in their own opinions. (p. 61).

The other side of this communication coin would be the *willingness to communicate* construct. McCroskey (1997b) identified the willingness to communicate (WTC) construct as a personality-type trait and stated, "The willingness to communicate trait is an individual's predisposition to initiate communication with others" (p. 77).

McCroskey advanced the willingness to communicate construct because he believed that it was reasonable to assume that some people are more willing to communicate in some contexts and with some people than with others. McCroskey (1992) stated, "In general, for example, we might expect most people would be more willing to communicate with friends in a dyadic context than to communicate with a group of strangers in a public speaking context" (p. 19). McCroskey tested his theory on 1,641 students at West Virginia University. The normative data from these students is reported in Table 1. This data shows that the students who participated in McCroskey's test were least willing to communicate in a public speaking situation or with strangers, but were more willing to communicate with friends and in dyads (a group of two). In addition, the reliability of the willingness to communicate scale makes this a very stable construct, as McCroskey stated:

As a function of the smaller number of items, reliability estimates for the sub scores are somewhat lower and more variable than those for the total scale. Estimates reported in Table 1 are taken from the large WVU sample. Obtained estimates for the context sub scores have ranged from .60 to .83. Those for the receiver sub scores have ranged from .70 to .91. The only test-retest reliability estimate obtained to this point was based on a sample of 174 WVU students who were asked to complete the WTC twice with an approximate three-month interval between administrations. The obtained correlation between the scores at the two times was .79. The internal reliability estimates for the two administrations were .92 and .91, respectively. Hence, the test-retest reliability estimate correctly for

attenuation due to internal unreliability is .86. Based on the above reliability estimates, it appears the WTC scale has very satisfactory stability. (p. 20)

Table 1. Normative Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for WTC Scores

Context Sub Scores	Mean	SD	Reliabilities
Public	54.2	21.3	.74
Meeting	59.7	19.9	.70
Group	70.8	16.3	.65
Dyad	76.2	15.6	.68
Receiver Sub Scores			
Stranger	38.5	21.5	.84
Acquaintance	72.5	18.3	.79
Friend	84.7	14.0	.76
Total WTC Score	65.2	15.1	.92

Source: McCroskey (1992).

While the willingness to communicate construct emphasized an individual's willingness to approach or avoid social interaction the last term relates to an individual's personality.

The *social-communicative anxiety* construct was advanced by Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford (1997) because of its inclusiveness of all the other terms previously covered, to which they stated, "We choose that term because it seems sufficiently inclusive to incorporate the extensive literature on the topic and because it is not tied to any particular measure or theoretical perspective" (p. 21). Understanding the development of social-communicative anxiety requires looking at multiple explanations. Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford continued:

There are four major, interrelated clusters of correlates: (a) genetic predisposition, (b) reinforcement, (c) skill acquisition, and (d) modeling. Each cluster offers some explanatory account for the anxiety's etiology through the specification of correlates. No single explanation accounts for the development of the anxiety; rather, they operate interactively, shaping an individual's level of worry or enjoyment of communication. (pp. 25-26)

The first example of interrelated clusters, which is defined as a genetic predisposition for communication apprehension, has been a controversy for many years. McCroskey (1984b) ruled out a specific communication apprehension gene, but argues that children are born with certain personality predispositions or tendencies which affect how they will react to communication encounters. Other scholars in other fields have also discounted a genetic links to communication apprehension except in the area of social biology which have been able to established significant data involving twins and siblings, as McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

Researchers in the area of social biology have established that significant social traits can be measured in infants shortly after birth, and that infants differ sharply from each other on these traits. One of these traits is referred to as "sociability," which is believed to be a predisposition directly related to adult sociability—the degree to which we reach out to other people and respond positively to contact with other people. (p. 6)

Thus, genetic predisposition may make some contribution to communication apprehension in certain individuals.

The reinforcement factor is by far the most popular explanation for why some individuals experience communication apprehension. The reinforcement factor emphasizes the reinforcement and punishments a child receives for communication. Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford (1997) stated:

Based on general learning models, the approach suggest that individuals seek situations and engage in behaviors predicted to result in positive consequences. They avoid activities and situations that hold aversive consequences for them. Thus, for some people, avoiding social and communication activities is rewarding because participation is expected to lead to punishment; for other people, engaging in the same activities is perceived as rewarding and thus sought out. These expectations are formed early in life. Over time, the positive and negative consequences associated with communication become internally mediated, removing the necessity for external events to elicit a response. (p. 27)

What this boils down to is that an individual will communicate more if they are positively reinforced and communicate less if the reinforcement is negative, to which McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

Of the three theoretical explanations we have examined so far, this is the only one that can claim to explain why children in the same family can be almost opposite of one another in terms of their communication behaviors and orientations. Since parents, teachers, and peers as well as siblings reinforce each child very differently, even within the same family, one

child can be reinforced for communicating while another child is not reinforced. (p. 7)

Not surprisingly, most clinical procedures that try to help individuals with communication apprehension employ reinforcement therapy.

The skills acquisition factor is an important component because it involves the poor development of skills related to communication. Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford (1997) stated:

However, in most cases the problem lies not in the absence of skills per se, but rather in either insufficient acquisition of the skills or slower than average development of the skills. When highly anxious children are compared to their nonanxious peers, their social and communicative skills are not as well developed. Relevant research on this explanation focuses on the development of referential communication skills, peer interaction, language use, reciprocity skills, sensitivity to social cues, interaction management, and the use of verbal rewards. (p. 28)

An interesting note, research has shown that individuals who are raised in rural environments are more lacking in the above mentioned skills than their urban counterparts. In 1977 Richmond and Robertson advanced the theory that children who were raised in a rural environment were more likely to develop higher levels of communication apprehension than their urban counterparts. Their reasoning is that rural children were typically exposed to fewer adults and therefore less likely to encounter situations where effective communication was necessary to avoid aversive consequences. Richmond and Robertson based their theory on their study of 813 college students from

Nebraska; they found that students who had lived most of their lives on farms or in towns with a population under 5,000 had significantly higher levels of communication apprehension than students from cities with populations of 5,000 to 50,000. Richmond and Robertson's study was replicated and expanded on by McCroskey and Richmond in 1978. In their 1978 study McCroskey and Richmond include 5,795 elementary and secondary school students from 67 school districts in West Virginia and Ohio. The results of this later study revealed the following:

While on the basis of statistical tests all we can say is that the difference between rural and urban environments is significant from the junior high level on, and not significant before that age level, if we visually examine the means at the younger levels, we can see what may be a pattern of development. The means in grades K-3 show no interpretable pattern. However, those for grades 4-6 are patterned just like those for older age groups, although the differences observed are not statistically reliable. Nevertheless, it would appear that the impact of community size on communication apprehension development is not one which occurs in the pre-school period of the child's life. Rather, it appears that the impact gradually increases as the child progresses through school.

The final factor of the social-communicative anxiety construct is modeling. This is not the same modeling that Christy Brinkley does, but refers to the role that parents play in children's development of social-communicative anxiety. Daly, Caughlin, and Stafford (1997) suggest there is a positive correlation to this factor: "Research supportive

of this position centers on the reduction of social isolation in children through the use of modelsö (p. 28).

Communication Apprehension Assessments

Over time researchers have devised and implemented many different methods to measure communication apprehension, as Daly (1991) stated, "There are three major ways communication apprehension has been measured: behavioral observation or ratings, physiological assessments, and self-reports" (p. 4). However, of these three types of assessments the first two methods do not fare well with researchers, as Daly explained:

Behavioral observations are typically sensitive to visible signs of nervousness or fear in a speaker (for example, fidgeting, reduced gaze, stuttering and stammering), while physiological measures tap less visible, and more momentary, reactions by a speaker such as blood pressure, heart rate, galvanic skin response, and temperature. Both observational techniques and physiological assessments tend to be poor measures of the dispositional apprehension since any number of reasons, aside from apprehension, may exist for a particular behavior or physiological reaction. (p. 4)

From Daly's conclusion, the development of a self-reporting research instrument for the assessment of communication apprehension was essential. In this field of study the early work began with Howard Gilkinson. Gilkinson developed a self-reporting instrument called The Personal Report on Confidence as a Speaker. Gilkinson's scale was developed to reflect an individual's fear or confidence of public speaking, as Gilkinson (1942) stated:

The present investigation was begun in the spring of 1941 with two general purposes in view: 1) To develop a method of securing reports from students on the emotions which they experience in speaking before their classmates; and 2) To study the association and correlation of these reports with data relative to such factors as speech skill, academic achievement, age, experience, training, physical status, fears and sensitivities, and morale. (p. 142)

Gilkinson's survey instrument was used successfully for many years, but was long and cumbersome to administer. A shorter and abbreviated version was developed from Gilkinson's work by Gordon Paul in 1966. Paul's instrument was called the New Performance-Anxiety Instrument and was also used primarily to assess anxiety as a speaker. Paul's version of the communication anxiety scale was used for several years until new research came to light in the early 1970's. In a 1970 Ad Hoc Committee Special Report for The Speech Communication Association, James McCroskey advanced a new research instrument that would measure students' inhibitions in oral communication. In his report McCroskey argued that public speaking was not the only genre in which anxiety can interfere with communication and that he believed that neither Gilkinson nor Paul's instruments could measure this other anxiety successfully. McCroskey (1976) introduces the concept of "communication apprehension" to his colleagues as follows:

Communication apprehension is a broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. While the normal person anticipates a pleasant and rewarding

experience as a result of communicating with others, and usually has such experiences, the person who is highly communication apprehensive expects punishment (or at the least, lack of reward) from her or his communicating with others, and frequently has such negative experiences. Such people do not enjoy talking with others, either singly or in groups, and will go to great lengths to avoid communication. If circumstances force them to become involved in communication with others, they normally will feel uncomfortable, tense, and embarrassed, and will appear (at best) shy or reticent to others. (pp. 1-2)

It is important to note that McCroskey pointed to Gerald Phillip's use of the term reticent to expand on the sense of apprehension in individual experiences. Individuals with this type of communication apprehension not only relate to the anxiety of stage fright, but also experience problems in communication in small groups and in interpersonal exchanges.

With self-reporting scales becoming popular with researchers because of their efficiency and accuracy, McCroskey developed one as a means of measuring communication anxiety. In his report to the Speech Communication Association in 1970 McCroskey stated that his Likert-type scale to measure communication anxiety had three major advantages to researchers:

This approach has three major advantages. First, such scales were easy and inexpensive to administer. Second, they could tap anxiety responses across a variety of communication contexts at one time. Third, Likert-type self-report scales were proven to be highly reliable. (p. 271)

McCroskey presented four scales that he had developed to conduct communication anxiety research: 1) the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for College Students (PRCA-College); 2) the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for Tenth Graders (PRCA-Ten); 3) the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for Seventh Graders (PRCA-Seven). The fourth scale was developed in regards to public speaking and was known as the Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA).

McCroskey's version began with an initial pool of seventy-six Likert-type items. Thirty of these items were taken directly from the Paul version of Gilkinson's Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker instrument. The remaining items were written by graduate students enrolled in a speech course (not identified) and by Dr. McCroskey. These new items focused on issues with interpersonal communication, small group communication, and a few extreme public speaking situations. The resultant pool of items was administered in a typical five-choice response format to approximately two hundred fifty college students. The responses were subjected to principal components factor analysis (simple patterns in the pattern of relationships among the variables) and varimax rotation (a change in coordinates that maximizes the sum of the variances to see how groupings of questions measure the same concept). Thus, the items with their highest loadings or moderate secondary loadings (.40 or above) on these factors were discarded. The twenty items with the highest factor loadings on the primary factor (all above .50) were selected to compose the initial instrument (McCroskey, 1970). The initial instrument was subsequently administered to Michigan State University college students. As McCroskey (1970) stated, "Over a period of a year the initial instrument was

administered to 1,434 college students at Michigan State University. Internal consistency reliability estimates (odd-even) ranged from .92 to .94. Test-retest reliability over a ten day period (N=769) was .83 (p. 272). The initial instrument was subsequently administered to 2,479 college students at Illinois State University:

In the first administration at Illinois State (N=1,127) ten additional items were added to the instrument to determine whether they would affect the results obtained. An analysis of the resulting data indicated that all but one of the original twenty items had a sufficiently high item-total correlation to be retained in the instrument. This item had a relatively low item-total correlation (.28), and although this correlation was significant at the .01 level it did not meet the preset .001 criterion. The item also was found (on the basis of a t-test between the twenty-seven percent with the lowest scores) to be nondiscriminating. The observed difference was significant at the .05 level but not at the preset criterion of the .001 level. Although the item could have been retained without seriously harming the total instrument, it was discarded in favor of one of the new items which had an item-total correlation of .72 and met the criterion for discrimination. The mean for the 2,479 Illinois State University students in 60.45, the standard deviation is 11.58. The internal consistency (odd-even) reliability estimates is .93. (pp. 273-274)

From these findings McCroskey summarized that the PRCA-College instrument was reliable and had some indications of validity.

McCroskey's PRCA-College was the measure of choice for researchers for many years. However, items on the initial instrument were ultimately determined by other researchers to over represent anxiety experienced in public speaking situations, as Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991) stated:

In fact, 10 of the 20 items on the original scale refer explicitly to public speaking, and several others are ambiguous regarding context. Thus, the original PRCA bordered on being a measure of speech anxiety rather than of generalized communication apprehension. To remedy this, McCroskey constructed a new version of the scale, the PRCA-24, to tap apprehension in four specific types of communication contexts. The PRCA-24 contains four subscales of six items each. The subscales measure communication apprehension in group settings, dyadic interactions, meetings, and public speaking situations. Four subscale scores can be obtained, along with a total communication apprehension score. Items are answered on five-point Likert scales (1, strongly agree; 5, strongly disagree). Scores on each subscale range from 6 (low communication apprehension) to 30 (high communication apprehension). Total scores range from 24 to 120. (pp. 170-171).

However, the validity of the answers given to any version of the PRCA depends on many factors, including how the instrument is administered as well as the mindset of the individuals answering the questionnaire. McCroskey (1978) stated that the best indication of validity would most likely relate to the degree to which these measure can

produce empirical results that are consistent with at least five major theoretical propositions. These five major theoretical propositions were stated as follows:

Proposition 1. *People vary in the degree to which they are apprehensive about oral communication with other people.* This proposition represents an underlying assumption concerning the distribution of oral communication apprehension in the population. As suggested in the proposition, oral communication apprehension can vary from individual to individual and be on a continuum from extremely high to extremely low. In addition, it should be noted that in all of the writings concerning communication apprehension there is an implied assumption that this construct represents a trait of an individual, as opposed to a state condition. A person who is a high oral communication apprehensive on one day would be expected to be a high oral communication apprehensive the next day, and the next week, as well. It should be stressed, however, that personality-type traits, such as communication apprehension, are not the same as physical traits such as eye color (which most are permanent). The key here is the idea that communication apprehension is conceived of as a relatively permanent, personality-type trait.

Proposition 2. *People with high oral communication apprehension seek to avoid oral communication.* This is probably the most central proposition in the theory relating to oral communication apprehension. It has long been known that people seek to avoid situations which cause them anxiety. Thus, it would be expected that people who are apprehension about oral

communication would try to avoid circumstances which would require them to communicate orally. Research employing the PRCA has consistently supported this proposition and this provides a strong indication of predictive validity of the instrument.

Proposition 3. *People with high oral communication apprehension engage in less oral communication than do less orally apprehensive people.* One method of avoiding oral communication, as indicated above, is to withdraw from situations which require oral communication by modifying one's life style. However, most people are forced into situations where oral communication is expected, even though they may prefer otherwise.

Proposition 4. *When people with high oral communication apprehension do communicate, their oral communication behaviors differ from those of people who are less apprehension.* In her Master's thesis Judith Wells observed that the comments of high communication apprehensive in a small group setting are much less relevant to the topic under discussion than are the comments of individuals with lower oral communication apprehension. Wells (1970) stated, "Perhaps high anxious people avoid the participant matter of a discussion or possibly they continually ask questions thereby avoiding participation in most of the discussion" (p. 58).

Proposition 5. *As a result of their oral communication behavior, high oral communication apprehensive is perceived less positively by others than are less apprehensive people.* This proposition assumes that proposition four is correct, and that the differences specified in proposition four will

be perceived negatively by other communicators in the same environment.

(pp. 193-197)

Although these five major theoretical propositions do not reside on a continuum they are an important component for researchers to base their studies.

Communication Apprehension

There are two generic types of oral anxiety: communication apprehension and situational communication apprehension. McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) defined these two types as follows:

Your generalized communication apprehension level is a personality-type trait. It is a predisposition to respond to communication situations either with or without apprehension, regardless of the nature of the situation itself. Situational specific communication apprehension is produced by the circumstances surrounding a specific communication encounter. As a result, one may feel high communication apprehension in one situation and virtually none in another. (p. 16)

Researchers have since divided these two generic types of communication apprehension into four stages along a continuum. These four stages are: 1) communication apprehension as a trait; 2) communication apprehension in a general situation; 3) communication apprehension with a given individual or group across situations; and 4) communication apprehension with a given individual or group in a given situation. These four stages of communication apprehension are the foundation of the study for this paper. For this reason, considerable attention was given to the

distinction between these different stages of communication apprehension: each of these stages has their own characteristics.

Trait-Like Communication Apprehension

Trait, or personality-type communication apprehension, is at one extreme end of the continuum and was best described by McCroskey and Richmond (1988) as follows:

Trait, or personality-type communication apprehension, is an individual's general orientation toward communication, regardless of the context or situation. While for the majority of people this trait plays an unimportant part in everyday life, for those who are very low (about 20% of the population) or very high (also about 20% of the population) in trait communication apprehension it can play a dominating role in life. (p. 346)

Trait-like communication apprehension was described by McCroskey (1977b) as being characterized by a fear or anxiety with respect to many different types of oral communication encounters, from talking to a single person or within a small group to giving a speech before a large crowd (p. 79). In addition, trait-like communication apprehension can be characterized by either being inherited or by coming from an individual's environment. Researchers in communication apprehension add their own spin on this variable. McCroskey (1982a) used the term trait-like intentionally to indicate a distinction between this type of communication apprehension and a true personality trait. McCroskey stated:

A true trait, as viewed here, is an invariant characteristic of an individual, such as eye color or height. No personality variable, and trait-like communication apprehension is viewed as a personality-type variable,

meets this strict interpretation of "trait." After achieving adulthood, true traits of an individual are not subject to change. Trait-like personality variables, although highly resistant to change, can be and often are changed during adulthood. That communication apprehension is participant to such changes is indicated clearly in the substantial research on treatment of people identified as having high communication apprehension. (p. 147)

Most of the communication apprehension research in the 1970s concentrated on trait-like communication apprehension and two of the most prolific were Virginia Richmond and James McCroskey. In regards to trait-like communication apprehension Richmond and McCroskey (1998) concluded:

As noted earlier, about 20 percent of the population falls in each extreme category. It is important to clarify the meaning we are assigning to the terms low and high communication apprehension. People in the so-called normal range of communication apprehension tend to respond very differently in various situations; one situation (a job interview) might prompt them to be highly anxious while another situation (answering a question in class) might result in no anxiety or tension at all. The "low" and the "high" communication apprehensive, however, tend to respond to virtually all oral communication situations in the same way. The low communication apprehensive will usually be willing to talk and not be scared to communicate. The high communication apprehensive will usually be unwilling to talk, remain quiet, and be scared speechless most

of the time. In summary, trait-like communication apprehension is an enduring orientation about communication and usually doesn't change unless there is some form of intervention or behavior modification. (p. 44)

Therefore, trait-like communication apprehension would be considered stable over time.

Situational Communication Apprehension

The second type of communication apprehension is communication apprehension in a generalized situation. This type of communication apprehension is one step farther removed from pure trait-like communication apprehension, as McCroskey (1983) stated:

Communication apprehension viewed from this vantage point represents orientations communication within generalizable contexts. Fear of public speaking, the oldest of the communication apprehension conceptualizations, is illustrative of this type of communication apprehension. This view recognizes that people can be highly apprehensive about communicating in one type of context while having less or even no apprehension about communicating in another type of context. (p. 3)

This type of communication apprehension relates to situations such as going on job interviews or meeting new people. Although there is no direct relationship to individuals who experience trait-like communication apprehension and those individuals who experience communication apprehension in any particular generalized context, research has found that a person who experiences trait-like communication apprehension will more likely than not also be affected by generalized context communication

apprehension. This research was summarized by Richmond and McCroskey (1998) as follows:

Of particular importance are the proportions of people who experience high communication apprehension in given situations. While only twenty percent of the population experiences high trait-like communication apprehension, estimates run as high as eighty percent of the population for generalized context communication apprehension over seventy percent for the public speaking context alone. Thus, while such communication apprehension is very likely to make one uncomfortable and interfere with communication, it is very normal for a person to experience high communication apprehension (to be scared) in at least one situation (p. 45)

A good instrument to determine what type of situations an individual might experience communication apprehension is the Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker. The Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker is broken down into five sections and provides data for the four most common types of generalized situations: group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conventions, and public speaking; McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

The first scale is a brief measure of communication apprehension across situations. By comparing your score on each of the other four scales with your score on this scale, you can identify what kinds of situations: talking in groups, talking in meetings, interpersonal conversations, public speeches: cause you to be more or less apprehensive. (p. 20)

The third type of communication apprehension is communication apprehension with a given individual or group across situations. In fact, almost ninety-five percent of the American population has reported anxiety about communicating with some person or group who is a part of their lives. Examples of these persons or groups were given by McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) when they stated:

The target that may produce this communication apprehension may be the boss, dad, teacher, a peer, or virtually anyone else in the person's environment. Some people simply cause us to be apprehensive. This may be a function of how they behave toward us, or it may be because of the role they play in our life. (p. 20)

This type of communication apprehension is person or group specific. Another person or group in the same context would not produce the same communication apprehension. In addition, communication apprehension within this context can be viewed as constant across time, as McCroskey (1982a) stated:

Person-group communication apprehension is viewed as a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people. It is not viewed as personality-based, but rather as a response to situational constraints generated by the other person or group. Although presumed to be relatively enduring, this type of communication apprehension would be expected to be changed as a function of changed behavior on the part of the other person or group. (p. 148)

At the far end of the communication apprehension continuum is the fourth type of communication apprehension, which is communication apprehension with a given

individual or group in a given situations. Virtually everyone has experienced this type of communication apprehension from time to time with some person or group in some situation. McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) list the following examples:

Consider some extreme examples: the teacher calls you into the office and informs you that he or she suspects you of cheating; with only five minutes notice you are expected to give a twenty-minute presentation to a group on a topic you know little about; you know you have offended someone and you need to talk to the person to apologize. (p. 20)

An example of this type of communication apprehension would be that an individual experiences the state of anxiety in a particular circumstance, but as soon as that situation terminates the individual is no longer anxious.

Communication In The Classroom

Individuals who successfully graduate from an American high school are expected to have good communication skills. This is important because institutions of higher education have always placed a high value on communication skills in the college classroom. Interactions between students, instructors, and peers have always been an intricate part of collegial learning. An individual's level of success in the college classroom is greatly influenced by their ability to communicate. Research on college students throughout the United States has demonstrated that students recognize the importance of being able to communicate well, but they also conclude that many students have an aversion to communicating orally, particularly before a group of their peers. This aversion to oral communication is sometime easy to recognize, but not always. That is because communication apprehension can be experienced at varying levels. At the lowest

level of communication apprehension are the individuals who will raise their hand to answer questions in class and even talk in small group settings. At the highest level of communication apprehension are the individuals who sit around the perimeters of the classroom, try to avoid eye contact with their instructor so they will not be called upon to participate in class discussion, and who would rather work alone than be in a group with their peers. These differences in behaviors between communication apprehensive individuals and their non-apprehensive peers affect many decisions about their college curriculum, as McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

To begin with, high and low communication apprehensive makes different decisions concerning what classes to take, when given free choice. Low communication apprehensive prefers classes with small enrollments where there is ample opportunity for students to interact with each other and with the instructor. High communication apprehensive, in contrast, tend to avoid such small classes in favor of larger, lecture-type classes in which most of the communication takes the form of the instructor talking to the students and the students simply listening and taking notes. (p. 24)

The struggle about what classes to take is merely the tip of the collegial iceberg. The next challenge the communication apprehensive individual has to deal with is choosing where to sit in the classroom. Research has shown that there are certain seats in the classroom where low communication apprehensive students are twice as likely to sit as their high communication apprehensive peers, as McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

Low communication apprehensive tends to sit in the front and center of the traditional classroom. High communication apprehensives tend to sit along the sides and in the rear of the room. Most interaction in the typical classroom is focused on the center of the room in the first few rows. This is where the low apprehensive chooses to sit, and where the high communication apprehensive tries her or his best to avoid. (p. 25)

Once the course is selected and the communication apprehensive student is comfortably sitting in their chosen seat it is time to interact with their instructor and peers. Research has showed that students with high communication apprehension are viewed by teachers and peers as not being as intelligent or successful as students with low communication apprehension. A 1976 study by McCroskey and Richmond tested 104 female and 108 male college students to determine if people exhibiting typical behaviors of high communication apprehension would be perceived less positively than people exhibiting behaviors typical of low communication apprehension.

High communication apprehensive target persons were perceived less positively than targets exhibiting behaviors in sociability, composure, competence, extroversion, social attraction, desirability as an opinion leader, and projection of academic success in the humanities, public speaking, and business. (pp. 20-21)

Since intelligence and achievement are strongly associated they must be considered to be a potential cause for any achievement differences. However, McCroskey (1977a) found that intelligence must be ruled out as a causal agent, as he stated:

First, intelligence and communication apprehension have not been found to be correlated. Second, even if there were a correlation between the two, since high communication apprehensives were found to achieve less than low communication apprehensive in some instructional environments but not in others, that correlation could not account for the differential results.

(p. 31)

Although intelligence and academic achievement are not correlated, McCroskey and Andersen (1976) isolated four major predictors of student success in the learning environment. First, the measures of intelligence and aptitude can be used to predict student grade point average. To test this prediction McCroskey and Andersen reported on a study of 1454 college students who examined the impact of communication apprehension on grades awarded by teachers. The students studied had completed from one to four years of college at the time the data was collected. The results indicated a sharp distinction between students who were high communication apprehensive and those who were low communication apprehensive. The low communication apprehensive had grade point averages across all courses taken that were approximately one-half grade point higher than the high communication apprehensive students on a four-point scale (pp. 78-79). The second predictor of student success in the classroom is by examining their prior academic achievement through the use of standardized achievement tests. In this regards McCroskey and Andersen found that communication students who were highly apprehensive scored significantly lower than less apprehensive students on the American College Test, both on the overall or composite score and on the four individual sub scores for social science, natural science, mathematics, and English (p. 78). The third

major predictor of academic success is the possession of certain personality traits of an individual. In research involving personality and communication apprehension conducted by James McCroskey, John Daly, and Gail Sorensen (1976) found that communication apprehension is positively correlated with anxiety, dogmatism, and external control, but negatively correlated with cyclothymia, emotional maturity, dominance, surgency, character, adventurousness, confidence, self-control, tolerance for ambiguity, and need to achieve (pp. 377-378). Thus, communication apprehension is substantially associated with an individual's total personality. The picture of these highly communication apprehensive individuals were summarized by McCroskey, Sorensen, and Daly as follows:

Aloof, prefers working alone, rigid, has hard time expressing self, quiet, reserved, stiff, changeable, dissatisfied, easily annoyed, strongly influenced by emotions, lacks leadership, a follower, submissive, conforming, obedient, serious, reflective, slow, cautious, silent, seeks low interaction occupations, undependable, irresolute, lacks internal standards, low task orientation, withdrawn, has feelings of inferiority, rule bound, restrained, avoids people, free of jealousy, concerned about others, good team worker, pliant, permissive, worrier, moody, avoids participation in groups, dislikes interaction, likes quiet environment, shy, ineffective speaker, little success in groups, lacks self-control, inconsiderate, unconscientious, indecisive, tense, restless, impatient, frustrated, low morale, closed minded, amoral orientation to life, manipulative, low

tolerance for ambiguous or uncertain situations, low need to achieve, and sees external forces as controlling her or his life. (p. 378)

In addition to the personality factors listed above highly communication apprehension individuals have to deal with issues of lower self-esteem than their more competent peers, as McCroskey (1976) stated:

Communication apprehension has been found to correlate with a variety of socially undesirable personality characteristics. In a series of studies it was found that self-esteem and communication apprehension were negatively correlated for samples of college students ($r = -.61$), for elementary and secondary school teachers ($r = -.56$), and for a group of federal employees ($r = -.61$). High communication apprehension was associated with negative self-image in every sample. (pp. 3-4)

Low self-esteem issues contribute substantially to negative attitudes to school in general. This negative attitude can impact on student achievement because as the level of communication apprehension increases the attitude towards school becomes more negative. Therefore, highly communication apprehensive students already have three strikes against them before instruction even begins.

The final predictor of student success is expectation. Oral presentations, small group discussions, and classroom participating are all major component of college course grades and evaluations. Failure in any of these areas can have devastating effects on a student's attitude towards school and may contribute to high dropout rates for these individuals. In regards to oral presentations, most communication apprehensive individuals will avoid courses that require an oral presentation. However, when courses

with oral presentation components cannot be avoided the communication apprehensive individual will skip class on the presentation day or may even become physically ill, as McCroskey (1976) stated:

The impact of communication apprehension on public speaking instruction is severe. As we might expect, highly communication apprehensive students try to avoid taking such classes. When such courses are not required, few high communications apprehensive will enroll. Those who do are very likely to drop the class before the first required performance. When the course is required, the dropout pattern still exists. But for the highly communication apprehensive students who remain, very severe problems frequently occur. (p. 5)

While some low communication apprehensive student will be able to control their anxiety while giving an oral presentation the highly communication apprehensive student will falter, as McCroskey (1997a) stated:

While many people are able to control their stage fright so that none of their behavior gives evidence of their internal distress, others will have faltering delivery, poor gestures, distracting mannerisms, inappropriate voice volume, poor eye contact, or loss of organization. When these things happen the quality of speaking deteriorates, and with this deterioration comes less positive influences over the audience and negative perceptions of the speaker in the minds of the audience members. (p. 57)

Thus, poor oral performance plays into the "expectation" prediction of student success because instructors are known to view students with high communication apprehensive as lower academic achievers, as McCroskey (1977a) stated:

Research on the expectations teachers have of high and low communication apprehensive elementary school students shows a major difference in expectations. This research indicated that teachers expect low communication apprehensive students, as opposed to highs, to do better in all academic participants, to have a much more promising future in education, and to have much better relationships with their peers. (p. 31)

These negative views of highly communication apprehensive individuals by their instructors can be viewed as a potential barrier to student academic success. In 1986 Ericson and Gardner began a study to measure the academic success (in the terms of the dropout rates) of 1,302 freshman students at the State University of New York at Oneonta. Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages for freshman "dropouts" by year and level of communication apprehension. The result from this study was reported by Ericson and Gardner as follows:

The proportion of total high communication apprehension students who did not complete their baccalaureate degrees (55.7%) was compared to the proportion of low communication apprehensive "lost" students (42.3%). The z test was significant ($z = 2.17, p < .05$). Over the four years, there was a difference between a student's communication apprehension and the tendency not to complete his/her degree. In addition, for the first year the proportion of high communication apprehension "drop-outs" (16.0%)

differed significantly from the proportion of low communication apprehension drop-outs (0.9%), $z = 4.58$, $p < .001$. (p. 130)

Table 2. Frequency and Proportion of Dropouts by CA

Year 1 – Lost	1 (.009)	11 (.019)	21 (.160)
Year 2 ó Lost	23 (.207)	129 (.218)	33 (.252)
Year 2 ó Cumulative	24 (.216)	140 (.237)	54 (.412)
Year 3 ó Lost	14 (.126)	76 (.129)	17 (.130)
Year 3 ó Cumulative	38 (.342)	216 (.365)	71 (.542)
Year 4 ó Lost	9 (.081)	30 (.050)	2 (.015)
Year 4 ó Cumulative	47 (.423)	246 (.416)	73 (.557)
Total	111	591	131

Source: Ericson and Gardner (1992)

These statistics are unfortunate and disturbing because it shows that most highly communication apprehensive individuals will fail to complete their first year of academic study, to which McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, and Payne (1989) stated:

Academically, we would expect lower grade point averages and higher dropout rates among high communication apprehension students compared to those with low communication apprehension. We could explain this outcome by noting communication apprehension typically elicits anxiety which leads to avoidance behaviors, cognitive deficits, and performance failures. (p. 101)

Communication In Small Groups

I have chosen to give communication apprehension in the small group setting its own heading because it encompasses so much of the communication apprehensive individual collegial experience. Some of the effects of communication apprehension in

the small group setting are observed in the amount of talk, communication content, perceived leadership, and perceived content quality. McCroskey and Richmond (1988) looked at the effects of each of these elements. In regards to the amount of talk McCroskey and Richmond stated:

Numerous studies have replicated a very consistent finding: people with high communication apprehension talk much less in the small group setting than do people with low communication apprehension. This is a classic example of withdrawal. In each study people were unable to avoid being in the small group setting, and in each case those with high communication apprehension were found to be infrequent participants, while those with low communication apprehension were found to participate extensively. To state the point simply, people who are apprehensive about talking in a small group setting tend not to speak, even when forced into such a situation. (p. 350)

While a reduction in the amount of talk in a small group setting might be expected, McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) found that highly communication apprehensive individuals also say things that are less relevant to the on-going discussion, to which they concluded, "It appears that this behavior has been learned as a means of getting people to stop asking the high apprehensive questions" (p. 26). Other research has shown that highly communication apprehensive individuals seldom disagree with their peers and often submit to the assertions of the group.

Another important impact communication apprehension has in the small group setting can be observed in the communication content. Several research studies have

shown that the content generated by people with high communication apprehension have an abnormally high level of verbalized pauses, as McCroskey and Richmond stated:

Several research studies have indicated that communication apprehension has an impact on the content of communication in the small group setting, most particularly on the content generated by people with high communication apprehension. Disruption of communication is a common impact. People with high communication apprehension have an abnormally high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives (such as "you know") in the small group setting. In addition, when they talk, people with high communication apprehension tend to say things that are not relevant to the ongoing discussion. Probably most important, people with high communication apprehension tend to avoid expressing disagreement in the small group setting. When asked their opinion they tend overwhelmingly to express agreement with the group, whether they actually are in agreement or not. (pp. 350-351)

The final two effects of communication apprehension in the small group setting are in regards to perceived leadership and perceived content quality, both of which are related to the amount of talk. Numerous studies have all reached the same conclusion in that the more a person talks the more they are perceived by their peers as being intelligent and of possessing leadership skills. The more an individual talks the more highly their peers perceive them as making a valuable contribution to group discussions, to which McCroskey and Richmond (1988) summarized:

In sum, the amount a person talks in a group has a major impact on the perceptions of the other persons in that group. Low talkers are seen as less attractive, as exerting less leadership, and as providing contributions of lower quality. In some cases these perceptions are consistent with what actually goes on in the group, though in others they are not. In both cases, however, the perception is there and determines to a major extent how the various group members relate to each other. Low talker, whether the reduced talk is a function of high communication apprehension or something else, are seen as less useful members of groups and tend to be rejected by other group members. (p. 352)

Summary

Communication apprehension is a pervasive, multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied at multiple levels by multiple researchers. However, my investigation into communication apprehension has found no viable research on communication apprehension as it relates to nontraditional graduate students or on any relationship between communication apprehension and insufficient vocabulary skills. These two variables seem to have been neglected by the communication profession, a situation my research will strive to correct.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

It was the intention of this researcher to only conduct a qualitative study for this research study. In describing qualitative research Professor M.A. Saint-Germain (2001) stated the following. Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. It is also called ethnomethodology or field research. It generates data about human groups in social settings.

Qualitative research does not introduce treatments or manipulate variables, or impose the researcher's operational definitions of variables on the participants. Rather, it lets the meaning emerge from the participants. It is more flexible in that it can adjust to the setting. Concepts, data collection tools, and data collection methods can be adjusted as the research progresses.

Qualitative research aims to get a better understanding through firsthand experience, truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations. It aims to understand how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behavior.

Qualitative research uses observation as the data collection method. Observation is the selection and recording of behaviors of people in their environment. Observation is useful for generating in-depth descriptions of organizations or events, for obtaining information that is otherwise inaccessible, and for conducting research when other methods are inadequate.

However, after conducting only nine interviews it was decided to incorporate an online survey in the study. Introducing the online survey changed the study from exclusively qualitative to a mixed method study. A mixed method study combined the qualitative components with a quantitative component formed by the online survey. During the qualitative phase of the study interviews were conducted, analyzed, and reported. After the qualitative phase of this study was completed the themes and trends brought out during the analysis process were incorporated into the online survey. The online survey was sent to all potential participants that did not respond to the request for interview participants.

In this third chapter I have presented my stance as a researcher, including any and all existing biases that might impact my interpretation of the results. I have also described the sites, participants, and method of data collection that was utilized in this study as well as the approach to data analysis and the procedures used to insure rigor in the interpretation of results.

Research Perspective

I recognize I approached this study with a strong bias because I am a sufferer of communication apprehension. I did not realize this until 2008 when I took a graduate level instructional communication course with Dr. Scott Titsworth at Ohio University. It was in Dr. Titsworth's course that I first encountered the term "communication apprehension." Up until that time I did not know there was a name for the anxiety that I experienced in my college level courses. When I began my undergraduate college career I was thirty-five years old and had a very basic educational foundation. Throughout my undergraduate career I preferred not to draw attention to myself and would always choose

seats in the farthest perimeter of the classroom. This choice in seating is a classic sign of communication apprehension, as Richmond and McCroskey (1998) stated:

Where a person chooses to sit in a classroom also reflects the person's level of quietness. Low communication apprehensives tend to sit in the front and center of the traditional classroom. High communication apprehensives tend to sit along the sides and in the rear of the room.

(p. 62)

In addition to my seating preferences I tried to keep my classroom participation to a minimum and avoided courses that required oral performances. Richmond and McCroskey (1998) commented on these course selections when they stated:

Low communication apprehensives prefer classes with small enrollments where there is ample opportunity for students to interact with each other and with the instructor. High communication apprehensives, in contrast, tend to avoid such small classes in favor of larger, lecture-type classes in which the instructor talks to the students and the students simply listen and take notes. (p. 61)

However, even though I made a conscious effort to avoid oral communication in the classroom I did not believe I had a communication problem. It was not until I became a graduate student that I realized my anxiety in the classroom was affecting my cognitive function, social skills, and self-esteem. During this time I found that I dreaded instructors who insisted on putting students in a small group setting where oral participation was required, or instructors who would randomly call on me to participate in class discussion. I found that I spent most of my classroom time thinking more about what I would say if

called upon. I was constantly reminded of the old saying, "Keep quiet and let people think you are a fool, open your mouth and prove them right."

After taking the communication course with Dr. Titsworth I wanted to learn more about communication apprehension. I began to read books, articles, and journals about communication apprehension and soon discovered that the answers that I sought eluded me. Communication apprehension for me stemmed from my frustration of not having the right words available in my vocabulary to communicate at the graduate level with my peers. At other times it was a matter not being able to understand words that my instructors and peers used in classroom discussions. In addition, assigned course readings would often times frustrate me because I was always running across words whose meanings eluded me. My collegiate dictionary became my constant companion. I found myself becoming more and more withdrawn and my grades in graduate school were always marked down for "lack of participation." Finally I came across an article by Hart and Risley in the Children's Literacy Initiative Newsletter (2007) that stated:

Impoverished children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of vocabulary deficiency. By age 3, a child from a low-income household has heard approximately 13 million words spoken, while a child with professional parents has heard 45 million words. As a result, many low-income children enter school at a disadvantage, having lacked exposure to rich and varied vocabulary words. Compared with their more affluent peers, they experience difficulties with reading comprehension and general academic performance. (p. 1)

This article set up red flags for me because I was a child of Appalachia. I had grown up in a family of first generation high school graduates. My family had little

money and we went hungry on many occasions. By the time I was fifteen I was left to take care of myself, I was a wife at age seventeen, a mother at age eighteen, and finished my high school education by taking stenography courses at a vocational school. My anxiety with oral communication focused entirely around not having a graduate vocabulary and not being able to comprehend college level vocabulary or the "professional jargon." I could not find any research about these issues so I decided to dedicate my doctoral research to them.

I needed to take an open-minded stance in order to be able to gather and analyze data that truly represents my participants' opinions combined with mine yet without being overly influenced by my biases. This was a challenge for me; however, while conscious of my own background and experience, I have endeavored to remain as objective as possible in giving my interviewees, nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University, the opportunity to convey their own thoughts with respect to their personal feelings regarding communication apprehension.

Considering my biases and my interest in this topic, I have tried to approach this study with a clear and confident mind in order to learn from and with my participants.

Identification Of The Population

The target population for this study was current graduate students from Ohio University who were born before January 1, 1965; who were admitted and matriculated to Ohio University on or after Fall quarter 1999; and who volunteered to participate in this study.

Sampling Plan

Under FERPA policies, the Ohio University Registrar's Office approved and constructed a query listing all current and previous graduate students from Ohio University who were born before January 1, 1965 and who were admitted and matriculated to Ohio University on or after Fall quarter 1999. This query disclosed directory information about each student that included the students' names and Ohio University email addresses. From this query seventy-three students fit the credentials for this study. All seventy-three candidates were contacted, nine agreed to face-to-face interviews and twenty-two agreed to complete the online survey. All participants stated that their participation in this study was to help the nontraditional researcher and to contribute to scholarly knowledge on this subject.

Participants

The participants for this study were not chosen randomly, but rather were chosen by using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability method of sampling in which participants are chosen in a nonrandom manner, and some members of the population have no chance of being included. With nonprobability sampling, researchers have no way of calculating how well their sample represents the population as a whole. The participants were chosen on the basis of their age at the time they were admitted and matriculated into a graduate level program at Ohio University. Participants were both male and female nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University. It was my intention by selecting these participants that I would be able to construct a richly textured interpretation of communication apprehension and its role in the interviewees' lives.

Operational Definition Of The Variables

The independent variables for this study were 1) college classroom; 2) nontraditional graduate students; 3) being raised in a rural household; 4) being raised in an impoverished household; 5) group discussions; 6) class participation; 7) public conversations; and 8) other conversation situations. The dependent variable for this study was communication apprehension.

Method Of Data Collection

This study used a mixed methods design in collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. The rationale for mixing data collection methods was because the researcher wanted to embellish the qualitative portion of the study with quantitative data. By combining these two methods the researched was able to achieve a more complete and scholarly analysis.

Qualitative Method

The qualitative component of this research involved face-to-face interviews with participants. During this phase of the study the researcher used prepared open-ended questions and field notes. Field notes were incorporated in this phase of the study because the use of field notes has been a vital part of qualitative research for many years.

Wolfinger (2002) stated, "Field notes are an often neglected yet fundamental part of ethnography. They serve the crucial role of connecting researchers and their participants in the writing of an ethnographic report" (p. 92). During each interview the researcher used the same predetermined open-ended questions and took field notes to record each participant's facial expressions or bodily gestures, reactions or specific speech patterns. Body language and speech patterns are important to capture as they helped interpret the

emotions experienced by the participants. In addition, a running record or tally of repeating patterns of behavior or comments were noted. This tally enabled the researcher to make clearer analysis of the data gathered. Through the inclusion of these field notes a more thorough record of what was observed and the responses of the participants were preserved.

Face-to-Face Interviews

The interview protocol included eight predetermined open-ended questions given to all participants that set the stage for additional follow-up questions. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to give as much detailed information as they desired and to express their own feelings on the subject matter. Turner (2010) viewed open-ended interviews as extremely beneficial to both the researcher and participant:

This open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. Standardized open-ended interviews are likely the most popular form of interviewing utilized in research studies because of the nature of the open-ended questions, allowing the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences. If one were to identify weaknesses with open-ended interviewing, they would likely identify the difficulty with coding the data. (p. 756)

Interview questions were developed specifically for this study. The questions used in the first part of the interviews were intended to gain information about the participants' family history, early educational endeavors, and early communication situations. The

questions used in the second part of the interviews were intended to gain information about the participant's role as a nontraditional graduate student at Ohio University and about communication situations in the classroom. During the interviews, field notes were used to record the nonverbal activity of each participant, the interview surroundings, and keep a tally of repeating patterns or comments. All participants signed consent forms and gave permission to have the interview tape-recorded, to be transcribed verbatim at a later date. By tape recording the interviews the researcher was able to focus on what was being said while documenting the event in the field notes.

The interviews provided descriptive data in the participant's own words. The open-ended interview questions provided an understanding of how these nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University interpreted communication apprehension. The informal setting allowed for a deeper and more textured picture to develop from the data. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants.

Interviews- Analysis

The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, analyzed and coded for common themes and trends. Responses from the interviews were coded using a software program called NVivo (version 10). This version of the software had an analysis software program especially designed for qualitative and mixed-methodology research. It had features that organized, analyzed and coded the information from the interviews and field notes into common themes and trends.

Quantitative Method

The quantitative component of the research involved using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), which is the instrument most widely used to

measure communication apprehension. The original PRCA-24 is a 24-item Likert-type instrument that assesses a person's communication apprehension in group discussions, meetings, public speaking, and interpersonal communications. For purposes of this study the questions number seven, eight, and nine had the word *meeting* replaced with the phrase *class discussion*. Questions number ten, eleven, and twelve had the word *meeting* replaced with the word *class*. Questions number twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-two had the word *class* added. Sixteen new items were added to the survey; these included questions about vocabulary skills, seating preferences in the classroom, nontraditional students, and classroom participation. Though the validity of the original PRCA-24 has been proven for many years the validity of the sixteen new items designed specifically for this study was not known; these questions were designed to explore the issues of interest in complementing questions asked during interviews. The goal was to assess specific issues related to the experience of nontraditional students. The resultant forty-item instrument was administered in an online format with a typical five-choice self-assessed response. The surveys were distributed to all potential participants via their Ohio University email addresses provided by the Ohio University Registrar's Office.

Survey Instrument

The quantitative phase of this study focused on identifying internal and external factors that contributed to and/or impeded upon nontraditional graduate students' communication in the college classroom. The technique used to collect the quantitative data was a self-administered survey measured on the 5-point Likert-type scale. As noted above, the survey consisted of forty questions. Demographic questions were added to the survey to extract responses to compare with those responses received from interview

participants. These demographic questions included information regarding participants' racial or ethnic group, gender, community where they were raised, whether they began their undergraduate career at a traditional age, and if their native language was English. The survey instrument was electronically delivered to participants through their Ohio University email. A consent form was scanned and sent to all participants that agreed to take part in the survey. Completed consent forms and surveys were returned by twenty-two individuals. The returned surveys had frequencies distribution, factor analysis, and a measure of central tendency performed.

Surveys - Analysis

The surveys were analyzed using the original PRCA-24 results key and SPSS frequency distribution. The results for the first twenty-four items on the survey were analyzed using the original PRCA-24 reporting scale. In addition, frequency distributions were run on all of the survey questions to estimate internal consistency of the responses. In addition to running frequency distributions on all the survey questions a factor analysis and measure of central tendency was included on the sixteen new questions developed for this study. This additional analysis was run to confirm sufficient reliability of each of the new items on the survey. As a result, the ensuing discussion of results represents the exploratory nature of this initial attempt to focus attention on communication issues experienced by nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University.

Credibility Issues

Planning a mixed methodology study for the first time tends to be an intimidating venture of any graduate student. In regard to qualitative research Kvale (1996) proposed that validity centered on the skills a researcher employs to think critically during data

analysis and dialogue with others. Merriam and Associates (2002), pointed out there is still much discussion and debate regarding how the concept of validity applies in qualitative research. In regards to internal validity Merriam suggested the question "How congruent are one's findings with reality?" (p. 25). She further explains that in qualitative research, "the understanding of reality is really the researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretation or understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 25). It is through the interviews with participants that the researcher gathered the data utilized to develop this interpretation.

Internal validity was strengthened through methodological triangulation, the use of a number of methods to check the 'integrity of, or extend inferences drawn from the data" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 43). One method of achieving methodological triangulation was by using multiple data collection methods that included interviews, field notes, and survey results. Using this strategy allowed for a more thorough interpretation of the data and resulted in more reliable findings and conclusions.

Summary

The goal in Chapter One was to introduce the research area and purpose of the study. Chapter Two presented a review of literature on the different constructs of communication apprehension, instruments of measuring communication apprehension, types of communication apprehension, and how communication apprehension is viewed in the academic classroom. The literature review indicated the need for additional study in this area. The focus of Chapter Three has been to present the procedures implemented in completing this study. Descriptions have been given to describe the criteria used to choose the participants of the study, the methods of data collection, and the use of field

notes. Researcher biases and personal stance have also been considered. Validity and credibility will be established through the use of a mixed-methods approach, including the individual interviews, field notes, and online survey.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The present research study has examined the relationship among communication apprehension and the experiences of nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University. Exploratory research was used for this study because a problem had not been clearly defined or its real scope was unclear. The exploratory nature of this study relied on the review of available literature, in-depth interviews, electronic surveys, and field notes taken during the interviewing process. The qualitative component of this study used an observational method of collecting and recording data. Although the results of this study can give some general information about the participant being studied its results can neither be generalized nor are they representative of the whole population being studied.

Grounded Theory Research

Prior to this study there was no literature regarding research in this area. Therefore, research questions and interview protocol were established before beginning the study. Because this study investigated a phenomenon in terms of a relationship between an independent and dependent variable grounded theory research was used. One of the unique features about grounded theory is that it allows the researcher to reevaluate research questions throughout the study. The general concept behind grounded theory is that it does not assume that the researcher knows enough to formulate specific hypotheses, only research generating questions. Therefore, the researcher must seek participants who have lived through the phenomenon that they want to learn about. Having lived through the phenomenon they become the experts for the study, as Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) stated:

Grounded theory research allows the researcher to admit that they may not know enough to pose a specific question. In fact, the researcher may not know what the right question is until they have finished collecting and analyzing the data. Therefore, instead of reading the literature looking for a specific question or problem, grounded theory instructs the researcher to look for issues that are open and unclear. Research issues are found by looking for perspectives that are left out, and assumptions that need to be challenged. (p. 15)

Analysis Process: Overview

First, the interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded for common themes. This analysis involved active listening of the tape recordings of each participant's description of what their subjective world was like for them. Second, the result of the entire survey is presented by way of frequency distribution. The frequency distribution was chosen to estimate internal consistency of the responses for each of the items on the survey. Third, the results for the first twenty-four items on the survey were analyzed using the PRCA-24 reporting scale. Lastly, a factor analysis, measure of central tendency, and discussion regarding the results of the sixteen new items are presented.

Demographics of Interviews

The interview participants included both men and women of at least 48 years of age. During the interviews questions regarding race/ethnicity, community where raised, and age of undergraduate enrollment were asked. The community question was raised to determine respondents' possible living conditions as a child. During the literature review for this study it was found that persons growing up in an urban area were believed to

have a greater access to educational facilities and career opportunities and would be less susceptible to communication apprehension. In contrast, persons living in a rural area were believed to have less access to educational facilities and career opportunities and more susceptible to communication apprehension. Additionally, Richmond and Robertson (1977) found that children raised in both a rural area and improvised environments were more likely to develop higher levels of communication apprehension than their urban counterparts. Therefore, it was important to bring this factor up during interviews and analysis. The age that respondent attended college for their undergraduate career it was to statistically evaluate the differences of the rate of communication apprehension between respondents that began their undergraduate education straight out of high school as opposed to beginning their undergraduate education as a nontraditional student. A summary of the demographics are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographics of Interviews

Participant	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Raised	Age at Admission
1	White	Female	Urban	Non
2	Black	Female	Urban	Traditional
3	White	Male	Urban	Non
4	White	Female	Urban	Traditional
5	White	Male	Both	Traditional
6	White	Male	Both	Both
7	White	Female	Urban	Non
8	White	Female	Urban	Traditional
9	Native American	Female	Urban	Traditional

Transcription

It is imperative in qualitative research that the participant's life experiences can be authentically understood. This authenticity is best achieved by including a full transcription of the interviews. To include these transcriptions in a dissertation report is often overlooked by researchers. Christina Davidson (2009) stated that most researchers neglect to address transcription as a necessary component of written results, and stated:.

This absence is made salient in relation to the reporting of qualitative studies in final reports and in journal articles that arise out of studies.

Trustworthiness of qualitative studies is raised as a question when transcription is overlooked. Reflection on the research process is emphasized and commentary about transcription viewed as essential in the reporting of research. (p. 6)

Including the transcription of the interviews in the dissertation report has the ability to allow the participants to tell their own story in their own words.

Interview #1

My first interview was with a Dutch-Native American woman that was born in 1958. The interview took place on November 7, 2010 at 4:30 p.m. at a private residence in Nelsonville, Ohio.

Background

Subject #1 was raised in two or three different towns in Southeastern Ohio. However, the majority of her growing up period took place in a small college town with the population of about 15,000-16,000. The community was almost entirely white (99.1%), blue collar, and very family oriented.

Communication in the Family

Subject #1 has one older brother and one younger sister. Both parents worked outside of the home. Her extended family on her father's side was very extroverted and talkative. She stated that conversations with her father were open, full of laughter, and consisted of mostly joking around. However, communication with her mother was a completely different scenario. Her mother was more soft spoken and serious. Communication between the mother and the rest of the family was minimal and carefully worded. Her mother did not like to hear anyone sounding stupid, as she stated:

My mother didn't want to hear, for lack of a better word, stupidity. She wanted just to ask questions and have you answer them where my dad was very joking. I think it irritated mother if you weren't smart. She wanted you to be smart so you really had to be careful. You just didn't. I communicated with my mother in a different way than I communicated with my father and his family.

(personal communication, 2010)

For the most part her parents had discussions and the children would just sit around and listen. She said that the children were supposed to be "seen and not heard". Very rarely was there direct talk between the children and the parents unless a task of some sort needed to be done, as she stated:

If my parents were telling me to do something or if I had a chore responsibility or they needed something done, then they would tell me and talk to me. But, there was no sitting around and chatting about aimless things. It was purpose driven conversation. One-way conversations. (personal communication, 2010)

As far as communication between the children there was some, but mostly they played quietly by themselves. However, Subject #1 indicated that she herself was a very talkative child. She stated that she had a very extensive vocabulary because her mother and paternal grandmother encouraged her to read. In addition, her mother did not permit gibberish to be used in conversation. She stated, "Our mother spoke to us like we were little adults all the time because that was the way she had been brought up by her maternal grandfather on his plantation in South Africa" (personal communication, 2010). This extensive use of vocabulary, in addition to being the middle child, contributed to this Subject being very talkative. She indicated that her younger sister got noticed because she was the baby and her older brother was noticed because he was the first born. However, her constant chatter got her in trouble both at home and at school. Many times she brought home a report card while in elementary school that indicated that she needed to work on being quiet.

It was a normal practice in this household to have the parents yelling and fighting. Subject #1 indicated she just thought this was the normal events in any family household. She indicated that the fights did not bother her and that she did not retreat from them. She stated that her parents mostly just called each other names and fought over money.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #1 went to public schools through high school. She indicated that she was very smart academically. In second grade the school officials had actually wanted to promote her to the fourth grade, but her parents did not think it was a good idea. Instead she was assigned to a special group (two other students) that had special, more challenging work as she stated, "I was expected to do more advanced work. I had more

advanced vocabulary, more advanced reading, and more advanced comprehension. I had more difficult assignments to do, but I always got straight A's (personal communication, 2010). She stayed in this advanced group until the end of fifth grade. She stayed in the upper tier of students through middle and high school. However, at the end of tenth grade her parents divorced and she was sent to a technical high school to learn a marketable trade. After graduating from the technical high school she moved from the area to find employment.

After nine years working at a western coal company Subject #1 enrolled in a community college and took a class now and then. Within eight years she had earned her Associates degree and used her degree to advance in her job. Thirteen years later she relocated to Ohio and enrolled at Ohio University to work towards her Bachelor's degree.

Communication in the Classroom

Going back to her grade school years Subject #1 did not communicate much in the classroom. This was mostly because she was singled out for higher level course work and she did not participate in the regular classroom discussions. Once she reached middle school she did not associate with student from the other elementary school districts. She would participate in class discussions if called upon to do so, but did not readily volunteer to do so.

As a nontraditional undergraduate student at Ohio University she stated that she was always the oldest person in her classes, but this fact did not cause her any apprehension. She stated that most of the traditional aged students actually looked to her for advice and academic support. The only apprehension that she encountered was actually from her instructors. Because she was usually younger than her instructors and

had more experience in most of the subjects being taught she believed the instructors avoid calling on her for class participation. She stated, "because of my background the instructors would ask me not to talk. I wouldn't raise my hand in class and I didn't participate" (personal communication, 2010).

Advancing to graduate status did not change her perception of the Ohio University faculty. Again she stated that she did not participate in her graduate courses because she felt that the faculty members in her graduate program felt threatening by her, as she stated:

I don't talk in my graduate classes because the faculty seems to always be threatening to red flag you. What I mean is that, let's say that you voice an opinion about gays or African Americans that they don't like, they threaten to red flag you as a person who should not be in the program and they threaten to throw you out. So, I don't voice any opinions. I give them strictly textbook answers and never elaborate. In sense of apprehension, I am apprehensive to talk period because of the threat of being thrown out of the program. So, I don't talk unless someone asks me. My papers are always very watered down. My answers are always very watered down. I don't like that continual threat. Nobody does. I don't know why they are allowed to do it. (personal communication, 2010)

Subject #1 concluded that she does have a form of communication apprehension in the classroom, but most because she does not feel that she is allowed to express her true feelings about the subject of discussion.

Subject #1 always sits facing the classroom door for personal reasons. She stated that she always sits in the back row and in a corner so that she can view the entire

classroom. She also likes to sit with the other nontraditional students because they can all talk to each other without the other students thinking they are stupid. In addition, the nontraditional students work harder and do better projects than their younger counterparts.

College Vocabulary

Subject #1 stated that she has always thought she had an extensive vocabulary until she started her undergraduate work at Ohio University. She stated that in one of her first classes she had to look up the meaning of the word *rubric*. She commented that most of the text books and research related information required in her courses were difficult for her to comprehend, as she stated:

I struggle with understanding any type of research, but the journals all seem to use what I call twenty dollars words. I don't think that using those types of words is necessary, but I think they do it to be scholarly and be published. I think there's an easier way to say something, but I do struggle with words. (personal communication, 2010)

Subject #1 worked very hard over the course of her undergraduate career to build a strong college vocabulary. When she entered her graduate career she felt she actually had to dumb down some of her classroom comments so that her traditional aged peers could follow her conversations.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #1 arrived for her interview casually attired in a sweatshirt and sweatpants. During the course of the interview Participant #1 was attentive to the questions posed to her, but occasionally shifted her weight in her chair. She was open and

responsive to questions and gave detailed answers when asked. This participant grew up in a household that did not allow the children to communicate with the adults in a normal fashion. She had two siblings that basically did not talk in the household. Because of this participant's emphasis on this dynamic of her childhood it was concluded that she was talkative in the classroom because she was unable to do so in her own environment. The family was not impoverished during her early years, but after the father left home the family was living on some sort of government assistance. Participant #1 stated that she did not attend college at a traditional age because she was "from the wrong side of the tracks". Participant #1 stated that she cried after coming home from her first day as an undergraduate at Ohio University because she felt stupid, old, and out of place.

Participant #1 entered graduate study at Ohio University immediately after obtaining her Bachelor's degree. Her only apprehension about entering graduate study is that she might outshine the teachers. Her personal work experiences before entering academia made her an outstanding resource for the graduate field that she had entered. She believed that her expertise would surpass that of her instructors. She quickly learned to "dumb down" her classroom responses. She said that she can never say what she wants to say because in graduate school you have to recite textbook articles verbatim. Participant #1 stated that she had a very extensive vocabulary, but admits that college level reading and research has been difficult. She stated that most of the journal articles that she is required to read have 20 words that might be impressive for the publisher, but are not necessary.

Because of these "scholarly" words being thrown out around every corner she has found that she has to look up vocabulary words constantly. At times her instructors and/or peers will also use a word that is uncommon in general conversation and she will be unable to

respond or comment because she does not know what the discussion is about. She said that when these words are spoken in an open classroom discussion her nontraditional peers will look at her and ask if she knows what the class is talking about. Therefore, Participant #1 believes that the inadequacy in the vocabulary is not a personal one for her but for her generation of academics.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #1 does not have any measureable communication apprehension in the classroom. Participant #1 is very sure of herself personally, professionally, and academically. What she lacks in graduate level vocabulary skills only minimally affects her communication in the classroom. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #1 does experience some degree of communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #1 stated this in her interview saying, "I struggle with understanding why authors and journals have to use what I call twenty dollar words. They make me feel stupid" (personal communication, 2010). In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that Participant #1 does not have any measurable communication apprehension due to the environment in which she was raised. Although raised on public assistance in her late teens, which would be considered impoverished for this study, Participant #1 excelled in communication situations at all academic levels.

Interview #2

My second interview was with an African-American woman that was born in 1960. The interview took place on November 19, 2010 at 4:30 p.m. in a classroom on the Ohio University campus in Athens Ohio.

Background

Subject #2 was raised in the north end of large city in the northeastern portion of the United States. The eldest of three children, two of whom were adopted. The family lived in a working, lower middle class neighborhood. Her father was a mechanic who also operated an independent business on the side. Her mother was a homemaker.

Communication in the Family

Subject #2 grew up having both parents living in the house. She indicated that her mother and father did not communicate very well. She commented that her parents actually had a terrible marriage, but back in those days people did not get divorced. She indicated that her father would come home from work, take care of the things that the man of the house was supposed to take care of, and leave. Communication between the mother and father were only about matters of the house and children. Although there was little adult-to-adult conversation there was good communication between the children-to-parent and the sibling-to-sibling. Subject had excellent communication channels between herself and her father and herself and her mother. In actuality, the father and daughter were very close and spent much time together. The subject was also very close to her mother since the mother was home every day. She indicated that both of her parents were from the South and were ñno nonsenseö kind of people. What she indicated as no nonsense kind of people is that there was a lot of yelling in the home. Whenever she did

something wrong her mother would yell at her because she (the mother) did not have time or patience for nonsense. Because of all the yelling in the home environment the subject indicated that she learned to be pretty assertive just to be heard.

Dinners were together as a family when possible, but the father was not always home for dinner because of his work schedule. Communication was made at the dinner table, mostly between the mother and the children. Dinner conversation consisted of school activities, neighbors and the activity of the neighborhood, but conversation was intermittent due to the fact the television would be playing during dinner. The family focus was not so much on the conversation or the food, but what was playing on the television.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #2 considered herself a very good student in school. In actuality, she was so advanced for her age that she started public school at the age of four years. However, although academically ready to begin school at the age of four years, the subject states that she was not emotionally ready. She had difficulties in kindergarten and believed that these difficulties were the result of her teacher not liking her. The subject indicated that the teacher was on her case all the time. This unwanted and negative attention made her dread going to school emotionally, but she still did well academically. Soon after finishing kindergarten her family moved to a new and, in her words, better school district.

In the new school district students were divided by academic skill into three different learning levels. Level A was for the most academically successful students. Level B was for the academically average students. Level C was for the academically challenged students. The subject was assigned to Level B in the first grade, but soon

advanced to Level A. Because Level A was perceived for “gifted” students she did her best to excel in all of her studies. From her perceived advantage point of being among the top in her class she was self-motivated to achieve. She was very aware that neither of her parents was highly educated and she wanted to make them proud of her. To encourage his daughter to do her best in school her father would give her money for every “A” that she earned on her report card. She continued to advance and excel during her elementary and junior high school. When she was about to begin high school she asked her parents to be moved from public school to a private Catholic school. Both parents agreed and she attended Catholic school through high school. The curriculum at the Catholic school was much more intense and challenging than public school. It appeared to her that the effort she put forth to earn an “A” in public school only earned her a “C” in the Catholic school. This change in curriculum challenged her for a couple of semesters, but she finally found her stride and began to excel once more. Her efforts earned her a placement on the Catholic school’s honor roll for the rest of the school terms and through to graduation.

Immediately after graduating high school the subject enrolled in a private, four-year liberal arts college in Ohio. With the momentum flowing from her experiences at the Catholic school the subject excelled in college, earning admission into both the “Torch and Key” and the Freshman Honor Society. She indicated that she had no communication problems with faculty, staff, or peers. After graduation the interview left academia and went to work for a prominent book publishing company. Unfortunately, her position at the book publishing company was not very satisfying or fulfilling, so, with the support of her parents, she enrolled in law school.

Law school proved to be an academic challenge for her and, for the first time in her life, she did not earn straight A's. However, she did admit that she had not apply herself at her studies as she had done previously in her life and she squeaked by with low Bs and high Cs. It was clear during this portion of the interview that her attitude towards learning had change substantially. She remarked that because she did not graduate at the top five or ten percent of her class she would never make the money as someone whom was at the top of their class or someone who attended a top school like Harvard or Virginia.

Communication Incident

The subject reported no communication problems throughout her prominent academic years. However, she did have one incident that she recalled where she was intimidated by the company she was associating with. As a senior in college he participated in a trip to Washington DC. On this trip she spent time with people that were from eastern portion of the United States. Many of these people were from very wealthy, educated families and attended prestigious colleges like Dartmouth and Princeton. The subject indicated that she felt like she was from a completely different culture, being lower middle class and attending a small liberal-arts college in Ohio. During our interview the subject frequently called new social group as WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). As a 21 year old African-American woman the above mentioned situation was intimidating, uncomfortable, and stressful. She did not like to communicate with or among this group of people.

Communication in the Classroom

As a young child the subject was relatively quiet although she did not believe she was shy. She indicated that she remembered a lot of shy kids who did talk a lot in class, but whom were quiet in social settings. That is how she felt that she was, just shy in social settings. She stated, "when I was a little girl, I was very shy and would hardly talk to anyone. I would have a handful of friends that I would talk to, but I wouldn't talk to anyone else. A lot of kids, I think, thought I was stuck up, but I was just shy" (personal communication, November 19, 2010). In the classroom setting she was very participatory. She indicated that she liked to be called on by the teacher and the recognition that she received by her teacher and her fellow classmates. She stated that the recognition made her "feel good" and gave her some counterbalance for her inability to communicate in social settings. This type of classroom participation continued throughout junior high and high school.

As a nontraditional graduate student in law school her communication style was the same as it had been historically. She indicated that communicating in class was rewarded by many teachers by bumping your grade up. These grade enhancement and other rewards were more personally rewarding, as she stated:

There was this one constitutional law class I had that had two incentives to participate. They use the Socratic Method in law school to call on you and if you don't participate, they may call on you when they're covering something you don't know very well. Then, you'll be embarrassed. You're better off if you raise your hand and volunteer something you know well. And the other thing was in this class. If you participated a lot and the professor liked your answers or liked

you, he would give you a little checkmark. I can still see him doing this to this day. If it was someone he really liked, I mean, you knew it was an honor if he checked your name before you started talking. He would add up the number of checks at the end of the term and would bump your grade up a half-grade.

(personal communication, November 19, 2010).

Although the subject stated that she believed law school was a learning process for everyone involved there were some people in her class that were very bright, and these people would say things that were right on point. These people had the perfect response every time and the way they say it is magnificent! She indicated that, although she was not as brilliant as some of the others, she was not intimidated at all about speaking up. However, she commented that class participation was part of the course grade, so she had to speak up.

After law school the subject entered the workforce. Being close to retirement in her current job, and wanting to begin a new academic adventure, she enrolled in Ohio University to pursue another graduate degree. Having overcome her "social shyness" many years ago she looked forward to participating with her graduate cohort. She indicated that she is never apprehensive about talking in class because she has become really good at it. She commented that she can express herself very clearly, gives decent answers, and generally gets good feedback from her teachers and peers.

The cohort that she is currently in is nontraditional in that it meets only one weekend each month with participants meeting for four hours on Friday, eight hours on Saturday, and four hours on Sunday. The remainder of the coursework is completed at home, online, and on the Blackboard Academic Suite. Due to the structure of this

particular cohort communication is very limited and is usually made electronically. However, when class is in session the subject does make an effort to participate in class. She indicated that her instructors seem to thrive on class participation. In addition, if people are not forthcoming with their comments and discussions they will begin calling on people randomly (similar to her experience in law school). She stated, "I know very well that if he asks questions, we better volunteer some answers" (personal communication, November 19, 2010).

The vocabulary used by the instructors and textbooks in her graduate cohort amounts to, what she calls "academic gobble-de-goop". She indicated that the extensive use of uncommon words, terms, and research jargon makes learning a little more difficult comprehension wise, but does not hinder her learning experience. She commented that much of the vocabulary that she sees in graduate school did not seem to be around in the 1970s when she was in high school and college. This was especially true in college when she was pursuing an undergraduate degree in journalism. The journalism department did not use unfamiliar vocabulary or profession jargon. However, as a graduate student she has come to expect this type of vocabulary and she does not allow it to intimidate her.

When attending in-person class meetings for this cohort the subject prefers to sit in the corner by the door with another nontraditional woman. This location is comfortable for her because she is claustrophobic. However, if she is in another location she would always sit at the end of a row.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #2 was an African-American professional woman that met with me before her class meeting time on the Ohio University campus. She was comfortably

dressed in a blouse and pants and had her dinner with her. She dabbled with her dinner during our interview, was very open with her responses, but did not maintain good eye contact. I would attribute this to her trying to eat her dinner while conversing because she was very friendly and happy to be helping with this study. Participant #2 grew up in a middle class, blue collar family. As with Participant #1, the mother in this household did not allow "stupid" conversations. She maintained her high level of academic performance throughout her high school years and entered college at the traditional age. She had no communication problems during her undergraduate career and she finished her Bachelor's degree with honors. Participant #2 entered professional school a few years after earning her Bachelor's degree. In professional school she quickly learned that you either voluntarily participated in classroom discussions or received the wrath of your professor. The professor's wrath always took place in front of the entire class and she found the process intimidating and humiliating. Participant #2 preferred to sit in the classroom with her nontraditional peers. Although she prefers to sit near a door, any location in the room will suffice. Participant #2 believed that the vocabulary used in graduate level courses was above her normal comfort zone. Research papers and scholarly articles were full of what she called "gobbledygook." The vocabulary used and accepted in the 21st century was not used in the 1970s by her or her peers.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #2 does not have any measurable communication apprehension in the classroom. Participant #2 is very sure of herself personally, professionally, and academically. She stated that she liked to be called on by teachers and basked in the attention she received from her

classmates. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #2 does experience some degree of communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of a graduate vocabulary. It is important to note here that Participant #2 has a professional vocation that requires her to speak in front of people for a living. Introduced in the beginning of this study was the notion that the concept of communication apprehension was interchangeable with other communication rubrics such as stage fright, speech anxiety, communication apprehension, reticence, and social anxiety. It is the finding of this study that this is not necessarily true. Participant #2 and several other participants stated that they had only a small measure of communication apprehension when giving a speech in settings such as at work, at volunteer functions, and/or in group settings outside of the academic setting. This small measure of communication apprehension was also felt by Participant #2 in regards to her graduate level vocabulary skills. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that Participant #2 did not grow up as an impoverished child and does not have any measurable communication apprehension due to that factor.

Interview #3

My third interview was with a European-American man that was born in 1962. The interview took place on November 20, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. at Alden Library on the Ohio University campus in Athens Ohio.

Background

Subject #3 was raised in a white, lower middle class suburban community in the northeastern portion of the United States. The demographics of his neighborhood would

be estimated at 99% white, 80% union, very crime free, and very Democratic. Everyone in the neighborhood attended one large public high school.

Communication in the Family

The family dynamics consisted of a controlling truck driver father who was an extreme yeller. Mother stayed at home and was the caretaker of four children. There were two older brothers and a younger sister in the family. The subject stated that because of the sibling dynamics he became a very abrupt person. He felt like every night he had to fight his way to a place at the dinner.

The family set down every evening for dinner where dad would control the conversations. The conversations were not interesting and all parties departed the dinner table as soon as possible. The family pretty much scattered and lived their lives on separate plains. The subject liked being outdoors and stayed outside most of the time. He was considered by his family to be a loud mouth that liked to embarrass other people. His mother provided the peace keeping duties between him, his father, and his siblings.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #3 went to public school for all twelve years. He stated that he was an average student although he did not work very hard. His saving grace throughout his elementary and high school years was that he was an athlete. In the school district in which he resided, and in the culture that he grew up in, a student athlete, especially a football player, was advanced through his academics without having to struggle.

Post High School

Due to the fact that subject #3 was not ready to enter college he joined the Navy before high school graduation. His goal for enlisting was to be able to goof off and enjoy

living life for a while, but also to earn money for college. However, after his initial four years in the Navy were up he reenlisted. During the next 18 years he would take an occasional college course here and there, but nothing very substantial. While being stationed in Europe, and with a growing family, he began thinking about why he entered the Navy. He had goofed off and lived a good life, but he had not completed his promise that he made to himself that he would earn a Bachelor's degree. With time running out before he retired from the Navy he enrolled in an American college that operated a satellite site in Europe.

Undergraduate Career

By this time he entered college to complete an undergraduate degree the subject was in his late thirties. Already considered a nontraditional college student he began his career by taking classes in the evenings after work. Most of his evening classes had an even distribution of traditionally aged students (18-19 years old) and nontraditional students. From the very beginning the subject felt that he was smarter than his peers. To demonstrate his academic superiority he liked to sit in the front row during classes, where he was an active participant. During our interview he stated, "I don't know if you've ever noticed an older student that has gone back into a class with 18 and 19 year olds, but they are engaged in the front of the room. They are the ones asking all the questions and driving all the 18 year olds nuts!" (personal communication, 2010). With motivation and hard work he completed his studies for his Bachelor's degree in only three years. He was the first in his family to earn one.

Communication in the Classroom

Having earned \$50,000 in GI bill money from his service to the Navy the subject began searching for a graduate program. He found what he was looking for at Ohio University. In his current graduate program his classmates are all nontraditional students. This nontraditional program is geared towards the needs of older students with classes only on the occasional weekend. In his weekend cohort most of the participants had attended undergraduate school at a traditional age, so they are now only in their late 20s and 30s. However, a small handful of his cohort are in their 40s and older. Although the subject stated earlier that he always sat in the front of the class he states now that he sits near the front, but never directly in front. He commented that he likes to sit near the front, but over to one side because he is more comfortable there. He is still an active participant in class discussions and can become very passionate about topics being discussed.

In this cohort participation consists of both whole group and small groups discussions. It was during those discussions that the interviewees felt that he is was not as eloquent as the people setting around him. He pauses before he stated:

I am intimidated by those people. You know, they have that long thought and long pause and you think, "Oh God here it comes. I am gone. They say things that I want to say, but just couldn't make it out. So, I do hold back. Absolutely. When they say things in class, it sounds more intelligent. I don't think I've ever developed that skill of that long pause and thinking through the whole thought and then putting it out there. I mean, I can sit back and think about it for 10 minutes and come up with something, but in those conversations, sometimes you have to be apprehensive not to talk because you're not going to be quite as

eloquent. And, you're right you're going to sound stupid. (personal communication, 2010)

Even though he is always well prepared for class he does not feel that his verbal communications are adequate. However, he adds that what he lacks in verbal skills he makes up for in his writing skills. His papers are well thought out and prepared with ease and grace. He feels he is a talented writer that can put the words on paper that escape him during class.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #3 was a 49 year old European-American man that met with me on a Saturday afternoon, accompanied by his wife and two teenaged daughters. Participant #3 was very energetic and had a bounce in his step. When he arrived for the interview he wore blue jeans and an Ohio University sweatshirt. His family sat behind us during the interview, but the Participant was very forthcoming with his responses, so I will not consider their presence a distraction. This participant entered undergraduate study as a nontraditional student taking evening classes at a community college. Nearly half of his peers were also nontraditional age and he felt that he fit in perfectly. He sat in the front of the classroom and participated in every class discussion. After completing his Bachelor's degree Participant #3 looked for an online graduate program and did not want to take the GRE because he was weak in mathematics and statistics. He also wanted to work like-minded, nontraditional students. Participant #3 is quite intimidated by some of his graduate peers and does not want to sound stupid in their presences.(lacks confidence in his ability to express these thoughts verbally).

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #3 does have a measureable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. His search for an online graduate program and his inability to verbally communicate his thoughts and ideas in front of his graduate classroom peers attests to this. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #3 does experience a high degree of communication apprehension in the classroom due to his lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #3 referred several times that he cannot communicate as eloquently as his peers. He believes that his contribution to classroom discussions would make him appear stupid. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that Participant #3 does not have any measurable communication apprehension due to the environment in which he was raised.

Interview #4

My forth interview was with a European-American woman that was born in 1962. The interview took place in subject's office in Athens Ohio on December 8, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

Background

Subject #4 grew up in Southern Ohio in a lower-to-middle income household. The neighborhood was prominently white and most of the neighbors were more middle income than the subject's family. However, during her teenage years her father became more prosperous and the family moved up the social scale to comfortable middle class.

Communication in the Family

Subject #4 grew up the youngest child of three which included one brother and one sister. The family dynamics includes both her parents as well as her mother's parents. Her father was a skilled labor worker whom moved up the ranks to management. Her mother did not work outside of the home. The communication within the family and within the community was very good. There was a lot of socialization within the neighborhood and everyone talked to everyone. This included dinner conversations with the family. The communication lines were always open in both directions for everyone.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #4 began her undergraduate course work right out of high school. This was possible for her because she was an excellent student in high school and received a full-ride scholarship to college. As a traditional undergraduate student she participated in class and enjoyed the classroom experience. After receiving her undergraduate degree she left academia to enter the workforce and to get married. When the organization that she worked for was taken over by another entity she realized she needed an advanced degree to move up the corporate ladder. Because of her work schedule she enrolled in an online graduate program.

Communication in the Classroom

As a graduate student taking online classes in this particular program subject #4 does not have face to face residency with her peers. However, she does communicate with her peers by telephone and by using classroom and social technologies such as Blackboard and Skype. She prefers the company of her nontraditional peers because she believes there is a difference between their type of work ethic and communication skills than those of their traditional peers. She vocalized this premise as follows:

Maybe it's just the people I gravitate towards; they are the ones with the attitude of, "I want to get an A on this project! I'm paying for this, I want to do well, and I want to get it done! I want to work on this!" It seems like the younger classmates I work with are much more laid back. They don't seem to be as concerned about the deadlines and getting a good grade. All they want to do is chat on their cell phones. It is their way of life. Nontraditional students want to talk to you about their kids, your progress in class, daily events. The traditional students didn't want to hear about that kind of stuff. They didn't care. They didn't ask. It was just a different dynamic. (personal communication, 2010)

In verbal communications with her traditionally aged peers the subject indicated she had no problem. However, when comparing her writing skills with that of her traditionally aged peers she indicated that they use more "five dollar words" than she does. She concluded that as an older student she focuses on communicating with people at all communication levels, not just graduate students and instructors. She found it important for her to revise her papers when compared to her traditionally aged peers, she stated, "We would combine on a paper and I would think, "Wow, that's written really well!" I didn't feel like my paper was as elaborate, so I would often go back and edit mine and bring the paper up to what I felt was a higher level" (personal communication, 2010).

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #4 was a 48 year old European-American woman whom I met in her office in Athens Ohio. Participant #4 is an administrator at a healthcare facility for which she has worked for a number of years. Her motivation to enter graduate school was motivated by a recent company takeover of her facility. She was professionally attired

and very welcoming to me and my endeavor. Participant #4 is enrolled in online graduate classes at Ohio University with no face-to-face meetings or discussions. Communication in her program occurs over the telephone or through a Web-based communication system. Even with the online delivery of her program, Participant #4 prefers to communicate exclusively with her nontraditional peers. She stated that she does not have anything in common with her traditionally aged peers. Participant #4 stated that her traditional aged classmates post papers on the Web-based communication system that are superior to hers in both vocabulary and intellect. She stated that her vocabulary is a more common everyday type of vocabulary and that she does not use or comprehend five dollar words. These differences give her an inferiority complex that requires her to write and rewrite her papers over and over again so as to incorporate the proper graduate level vocabulary into her writings. Other than her academic writing and communication in the classroom Participant #4 has no problems with verbal communication. She gives presentations in front of groups in her administrative role and has no difficulties speaking or being understood.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #4 does not have a measureable degree of verbal communication apprehension as it relates to her online graduate coursework. However, Participant #4 does demonstrate a high level of communication apprehension as it relates to written communication. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #4 does experience a high degree of communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of graduate vocabulary skills. Participant #4 feels inferior to her traditional aged peers and must write

and rewrite her papers before feeling they are up to the standard for submittal. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that Participant #4 does not have any measurable communication apprehension due to the environment in which she was raised.

Interview #5

My fifth interview was with a European-American man that was born in 1963. The interview took place in a coffee shop on the Ohio University campus on December 17, 2010 at 11:00 a.m.

Background

Subject #5 grew up in a small town in Northeastern West Virginia. He described this town as being small, but not urban or rural. The majority of residents in this town were 98% white and the other 2% African-American. The high school he attended was the poorest school of the three in town, one being private and the other being different school district. His family lived below the federal poverty level.

Communication in the Family

Subject #5 lived with his mother and three siblings after his parents divorced. He stated that the divorce was very ugly within the home with much yelling and fighting. These fights would get physical at times and the children would stay very quiet, huddled as a group for support. He stated that no violence was ever directed at the children, but that these episodes were very painful and very hurtful for everyone. He also indicated that he felt like his family was the talk of the town because divorce back in those days was scandalous. Of the children in the household he had two older siblings, a brother and a sister, and a younger brother. His father had been a career college student who never

really worked and who disappeared after the divorce. His mother worked outside the home both before and after the divorce. She never remarried and was the sole provider for the family. There was not much communication between his mother and the children, as he stated:

Mom was from stoic German stock. They don't believe in discussing feelings, this or that, or the other. In my family communication, it is simply a form of conveying information. If we have nothing new to say, we don't talk to each other. If there is something new to say, then we talk. We're not one of these, you call up your sister every three days and say, "Hey, how you doing?" We just don't do that and never have. (personal communication, 2010)

Academic Proficiency

Subject # 5 did well academically throughout his grammar and high school years. However, because of his family's income level he had some issues at school that left him with little self-worth. He elaborated on a couple of these social incidents that impacted him during this time. At the time in history schools would routinely separate kids during lunch period, one side of the cafeteria was for students receiving free or reduced lunch, and the other side was for everybody else. He commented on this as follows, "So, you know, you're in the free-reduced line and here's the real people over here" (personal communication, 2010). Then there was the time when he was in ninth grade and was playing basketball on the high school team. His coach told the players that everyone on the team had to wear the same, top of the line Converse tennis shoes. All of the other players came from families where money was not an issue so they purchased the tennis shoes with no problem. When he told his mother about the tennis shoes his mother flat

out refused to buy them. Unfortunately for him his mother called his basketball coach and told him about their financial situation. This must not have sat well with the coach because the very next week the coach, who was also his math teacher, dropped a box of shoes on his desk in front of everybody. He was mortified and it left him with a permanent dislike to be the center of attention.

Subject #5 was offered a small scholarship out of high school and he was admitted in to a journalism program. As journalism major he commented that he had no real communication problems except when speaking with someone from another culture. At these times he would find himself saying, "Well that's not what I meant, I meant this" (personal communication, 2010). After earning his Bachelor's degree Subject #5 was very intent on getting out in the real world and getting a job. With a background in journalism he landed several jobs that required good communication and vocabulary skills. Having found success in the industry that he enjoyed he settled down to raise a family.

Communication in the Classroom

Subject #5 was reluctant to pursue a graduate degree because he did not want to take graduate classes with "kids". However he enrolled in a Master's program and was delighted with the experience, which he described as follows:

Most of the kids were between 22 and 28 years old on average. It was a great experience! I loved every minute of it and I still do. Number one, they are wicked sharp all of them. They were full of energy, full of life, full of hope, full of optimism; all those things we tend to lose once you're out there and get pummeled around a bit. (personal communication, 2010)

He found communicating with these students very interesting and thought that the communication issues brought up by these students were both deep and wide. However, he would get lost when communicating on cultural issues stating he had no references as to what they were discussing. For example, they were consuming things in terms of media that never occurred to him and they spent time with social media outlets that would never occur to him to spend time on. He likes to read the New York Times every morning and they liked to Face Book and YouTube. He stated that his cultural references were in the 1960s and 1970s and theirs were in the 1990s. However, these differences did create many hours of conversations about culture, movies, music, etc. He stated that he never came up to snuff with their cultural references, but really didn't want to.

After earning his Master's degree Subject #5 immediately enrolled in a Doctoral program. This doctoral program was described by subject #5 as a hybrid class with some graduate students, but mostly undergraduate students. During class periods the subject stated that he preferred to sit in the back of the classroom with students around his own age. He stated that this seating arrangement was not so much by his own design, but because the younger students were always sitting up front. He commented that the old people liked to cluster together.

Subject #5 stated that he never participates in class discussions in these hybrid classes because he has no frame of reference. He summarized this as follows:

I never speak. I mean there is nothing I can contribute that these people would understand that the undergrads would understand. As far as the professors goes they seem to gear their instruction to the undergrad portion and the graduate portion is always an afterthought. This is by necessity however. If you have a

class of 23 people and only four of them are grad students you are going to gear everything to the undergrads. (personal communication, 2010)

He had a very interesting turn on why he does not participate in class. He stated that he does not want to appear arrogant, as he stated:

I think the fear is that I don't want to come across as arrogant. I can say "I've seen this before"; "I've done this before"; and "This is what I've done." My fear is more that I don't want to come across as a know it all. I don't want to come across as, here's the old irrelevant dude sitting in the back, so I just be quite.

Silence is always better. (personal communication, 2010)

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #5 was a 48 year old European-American that agreed to meet with me at a local coffee shop in Athens, Ohio. Participant #5 arrived very late for our meeting, but that was due to his class being released late. Carrying his backpack, Participant #5 wore a men's dress shirt and blue jeans. The interview was difficult due to other conversations in the coffee shop, but Participant #5 was fine with speaking louder and directly into the tape recorder. Participant #5 grew up in extreme poverty and in a household where communication was loud and violent. Because of his family dynamics Participant #5 rarely communicated with family or friends. Because his family moved around so often he rarely had friends to communicate with, and when the family did put down roots, the scandal of his parents' divorce kept him quite still. Being on public assistance embarrassed Participant #5 and he kept to himself during his time in elementary and high school. In the household, communication was limited to a means to communicate information. Expression of feelings or ideas were not conveyed or

encouraged. Participant #5 began his undergraduate education at the traditional age had no communication problems. Upon entering graduate school Participant #5 found his younger counterparts had a vastly deeper understanding of modern technology and culture in the graduate field that he was pursuing. This difference in technology and the concomitant vocabulary left Participant #5 behind in classroom and group discussions. Participant #5 usually did not participate due to his perceived lack of verbal communication ability. He likes to sit in the back of the classroom and just be quiet because he does not want to be perceived as the irrelevant or ignorant. Participant #5 sat with his nontraditional classmates when in class. He feels that he has the ability to communicate with them in a way that they will understand and appreciate. In this company he actually feels that he is well informed and a good motivator. He communicates very well and efficiently with this group as they share real work experiences. He actually worries that he may seem arrogant when he speaks about his life experiences, so he tries to include other types of anecdotes.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #5 does have a considerable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. Although Participant #5 would like to share his learned knowledge in the classroom he does not because he does not want to sound arrogant. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #5 does experience a measurable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom due to his lack of a graduate vocabulary. This is especially noticeable when communicating about modern technology in his field of study. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that more research would need to

be completed to determine if Participant #5's communication apprehension in the classroom could be related to the environment in which he was raised.

Interview #6

My sixth interview was with a European-American man that was born in 1950. The interview took place in a conference room on the Ohio University campus on December 22, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

Background

Subject #6 grew up in a small town in northwestern Ohio. The subdivision that his family lived in was lower, middle class and predominantly white. The subdivision was built in an agricultural area so there was lots of farm land surrounding their home.

Communication in the Family

Subject #6 grew up with both parents in the household. He was the oldest of three siblings, one brother and one sister. His father was the only one who worked outside the home. His mother was a homemaker and socialite. His parents lived in their own separate worlds and they did not communicate very well. His father kept mostly to himself because he was neither a verbal nor a social person. However, his mother was very verbal, very social, and tended to be kind of an authoritarian. She had to have things done a certain way and the children were expected to complete these tasks as assigned. When it came to communications within the family neither his mother nor father chose to communicate with each other or the children. Family dinners were common, but there was not really any communication. After dinners and at various other times his parents would discuss day to day affairs and stuff like that, but that was all.

The siblings never really communicated between themselves. His sister was five years younger so they did not have anything in common to talk about. His brother was turned against him by his mother who told his brother how much better his older brother was than him. He resented his mother for turning his brother against him and feels the loss still of that brother since they do not have any involvement in each other's life.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #6 went to a public city schools that were highly rated in the community. The school district was ninety-five percent white. Subject #6 did very well academically throughout his elementary and high school career and finished in the top five percent of his class. After high school subject #6 went straight into college, but dropped out to join the military. After his stint in the military he went to work, got married, and purchased a small farm. Also during this time he finished his undergraduate degree.

When subject #6 reentered academia to start a Master's degree he was 29 years old. Attending classes with 18 year olds at this time did not bother the Subject at all. In fact, he stated that he felt like he had some advantages over his younger peers because he was older and felt like he had more of a sense of what he needed to do. He stated that he was not as easily influenced as the younger students and this actually had an effect on his relationship with the other students and the instructors. He said that he felt did not know exactly what to do with him

During this time Subject #6 actually had difficulties with his classes. He was only earning C's mostly because the technical parts of his courses were beyond the depth and range that he had ever done before. Even though he was not uncomfortable in the classroom he did tend to sit in the back rows during class. He stated that he sat in the

back because he had personal difficulties during this time and it was not academically related.

Communication in the Classroom

Approximately six years after earning his Master's degree Subject #6 enrolled into a doctoral program. In his doctoral program he realized that he was not only older than most of his classmates, but he was older than most of his instructors. This age difference seems to create a communication problem between him and his instructors. He stated that some of the communication difficulties come from his inability to learn as quickly as he did when he was younger. However, the majority of his difficulties came from instructors who could not appreciate the fact that he knew as much as they did about the subject matter. To this issue he stated:

I think part of the problem is that there is this sort of label placed on graduate student that has a certain denotation, but carries with it a certain connotation. I, in general, have been treated with connotation; that is graduate student who's gone straight through school, hasn't done anything else, and is somewhat still wet behind the ears. That's what I've observed and how I've been treated even though I have more industrial experience than a couple of professors put together.

(personal communication, 2010)

This communication barrier makes him feel like he does not fit in. Therefore, he does not communicate in classes unless he has to. He summarized his lack of participation as follows:

When I'm in a setting with other students and in a classroom I generally do not participate because I really don't see the point. I think there is too much of a

barrier over, sort of an intellectual propriety. I chose not to share it because what's the point. I see that there is not much room given for experiential kinds of input. I tend to sit in the back of the classroom, watch, and listen. (personal communication, 2010)

When he does participate in class he tends to be more thoughtful and will say something if he feels it is a worthy contribute to the discussion.

Subject #6 does not like to meet new people and would prefer not to have to be in that situation. He does not like to approach people to initiate conversation and does not like to be approached by others. He stated that he never saw any of his family members engaged in any conversation except idle chit chat. He stated that most people do not even know how to communication at an intimate level.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #6 was a 61 year old European-American man who met with me at my work. Participant #6 seemed very nervous and would not take off his coat for the entirety of the interview. Participant #6 was very apprehensive of the interview procedure, but agreed to participate and signed the consent form. Verbal communication for Participant #6 was very limited during his childhood years. Participant #6 went directly to college after high school, but dropped out to join the military. He finished his undergraduate degree after a three year stint in the military. Participant #6 preferred to sit in the rear of the classroom and did not like to communicate during class periods. He felt that being out of academia for as long as he had been left him clueless about his chosen field of study. Participant #6 rarely volunteered to speak in classroom discussions. He stated this was a personal defect on his part because he did not actually mind speaking in front of people,

but always foundered on his words and word choices. Participant #6 referred to his inability to find the right word choices as "academic reflex," the inability to learn things quickly. He believes that older, nontraditional students are at a disadvantage to their younger peers because research has shown that the aging process slows the human brain processes. He does not like to speak up in class because his younger professors do not appreciate his life experiences in his area of study. The faculty seems to put up a barrier to his successful communication in the classroom because of his age. Participant #6 prefers to sit in the back of the classroom and be as invisible as possible. He does not want to share his work experiences with the class or the professor. He does not like to meet new people or socialize on any level. He believes that no one really talks about anything interesting and that no one really cares to hear other people communicate.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #6 does have a measureable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. Participant #6 does not communicate on any level during classroom discussion and prefers to be left alone. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #6 does not experience communication apprehension in the classroom due to his lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #6 has an adequate graduate vocabulary and does not express any inhibitions in regards to said vocabulary. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that the communication apprehension displayed by Participant #6 does not relate to being raised in an impoverished household. On the contrary, Participant #6 was raised in a modestly comfortable home environment. However, the home was

very dysfunctional and verbal communication was very lacking. This might be an interesting study for future investigation

Interview #7

My seventh interview was with a European-American woman that was born in 1955. The interview took place in subject's office on the Ohio University campus in Athens Ohio on January 26, 2011 at 2:15 p.m.

Background

Subject #7 grew up in a suburban area on the West Coast. The community was 98% white.

Communication in the Family

Subject #7 was the eldest of three, having two younger brothers. Both parents were in the home until the Subject was in high school, at which time they divorced. Her father was a commercial truck driver that worked local routes. He was home every night and during the weekends. Her mother was a stay at home mom, but went back to school to earn a nursing license.

There was not a lot of communication in the household and what communication that did occur had little substance, as Subject #7 stated, "I look back and nothing occurs to me, nothing stands out, of any particular interesting topics, conversations, or not a lot of interaction. Not a sense of we're ignoring each other, just watch TV, etc." (personal communication, 2011).

Academic Proficiency

Subject #7 went to public city school. She did not do particularly well academically and especially struggled with math. However, she stated that she was a very good reader

and used this talent to help her get through her studies. She stated that was not very popular in school and this may have contributed to her not liking school very much. Subject #7 stated, "I never sensed that I was stupid, but I didn't particularly enjoy school. I didn't feel comfortable" (personal communication, 2011). In the classroom she was happy to participate in classroom discussions and never minded speaking in class.

When Subject #7 advanced to junior high and then high school her grades went from bad to worse. It was during this time that she got involved in drugs and partying for the first time. Academics fell by the wayside and school became less and less important to her. After several suspensions and an expulsion she dropped out of high school. She wandered around for a couple of years after that and finally earned her GED. Still having no interest in her education she hitchhiked around the country, met a boy, and had a baby by the time she was 18 years old. Three more children would follow in fast succession. As her children grew and when off to college she began to regret her educational decisions of the past, which she stated, "I decided to do that because I have always been ashamed of quitting high school. All my friends were college educated and I felt that it was about time for me to do that also" (personal communication, 2011). She enrolled in a technical college to work on an undergraduate degree. One of the first courses that she had to take was introduction to computing. Subject #7 had never even turned on a computer let alone had any idea on how to use one. She stated, "I had never turned a computer on in my life! I cried because I was so afraid of the technology and not knowing what to do. Then the teacher started talking about email and I didn't know what that was!" (personal communication, 2011).

Although feeling totally out of her element she was successful and earned her undergraduate degree. Finding that she actually enjoyed being in an academic setting, and wanting to have an impact on other people's lives she decided to continue her educational pursuits. She decided that her graduate studies should be in communication, so she located a Master's degree program that would allow her the opportunity to pursue this degree without having to take the Graduate Records Examination (GRE), which she stated, "because of that math problem I had and my math phobia and all of that, I thought 'Wow, that's terrific. This is communication program and there is no GRE!' (personal communication, 2011)". However, after being accepted into that program she felt like a fish out of water. She indicated that she did not think she was even speaking the same language as the other students in the program. For a moment she felt like she made a terrible mistake enrolling in a graduate program, but soon she found class that were more "hands on", which was to her liking. After struggling for many years she finally hit her stride and actually completed two Master's degrees. After teaching for a year she decided to enroll into a doctoral program at Ohio University.

Communication in the Classroom

When Subject #7 began her undergraduate education she attended a state school that had a high percentage of nontraditional students. Although she did not feel segregated by her age she did have regrets about not attending college earlier in her life. She idolized the college experience and actually envied the younger students that were achieving the entire educational experience. She was also disappointed in the caliber of her fellow traditional students as they seemed to not put as much effort into their

classroom performances. However, socially she felt out of touch with these students, as she stated:

I sort of felt a little bit out of the loop because I was in a discipline that I was not particularly familiar and these other students seemed to have an inside track. They also seemed to be the ones who were given all the teaching positions, so they all knew each other. It wasn't a huge deal, but I was aware of it. (personal communication, 2011)

Subject #7 commented that she was more comfortable around the students that were in her age group and would partner up with them when possible. She enjoys the comradery with her nontraditional peers because she feels they have walked in the same shoes. As a graduate student she indicated that she likes to participate in classroom discussions. She stated that she was not intimidated by other students and actually struggles to limit her participation so that others can join in discussions. That said, she also indicated that she was not "scholarly" in nature. She clarified this by saying:

I felt that I had this idea of how scholars should behave or approach learning and that wasn't me. I didn't like doing research like the younger students. I felt like not only am I a nontraditional student because of my age, but I don't bring some of these traditional academic personalities. (personal communication, 2011)

One of the reasons that she felt she was not very scholar was her inability to focus on tasks for long periods of time. She decided to be tested for Attention Deficit Disorder and was positively diagnosed while in graduate school. After the diagnosis and the drug treatment intervention everything for her changed. She began to see the world differently and that included her academics.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #7 was a 46 year old European-American woman that met with me in her office on the Ohio University campus. When I arrived for the interview Participant #7 was talking on the telephone and ignored me for about thirty minutes. When she finally approached me, Participant was disheveled and visibly tired. She slouched in her seat during the interview and continually went off subject.

Participant #7 did well academically in elementary and high school even though she would be later diagnosed with Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as an adult. Participant #7 struggled with most school participants but seemed to do well in reading. Her lack of verbal communication skills made it difficult to make friends. Participant #7 never particularly liked or enjoyed going to school and did not volunteer to communicate in classes. A high school dropout she decided to earn a bachelor's degree as a nontraditional student. As a nontraditional undergraduate student, Participant #7 she had no verbal communication problems that she can recall. However, because she was an adult when she was finally diagnosed with ADHD, she better understands the academic problems she faced as a child. Participant #7 now takes medication for her disorder and believes the medication is the reason she was successful as an undergraduate. In fact, she had such success that she immediately entered graduate school. In graduate school, aided with medication, she was very successful. However, she did feel a bit out of place because the discipline that she had entered was not one that she was familiar with. She believes that the traditional aged graduate student had a better depth and breadth of knowledge than she does. This knowledge gives them an advantage over her, especially when communicating in the classroom. Participant #7 gravitated

towards her nontraditional peers and they seemed to commiserate together on their lack of research and participant knowledge. Because of her age and her prior drug use, Participant #7 thinks she has more difficulty with remembering details, especially research data and other types of scholarly information. She continues to struggle every day with her ADHD and juggling a job with her academic studies. However, she is very optimistic and excited to be in a graduate classroom at Ohio University.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #7 does have a measureable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. However, her apprehension is managed by prescription medication that she takes for her ADHD. In fact, Participant #7 holds a teaching position at a local community college and does speaking engagements at other facilities. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #7 does experience a measureable amount of communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #7 feels that she does not have the level of knowledge as her traditional aged peers and this lack of knowledge hinders her participation in the classroom. In regards to research question #3: It is my interpretation that the communication apprehension displayed by Participant #7 does not relate to being raised in an impoverished household

Interview #8

My eighth interview was with a European-American woman that was born in 1963. The interview took place on the Ohio University Lancaster Ohio campus on February 11, 2011 at 1:45 p.m.

Background

Subject #8 was born and raised in Southwestern Michigan. The community was suburban, middle class, and primarily white. She is the eldest of four children, two other girls and one boy.

Communication in the Family

Subject #8 grew up with both parents in the household. Both of her parents were in the healthcare profession, her father was a physician and her mother was a nurse. Both parents were open and inviting communicators between themselves and the children. This was clearly communicated by the Subject when she stated, "I don't ever remember feeling like there were things we don't talk about or things that go unsaid. I was always very comfortable asking questions, bringing things up, having conversations" (personal communication, 2011). Her parents actually encouraged the children to have their own opinions and those opinions were received and appreciated. This was such a warm, loving and encouraging environment for all the siblings that they all went to college and have successful careers.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #8 attended public school throughout her elementary and high school years. She indicated that she was a very good student and that learning was never difficult for her. She was considered by her teachers as a perfect student. After high school she went straight to a four-year public university close to her home. However, undergraduate academics were kind of difficult for her, as she stated, "When I began my undergraduate studies I went from being top of my class with straight A's to being average, at a C level. I was having a great time away from home, but I really got lost, very much so in a college population of over 40,000 students" (personal communication, 2011). The anonymity of

being in such a large student body and being taught mostly by graduate students caused her to lose her focus. She said that she needed the one-to-one attention that she had received in high school and that many of her friends and siblings had received at smaller colleges. She managed to finish her undergraduate degree, but had no intentions of engaging in more academic study. She began a 20 year working career, married, and raised a family.

Communication in the Classroom

Subject #8 participated in a graduate program that was completed mostly online. She would have class every week live via teleconference over the Web. Other times classes were face-to-face. She loved being in this cohort and found that she was very much more successful at her nontraditional age than she had been at an earlier age, as she stated “I know I am an adult learner now versus where I was when I was 18, 19, and 20. I am a much better student because I take just being in the program more seriously than I did when I was an undergrad” (personal communication, 2011).

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #8 was a 48 year old European-American woman who met with me on the Ohio University campus in Lancaster. Participant #8 had on casual attire and was prepared for a full evening of coursework. However, I became lost on the Lancaster campus and did not find this Participant for over one-half hour. Because of this delay, our interview was hastened because she had to go to class. Participant #8 was very warm and accepting of me and my tardiness. My tape recorder did not want to run on batteries, so we had to move the interview table next to a soda pop machine. The humming of the soda pop machine was very distracting, but we did our best to make the interview successful.

Participant #8 grew up in an affluent family of professional healthcare providers. Verbal communication was the norm in the family and such communication was always pleasant and friendly. She was an exceptional student through high school and went directly to college after high school graduation. Throughout her undergraduate and graduate career she has never shown any signs of communication apprehension.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #8 does not have any measureable degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. In fact, Participant #8 enjoys communicating at all levels in any type of situation. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant #8 does not experience any communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #8 is very confident, direct, and self-assured in communication situations. In regards to research question #3: Participant #8 was not raised in an impoverished household and does not display any traits of communication apprehension.

Interview #9

My ninth interview was with a Native American/European American woman that was born in 1949. The interview took place on June 29, 2011 at 2:30 p.m. at the Dairy Queen restaurant in Nelsonville Ohio.

Background

Subject #9 grew up in a large city in the southwestern portion of the United States (population stated to be around 100,000). Almost everyone in the neighborhood had built their own small homes complete with flowers gardens and swing sets. The residents of her city continuously changed but for the most part it was populated by middle class

families. Her father had a white collar job, but not a really prestigious one. Her mother did not work outside of the home.

Communication in the Family

Being the youngest child of older parents subject #9 felt like she was not really wanted by her parents. Her only sibling, a brother, was 10 years older than her and left for college when she was a small. She stated that she felt that she was raised by a pet cat that her brother had given her before he left home.

Both of her parents had attended college but it was during the Depression and they had to drop out after two years. She stated that her family did have dinners together and there was some communication at the dinner table. It was known that no one was to bring up controversial subjects at dinner. Dinner was supposed to be pleasant and most conversations were about astronomy and the space race. These topics of conversation were enjoyable because her father had always wanted to be an astronomer and her parents actually hosted an astronomy club at their home.

Conversations between her parents were pleasant and she does not recall them fighting a lot. Her mother would talk about her art work and her father would talk about the astronomy club. Because she was small and they were talking about adult subjects she was encouraged to be quiet. However, if she felt like joining a conversation or had something to add to a conversation her parents always listened. I was quiet most the time, but if I did have something to talk about, they listened to me. However, in conversations with her high school friend her mother would dominant the conversation and she felt like she never got a turn to speak.

Academic Proficiency

Subject #9 started public school when she was only four years old. Beginning in the first grade children were divided into three group, which she called 1) the stupid behind young kids who could not do anything; 2) the middle group who was right on schedule for their grade; and 3) the advanced group that was pushed to be ahead (personal communication, 2010). During our interview she stated, "They kept the middle group together and put the stupid slow behind young kids with the fast, smart advanced kids to see how we would do" (personal communication, 2010). She stated that she was in the stupid, slow group and that school work was very hard for her. It is because of the challenging school work that caused her to throw up a lot in school. During this time she was not only scared and was really, really shy.

Once she reached junior high she had found her stride and became a straight "A" student. She excelled in science and won many awards for her talents in that field. She ultimately graduated valedictorian of her high school class.

Communication in the Classroom

Throughout her entire academic career she was very, very shy. She did not want to talk in class, she did not want to be looked at in class, and most of the time she just wanted to crawl under a table and hide. On occasion she might talk to the student sitting next to her, but other than that speaking in class was not something she liked to do at all! This feeling of not wanting people to look at her has plagued her even as a graduate student at Ohio University. In describing one of her current classes she stated:

I took an Anthropology class this quarter and I really did not like talking in that class, but everyone was arranged around the outside of the room in a huge circle.

Whereas I don't mind circles at all, I think they are kind of nice if you have a

small number of people, but the class had a large number of people so we were penned against each other. Everybody was where they could see you, so you felt like you wanted to crawl under the table and hide. There was no shielding or anything that you could feel safe behind. (personal communication, 2010)

In classes where she knew some of the people or classes that have more diversity she sometimes felt more comfortable. Being the only Native American in a prominently ōwhiteö educational system sometimes makes her feel like it is ōthem against meö so she does not participate much.

After earning her Bachelor's degree she left academia briefly, got married, and had three children. When her oldest child was about seven years old both she and her husband began graduate study. However, this arrangement did not last more than a year because her husband secretly enlisted in the military. She quickly withdrew from her studies and moved to another city with her husband. Years would go by before she stepped foot onto an academic campus again. During her time away from academia subject #9 spent much time speaking in public. For one thing she was embracing her Native American heritage and found it very fulfilling to tell stories about the Shawnee roots in Ohio. In addition, she spent a year in Alaska conducting tours for tourist describing the prominence of the boats and ships around the state. During this time she expressed she had no fear of public speaking and in actuality enjoyed talking in public.

It was almost two decades later that subject #9 went back to college to pursue both a Master's and Doctoral degree. Her first few quarters of coursework proved to be challenging, but only on occasion did she care to work within the confines of a group. Communication wise she stated that she did not mind talking in the groups. However,

because her peers were much younger than she was she sometimes felt like she did not have the background or vocabulary that they did. Their vocabulary and background were more contemporary, more up-to-date. In a much contemplated statement she said, "I wasn't up to date at all. Academically I could keep up just fine, but as far as knowing all the terms that you use connection with a particular subject was another story. It was challenging in class" (personal communication, 2011). She commented on how an instructor can also make communicating in class easy or difficult. She indicated that she had one particular class in which the instructor was very encouraging and open to all discussions. With this instructor she did not feel shy and she would actively participate in class discussion. On the other hand she had another instructor whom she called, "A member of the white western patriarchal establishment" (personal communication, 2011). She stated that this instructor would "run her up the wall" with his very non-liberal and conservative religious points of view. Luckily this is the one time she was ever put in this type of situation.

Field Notes and Observations

Participant #9 was a 62 year old Native American-European American woman who met with me at the Nelsonville Ohio Dairy Queen. Our interview was conducted outside of the establishment on a picnic table. She was extremely friendly and easy to talk with. She was dressed in casually with a Native American style to her clothing. The interview was conducted side-by-side, in very close proximity to one another. Participant #9 had very close bonds with her Native American history. She grew up in an upper middle class family where verbal communication was common among family and friends. Participant #9 was a gifted scholar and valedictorian of her public high school.

However, traumatized by being in a slower learners program as a young student, Participant #9 was very shy in class. She did not like to be looked at or have to speak in front of the other students. This verbal communication apprehension plagues her to this day. Classroom experiences are always unpleasant for Participant #9 and she continually repeated that she wants to hide from people. She commented that she believes that most of her comfortableness stems from the fact that she is the only Native American individual in her classrooms. She is very vocal about the fact that she can tell her Native American stories in front of people and even give speeches on Native American history. However, when it comes to discussing topics in a classroom situation she does not believe that she has the proper background or vocabulary as her peers. She states that participation in classroom discussions was scary.

Researcher Interpretations

In regards to research question #1: It is my interpretation that Participant #9 has a serious degree of communication apprehension in the classroom. In fact, Participant #9 feels violently ill at the prospect of verbal communication in the classroom. In regards to research question #2: It is my interpretation that Participant # 9 does experience communication apprehension in the classroom due to her lack of a graduate vocabulary. Participant #9 stated that she does not know how to communicate with her peers because they have a different vocabulary than the one that she possesses. In regards to research question #3: Participant #9 was not raised in an impoverished household so her communication apprehension cannot be related to her environment.

Interview Themes And Trends

The purpose of the interviews was to ascertain if and how nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University show any signs of communication apprehension. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to uncover participants' communication skills throughout their life history. This life history included communication situations as a young child, family interactions, everyday life and college life. The following themes and trends resulted from this analysis:

- Class participation
- Early academics
- Family conversations
- Group discussions
- Seating
- Vocabulary skills

Class Participation And Group Discussions

Two of the largest themes to emerge from the interviews were in the areas of class participation and group discussions. These themes are presented here together because they are so interrelated. To recap, McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) believed that almost ninety-five percent of the American population had reported anxiety about communicating with other people or groups of people in and out of the classroom. In the classroom communication apprehension can be experienced at varying levels. At the lowest levels are the individuals who will raise their hand to answer questions in class and even talk in small group settings. At the highest levels are the individuals who sit around the perimeters of the classroom, try to avoid eye contact with their instructor so

they will not be called upon to participate in class discussion, and who would rather work alone than be in a group with their peers.

In analyzing the transcripts of Participant #1 she stated that her only apprehension as a nontraditional graduate student came from her encounters with her instructors, not with her peers. Participant #1 stated that she enjoyed participating in class discussions, but being older and having more life experience in the fields being studied, the instructors avoided calling on her for class participation. However, Participant #1 did state that she does have a form of communication apprehension in the classroom, but mostly because she does not feel that she is allowed to express her true feelings about the participant of discussion.

In Participant #2's case, class participation was never a problem for her. She indicated that she was never apprehensive about talking in class because she was very good at it. She stated that she has no problem expressing herself very clearly, giving decent answers, and generally gets good feedback from her teachers and peers. She stated that the recognition she received from teachers and peers made her feel good and gave her some counterbalance for her inability to communicate in social settings. On the negative side, she stated that there were times that she felt she had to participate in class discussions because it was factored in as part of the course grade.

Participant #3 stated that class and/or group discussions became a personal event for him. He found that he was very passionate about his feelings when he discussed a topic. He actually found enjoyment in these communication situations because it gave him an opportunity to share his life experiences with his much younger peers.

Participant #5 stated that he never participated in class discussions for two particular reasons. First, because he felt that he had no frame of reference. As a nontraditional graduate student he felt his education and experiences came from a completely different space and time perspective. Second, he claimed that he did not want to appear arrogant to his professors or peers. To this end he stated:

I think the fear is that I don't want to come across as arrogant. I can say 'I've seen this before', 'I've done this before', and 'This is what I've done.' My fear is more that I don't want to come across as a 'know it all', I don't want to come across as, here's the old irrelevant dude sitting in the back, so I just am quiet. Silence is always better. (personal communication, 2010)

Having a different frame of reference was also an issue for Participant #6. This interviewee indicated that in his doctoral program he realized that he was not only older than most of his classmates, but he was older than most of his instructors. This age difference created a communication problem between him and his instructors. He felt that the majority of his difficulties came from instructors who could not appreciate the fact that he knew as much as they did about the participant matter. This communication barrier made him feel like he did not fit in. Because of this barrier he did not communicate in classes unless he absolutely had to. He summarized his lack of participation as follows:

When I'm in a setting with other students and in a classroom I generally do not participate because I really don't see the point. I think there is too much of a barrier over, sort of an intellectual propriety. I chose not to

share it because what's the point. I see that there is not much room given for experiential kinds of input. (personal communication, 2010)

Unlike many of the other participants Participant #7 enjoyed her role as a nontraditional graduate student and indicated that she liked to participate in classroom discussions. She stated that she was not intimidated by other students and actually struggled to limit her participation so that others can join class discussions.

Participant #9 grew up as a very shy child. Academically, not only did she not want to talk in class but she did not want to be looked at in class. If she could have had her own way she would have crawled under a table and hid. She stated that on occasion she would talk to a student sitting next to her, but speaking in class was not something she liked to do at all. This feeling of not wanting people to look at her has plagued her even as a graduate student at Ohio University.

Embellishing on the group discussion theme McCroskey and Richmond (1988) maintain that the amount a person talks in a group has a major impact on the perceptions of the other persons in that group:

Low talkers are seen as less attractive, as exerting less leadership, and as providing contributions of lower quality. In some cases these perceptions are consistent with what actually goes on in the group, though in others they are not.

In both cases, however, the perception is there and determines to a major extent how the various group members relate to each other. (p. 352)

This concern was exhibited by interviewees who had the feeling that their peers might think they were stupid. Participant #3 commented that when he is required to participate

in either whole group or small group discussions he cannot speak as eloquently as his peers. With some hesitation he stated:

I'm intimidated by those people. You know, they have that long thought and long pause and you think, "Oh God here it comes - I'm gone. They say things that I want to say, but just couldn't make it out. So, I do hold back, absolutely. When they say things in class, it sounds more intelligent. I don't think I've ever developed that skill of that long pause and thinking through the whole thought and then putting it out there. I mean, I can sit back and think about it for 10 minutes and come up with something, but in those conversations, sometimes you have to be apprehensive not to talk because you're not going to be quite as eloquent. And you're right; you're going to sound stupid. (personal communication, 2010)

The notion of feeling stupid seemed to go hand-in-hand with the feeling of not having a sufficient vocabulary for someone in a graduate program. In the literature review it was stated that to be proficient in any communication situation required such components as fluency, accuracy, accent, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Vocabulary

What turned out to be the major area of concern of students at Ohio University was how they related their communication apprehension in the classroom to having an inadequate graduate vocabulary. Although this question was not well addressed in the online survey it was well addressed in each interview. This was a particularly intriguing investigation because no prior research could be found regarding this area of communication apprehension. Of the nine interview participants six subjects had

comments regarding graduate level vocabulary deficiencies. regards to vocabulary Participant #1 stated that she had always thought she had an extensive vocabulary until she started her graduate work at Ohio University. She stated that in one of her first classes she had to look up the meaning of the word rubric. She commented that most of the books and research related information required in her courses were difficult for her to comprehend, as she stated:

I struggle with understanding any type of research, but the journals all seem to use what I call twenty dollar words. I don't think that using those types of words is necessary, but I think they do it to be scholarly and be published. I think there's an easier way to say something, but I do struggle with words. (personal communication, 2010)

From this personal struggle Participant #1 worked very hard over the course of her graduate career to build a stronger college vocabulary. However, she found that authors of scholarly papers seemed to enjoy using five dollar words to impress their colleagues and confuse students.

Professional or graduate vocabulary includes jargon that is the specialized or technical language of any trade, fellowship, organization, class, profession, or even hobby. Participant #2 commented that the vocabulary used by the instructors and textbooks in her graduate cohort amounts to academic gobbledygook. She stated that the extensive use of uncommon words, terms, and research jargon makes learning a little more difficult for her, but does not hinder her learning experience. She commented that much of the vocabulary that she sees in graduate school did not seem to be around in the 1970's when she was in high school and college. Echoing this sentiment, Participant #3

had thought that he was well prepared for graduate studies until he participated in his first graduate level class. Even though he had thought that he was well prepared for class he felt that his verbal communications were not adequate. However, he added that what he lacked in verbal skills he made up for in his writing skills. His papers are well thought out and prepared with ease and grace. He feels he is a talented writer who can put the words on paper that escape him during class. In comparison Participant #4 thought her verbal communications skills were on par with her traditionally aged peers. However, when comparing her writing skills with that of her traditionally aged peers she indicated that they used more elegant and impressive words than she did. She felt that they had a more extensive vocabulary than she did which causes her to pause and makes her think twice about what she says and writes. Comparing her own vocabulary skills in comparison to her traditionally aged peers, Participant #4 stated:

We would combine on a paper and I would think, Wow, that's written really well!

I didn't feel like my paper was as elaborate, so I would often go back and edit mine to bring the paper up to what I felt was a higher level. (personal communication, 2010)

Vocabulary does not stay static. Language changes and develops, so even everyday words become dated. Participant #5 stated that it was common for him to get lost when communicating on cultural issues. He stated that he had no references as to what they were discussing because his cultural references were from the 1960's and 1970's and these twenty plus year olds were from the 1990's. Participant #7 stated that she believed her vocabulary was quite adequate until she began her graduate program at Ohio University. After being accepted into that program she felt like a fish out of water. She

indicated that she did not think she was even speaking the same language as the other students in the program. Participant #9 also felt the difference in reference points because her peers were much younger than she was. She felt they had a better command of their vocabulary and they were more contemporary and up-to-date than she was.

Classroom Seating

Another theme presented during the interviews was the preference of *seating in the classroom*. Communication apprehensives prefer to sit in the back and sides of classrooms where they hope not to be noticed. At the lowest level of communication apprehension are the individuals who will raise their hand to answer questions in class and even talk in small group settings. At the highest level of communication apprehension are the individuals who sit around the perimeters of the classroom, try to avoid eye contact with their instructor so they will not be called upon to participate in class discussion, and who would rather work alone than be in a group with their peers.

Participant #10 preferred seating was to face the classroom door. She stated that this arrangement was not for academic reasons but for personal reasons. However, depending on the classroom arrangement and the participant being discussed, she sometimes liked to sit in the back row and in a corner so that she could view the entire classroom. Participant #2 participated in mostly online classes, but when she had to attend a class in person she preferred to sit in the corner by the door. This location was more comfortable for her because she is claustrophobic. However, if that seating arrangement was not available she would prefer to sit at the end of a row. Participant #3 stated that when he first began his graduate study at Ohio University he enjoyed demonstrating his academic superiority by sitting in the front row during classes where

he was an active participant. However, after taking a couple of courses he changed his preference to sitting near the front, but not directly in front. He commented that he liked to sit near the front, but over to one side because he is more comfortable there. Participant #5 stated that during class periods he preferred to sit in the back of the classroom with students around his own age. He stated that this seating arrangement was not so much by his own design, but because the younger students were always sitting up front and that the older student seemed to like to cluster together. However, on a personal level he would rather sit in the back of the classroom and simply observe without having to participate. This is only because he was having personal difficulties during this time and it was not academically related. Sitting in the back of the classroom and observing was also important to Participant #6, who preferred to sit in the back of the classroom to watch and listen to the other students. Participant #9 had issues with seating in the classroom. Generally her graduate cohort classroom was arranged around the outside of the room in a huge circle where everyone was in a position where they could see you. This arrangement made her so uncomfortable that she felt like she wanted to crawl under the table and hide.

An interesting trend that emerged in this area is that five of the nine participants stated that they would rather sit with other nontraditional students in the classroom. Participant #1 stated that she likes to sit with her nontraditional peers because they could talk to each other and not feel stupid. Participant #2 stated that she preferred to sit with or around other nontraditional graduate students because she had more in common with them. Participant #4 stated that nontraditional students liked to talk to you about their kids, your progress in class, and daily events, but the traditional students didn't want to

hear about that kind of stuff. Participant #5 preferred to surround himself with students of similar age as his own. He stated that he thought "old people" liked to cluster together. Subject #7 commented that she was more comfortable around the students that were in her age group and would partner up with them when possible. She enjoys the comradery with her nontraditional peers because she feels they have walked in the same shoes.

Family Communication

Family communication was another important theme that presented in the interviews. The way children are communicated to and within the dynamics of a family can lead to communication problems or advantages later in life. McCroskey and Richmond (1982b) stated:

Of the three theoretical explanations we have examined so far, this is the only one that can claim to explain why children in the same family can be almost opposite of one another in terms of their communication behaviors and orientations. Since parents, teachers, and peers as well as siblings reinforce each child very differently, even within the same family, one child can be reinforced for communicating while another child is not reinforced. (p. 7)

Participant #1 was raised in a household where children were supposed to be seen and not heard. The only communication interaction between her and her parents was them telling her to do something. She stated, "they only spoke to me if I had a chore to do or they needed something done. There was no sitting around and chatting about aimless things. Conversations were purpose and always a one-way conversation" (personal communication, 2010). This was especially true in regards to her mother who did not permit gibberish to be used in conversation. Participant #2 also had a difficult

communication situation with her mother. She stated that whenever she did something wrong her mother would yell at her because she (the mother) did not have time or patience for nonsense. Coming from stoic German stock, Participant #5 had a mother that did not believe in discussing a person's feelings, this or that, or the other. In her family, communication was simply a form of conveying information. If there was nothing new to say they simply did not talk to each other. In the home of Participant #6 communication within the family was nonexistent. Neither his mother nor his father chose to communicate with each other or the children. Because of the communication silence that surrounds the family, the siblings never really communicated between themselves either. For Participant #7 there was not a lot of communication in the household and what communication that did occur had little substance.

In several of the interviews, participants commented that their family communication was positive and encouraged. Participant #4 stated that the communication lines were always open in both directions for everyone in her family. Participant #8 commented that both of her parents were open and inviting communicators between themselves and with their children. This feeling of open communication was clearly communicated by this participant when she stated, "I don't ever remember feeling like there were things we don't talk about or things that go unsaid. I was always very comfortable asking questions, bringing things up, having conversations" (personal communication, 2011). In fact, her parents actually encouraged their children to have their own opinions, and those opinions were received and appreciated. Participant #9 was encouraged to be quiet in the home, but if she felt like joining a conversation or had something to add to a conversation her parents always listened.

Most of the participants in this study lacked a positive family communication environment during their informative years. However, this communication deficit did not seem to leave a negative imprint on them in regards to future communication situations. This was also true of nearly all of the participants that did have a positive family communication environment, with the exception of one participant. This one participant suffered from severe communication apprehension and would be a good case study for future research.

Early Academic Achievement

The final theme that was presented in the interviews was that of early academic achievement. Participant #1 indicated that she was very successful academically. She stated that she had a more advanced vocabulary, more advanced reading, and more advanced comprehension than her grade school counterparts. Participant #2 was placed in an elevated classroom and from her perceived advantage point of being among the top in her class she was self-motivated to achieve. Participant #4 stated that she was an excellent student in grade school through high school and received a full scholarship to college. Participant #6 did well academically throughout his elementary and high school career and finished in the top five percent of his class. Participant #8 indicated that she was a good student and that learning was never difficult for her. Lastly, Participant #9 stated that once she reached junior high school she had found her stride and became a straight "A" student. She excelled in science and won many awards for her talents in that field. She ultimately graduated valedictorian of her high school class.

On the other side of the coin were the participants that did not perform well in their early academic career. Participant #3 failed to apply himself as a child and was only

an average student due in part to his desire not to work very hard. Early academics were difficult for Participant #7 as she did not do particularly well academically and especially struggled with math. She stated that she actually used her good communication skills and her reading ability to help her get through her studies. In the classroom she was happy to participate in classroom discussions and never minded speaking in class. However, upon entering junior high school her gift of communication management had forsaken her and her grades dropped. In high school her grades continued to plummet and went from bad to worse. As her grades dropped so did her communication skills, both in and out of the classroom.

Demographics ó Survey

Part one of the survey was designed to give the researcher demographic information on the participants. The questions asked were about race/ethnicity, gender, community where raised, and at what age respondent attended college as an undergraduate. These questions were added to the survey to correspond with the information gathered during the face-to-face interviews. The information listed in Table 4 was used to draw correlations between interviewees' responses and those from the emailed survey.

Table 4. Demographics of Survey

Participant	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Raised	Age at Admission
1	White	Female	Rural	Traditional
2	White	Female	Rural	Traditional
3	White	Male	Urban	Traditional
4	White	Female	Urban	Traditional
5	White	Female	Urban	Non
6	Mixed (Black/White)	Female	Urban	Non
7	White	Male	Urban	Traditional
8	White	Female	Urban	Traditional
9	White	Female	Urban	Non
10	White	Female	Urban	Non
11	White	Female	Urban	Non
12	White	Male	Urban	Traditional
13	White	Female	Urban	Traditional
14	White	Male	Urban	Non
15	White	Male	Urban	Traditional
16	White	Male	Urban	Non
17	Mixed (Asian/White)	Female	Urban	Traditional
18	White	Male	Urban	Traditional
19	White	Female	Urban	Non
20	Black	Female	Urban	Traditional
21	White	Male	Rural	Non
22	White	Female	Urban	Traditional

Survey

In regards to the survey there were twenty-two respondents out of seventy-three surveys distributed, yielding a response rate of 30%. Frequency distribution analysis were performed on each survey question individually. Computing the frequency of the scores is simply a matter of counting the number of times that scores appears in the set of data. Frequency distributions were performed using the software program SPSS (version 17.0).

In completing the survey participants indicated the level of anxiety he or she felt about various communication situation. The possible selections for each question were

strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. The survey contained both positively and negatively worded statements. This technique was used because using positive and negative wording reduces acquiescent bias. Acquiescent bias is what happens when participants agree or disagree to all statements. By including a mix of both positive and negative items, participants are forced to consider the question and provide a more meaningful response.

In the survey for this study positively worded questions were numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 30, 32, and 36. If participants responded "strongly agree" to these questions they like the activity/event. Negatively worded questions were numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, and 40. If respondents answered "strongly agree" to these questions they do not like the activity/event. All of the negatively worded questions were reverse coded in SPSS before analysis was performed. That way the negatively worded questions indicated the same type of response for every item. The individual survey question is listed below with the summarized results and their frequency distributions.

1. Question: I dislike participating in group discussions. **Result:** 66.7% of respondents like participating in group discussions.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution: Question #1					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	13.6	14.3	14.3
	2	2	9.1	9.5	23.8
	3	2	9.1	9.5	33.3
	4	7	31.8	33.3	66.7
	5	7	31.8	33.3	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

2. Question: Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.

Result: 77.3% of respondents are comfortable while participating in group discussions.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution: Question #2					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	4	18.2	18.2	22.7
	4	6	27.3	27.3	50.0
	5	11	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

3. Question: I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

Result: 81.9% of respondents are not tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

Table 7. Frequency Distribution: Question #3					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	3	13.6	13.6	18.2
	4	8	36.4	36.4	54.5
	5	10	45.5	45.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

4. Question: I like to get involved in group discussions. **Result:** 72.7% of respondents like to get involved in group discussions.

Table 8. Frequency Distribution: Question #4					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	3	13.6	13.6	18.2
	3	2	9.1	9.1	27.3
	4	7	31.8	31.8	59.1
	5	9	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

5. Question: Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. **Result:** 81.9% of respondents are not tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

Table 9. Frequency Distribution: Question #5					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	4	18.2	18.2	22.7
	3	1	4.5	4.5	27.3
	4	8	36.4	36.4	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

6. Question: I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.

Table 10. Frequency Distribution: Question #6					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	18.2	18.2	18.2
	3	1	4.5	4.5	22.7
	4	9	40.9	40.9	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

7. Question: Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in class discussions.

Result: 72.8% of respondents are not nervous when participating in class discussions.

Table 11. Frequency Distribution: Question #7					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	4	18.2	18.2	22.7
	3	1	4.5	4.5	27.3
	4	8	36.4	36.4	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

8. Question: Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in class discussions.

Result: 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed while participating in class discussions.

Table 12. Frequency Distribution: Question #8					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	18.2	18.2	18.2
	3	1	4.5	4.5	22.7
	4	9	40.9	40.9	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

9. Question: I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in class. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion in class.

Table 13. Frequency Distribution: Question #9					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	18.2	18.2	18.2
	3	1	4.5	4.5	22.7
	4	10	45.5	45.5	68.2
	5	7	31.8	31.8	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

10. Question: I am afraid to express myself in class. **Result:** 95.5% of respondents are not afraid to express themselves in class.

Table 14. Frequency Distribution: Question #10					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	4	11	50.0	50.0	54.5
	5	10	45.5	45.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

11. Question: Communicating in class usually makes me uncomfortable. **Result:** 81.9% of respondents are not uncomfortable communicating in class.

Table 15. Frequency Distribution: Question #11					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	3	1	4.5	4.8	14.3
	4	10	45.5	47.6	61.9
	5	8	36.4	38.1	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

12. Question: I am very relaxed when answering questions in class. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents were relaxed when answering questions in class.

Table 16. Frequency Distribution Question #12					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	3	2	9.1	9.5	19.0
	4	10	45.5	47.6	66.7
	5	7	31.8	33.3	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

13. Question: While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous. **Result:** 72.8% of respondents do not feel nervous while participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance.

Table 17. Frequency Distribution Question #13					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
	2	2	9.1	9.1	18.2
	3	2	9.1	9.1	27.3
	4	8	36.4	36.4	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
Total		22	100.0	100.0	

14. Question: I have no fear of speaking up in conversations. **Result:** 86.4% of respondents have no fear of speaking up in conversations.

Table 18. Frequency Distribution Question #14					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	4	11	50.0	50.0	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

15. Question: Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations. **Result:**

95.5% of respondents are not tense and nervous in conversations.

Table 19. Frequency Distribution Question #15					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	4	10	45.5	45.5	50.0
	5	11	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

16. Question: Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations. **Result:** 86.4% of respondents are calm and relaxed in conversations.

Table 20. Frequency Distribution Question #16					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	4	8	36.4	38.1	47.6
	5	11	50.0	52.4	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

17. Question: While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed. **Result:**

72.7% of respondents feel very relaxed while conversing with a new acquaintance.

Table 21. Frequency Distribution Question #17					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	2	9.1	9.1	13.6
	3	3	13.6	13.6	27.3
	4	7	31.8	31.8	59.1
	5	9	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

18. Question: I'm afraid to speak up in conversations. **Result:** 95.4% of respondents are not afraid to speak up in conversations.

Table 22. Frequency Distribution Question #18					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	4	9	40.9	40.9	45.5
	5	12	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

19. Question: I have no fear of giving a speech in class. **Result:** 54.6% of respondents have no fear of giving a speech in class and 36.3% do have a fear of giving a speech in class.

Table 23. Frequency Distribution Question #19					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	2	5	22.7	22.7	36.4
	3	2	9.1	9.1	45.5
	4	4	18.2	18.2	63.6
	5	8	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

20. Question: Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech in class. **Result:** 73.7% of respondents do not feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech in class.

Table 24. Frequency Distribution Question #20					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	2	3	13.6	13.6	27.3
	3	2	9.1	9.1	36.4
	4	8	36.4	36.4	72.7
	5	6	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

21. Question: I feel relaxed while giving a speech in class. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents feel relaxed while giving a speech in class and 36.4% of respondents do not feel relaxed while giving a speech in class.

Table 25. Frequency Distribution Question #21					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	18.2	18.2	18.2
	2	4	18.2	18.2	36.4
	3	3	13.6	13.6	50.0
	4	5	22.7	22.7	72.7
	5	6	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

22. Question: My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents do not have their thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech in class.

Table 26. Frequency Distribution Question #22					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	3	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
	4	13	59.1	59.1	68.2
	5	7	31.8	31.8	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

23. Question: face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence and 36.3% do not face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

Table 27. Frequency Distribution Question #23					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	2	5	22.7	22.7	36.4
	3	3	13.6	13.6	50.0
	4	5	22.7	22.7	72.7
	5	6	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

24. Question: While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.
Result: 86.4% of respondents do not get so nervous that they forget facts that they really know while giving a speech.

Table 28. Frequency Distribution Question #24					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	4	10	45.5	45.5	59.1
	5	9	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

The new items on the survey, questions twenty-five through forty, were developed to assess each of these factors: group discussions in the classroom; class participation; public conversations in the classroom; and other conversational situations in the classroom.

25. Question: I have insufficient vocabulary skills to communicate effectively.

Result: 63.7% of respondents do not feel they have insufficient vocabulary skills to communicate effectively.

Table 29. Frequency Distribution Question #25					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	2	4	18.2	19.0	28.6
	3	1	4.5	4.8	33.3
	4	4	18.2	19.0	52.4
	5	10	45.5	47.6	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

26. Question: I prefer to be alone most of the time. **Result:** 81.8% of respondents do not prefer to be alone most of the time.

Table 30. Frequency Distribution Question #26					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
	3	2	9.1	9.1	18.2
	4	14	63.6	63.6	81.8
	5	4	18.2	18.2	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

27. Question: Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. **Result:** 96.4% of respondents do not get tense and nervous while engaging in a group discussion with new people.

Table 31. Frequency Distribution Question #27					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	2	9.1	9.1	13.6
	4	9	40.9	40.9	54.5
	5	10	45.5	45.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

28. Question: I see little need to communicate in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents see a valid need to communicate in class.

Table 32. Frequency Distribution Question #28					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	3	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
	4	8	36.4	36.4	45.5
	5	12	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

29. Question: I do not participate in class discussion because I do not want to be perceived as being "stupid." **Result:** 90.9% of respondents do not hesitate to participate in class discussion because they do not want to be perceived as being stupid.

Table 33. Frequency Distribution Question #29						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	2	2	9.1	9.1	9.1	
	4	7	31.8	31.8	40.9	
	5	13	59.1	59.1	100.0	
	Total	22	100.0	100.0		

30. Question: I was an outgoing, talkative child. **Result:** 68.2% of respondents were outgoing, talkative children.

Table 34. Frequency Distribution Question #30					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
	2	3	13.6	13.6	22.7
	3	2	9.1	9.1	31.8
	4	11	50.0	50.0	81.8
	5	4	18.2	18.2	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

31. Question: I see no benefit by communicating in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents see a benefit to communicating in class.

Table 35. Frequency Distribution Question #31					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	3	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
	4	7	31.8	31.8	40.9
	5	13	59.1	59.1	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

32. Question: I am an effective communicator. **Result:** 86.4% of respondents believe they are an effective communicator.

Table 36. Frequency Distribution Question #32					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	4	11	50.0	52.4	61.9
	5	8	36.4	38.1	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

33. Question: I prefer to sit in the back row or along the side of the room when I am in a classroom. **Result:** 81.8% of respondents do not prefer to sit in the back row or along the side of the room when they are in a classroom.

Table 37. Frequency Distribution Question #33					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	2	1	4.5	4.8	14.3
	4	12	54.5	57.1	71.4
	5	6	27.3	28.6	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

34. Question: I prefer not to draw attention to myself when I am in a classroom setting. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents are okay with drawing attention to themselves while in a classroom setting and 45.4% of respondents prefer not to draw attention to themselves while in a classroom setting.

Table 38. Frequency Distribution Question #34					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	9	40.9	42.9	42.9
	3	1	4.5	4.8	47.6
	4	8	36.4	38.1	85.7
	5	3	13.6	14.3	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

35. Question: I hate it when an instructor makes participation part of an overall course grade. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents do not hate it when an instructor makes participation a part of an overall course grade.

Table 39. Frequency Distribution Question #35					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.8	4.8
	2	3	13.6	14.3	19.0
	4	9	40.9	42.9	61.9
	5	8	36.4	38.1	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

36. Question: I prefer to sit front and center in the classroom. **Result:** 72.7% of respondents prefer to sit front and center in the classroom.

Table 40. Frequency Distribution Question #36					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	13.6	14.3	14.3
	3	2	9.1	9.5	23.8
	4	12	54.5	57.1	81.0
	5	4	18.2	19.0	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

37. Question: I have a high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives (such as "you know") in group discussions. **Result:** 63.6% of respondents do not have a high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives in group discussions.

Table 41. Frequency Distribution Question #37					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	18.2	19.0	19.0
	3	3	13.6	14.3	33.3
	4	11	50.0	52.4	85.7
	5	3	13.6	14.3	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

38. Question: I avoid expressing disagreement in small group settings. **Result:** 86.3% of respondents do not avoid expressing disagreement in small group settings.

Table 42. Frequency Distribution Question #38					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
	3	1	4.5	4.5	13.6
	4	16	72.7	72.7	86.4
	5	3	13.6	13.6	100.0
Total		22	100.0	100.0	

39. Question: I would rather miss class than have to participate in group activities. **Result:** 95.4% of respondents would not rather miss class than have to participate in group activities.

Table 43. Frequency Distribution Question #39					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	7	31.8	33.3	33.3
	5	14	63.6	66.7	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

40. Question: I am more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students.

Result: 45.4% of respondents are not more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students and 36.4% of respondents are more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students.

Table 44. Frequency Distribution Question #40					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.5	9.5
	2	6	27.3	28.6	38.1
	3	3	13.6	14.3	52.4
	4	9	40.9	42.9	95.2
	5	1	4.5	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	4.5		
Total		22	100.0		

Scoring - Survey

The majority of the survey instrument used for this study was taken from McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), which was designed to measure overall anxiety in four specific communication contexts: (interpersonal or dyadic, small group, meeting or large group, and public speaking). The first twenty-four questions of this survey followed the format of the original instrument with the exception of substituting the word *classroom* for the original word *meeting*. Therefore, the first twenty-four questions were analyzed by using the scoring key from the original instrument. The scoring key is listed below:

To calculate *group discussion* sub-score:

Add 18 + Items 2, 4, & 6

Add Items 1, 3, & 5

Subtract the first number from the second number:

To calculate meetings (changed to *classroom*) sub-score:
Add 18 + Items 8, 9, & 12.
Add Items 7, 10, & 11.
Subtract the first number from the second number:

To calculate *interpersonal* sub-score:
Add 18 + Items 14, 16, & 17.
Add Items 13, 15, & 18.
Subtract the first number from the second number:

To calculate public speaking sub-score:
Add 18 + Items 19, 21, & 23.
Add Items 20, 22, & 24.
Subtract the first number from the second number:

Add all four sub-scores together.

OVERALL SCORE:

Scores between 83 and 120 indicate a high level of communication apprehension.

Scores between 55 and 83 indicate a moderate level of communication apprehension.

Scores between 24 and 55 indicate a low level of communication apprehension.

Original Source: McCroskey, J. C. (1982b). *An introduction to rhetorical communication* (4th Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Using the scoring key described above each survey participant had their sub scores calculated for group communication, class communication, interpersonal communication, and public communication. These sub scores were tallied for each participant's overall score and compared to the scoring key. Results for each participant ranged in values from low communication apprehensive to highly communication apprehensive, and are exhibited below:

Table 45. Participants Results

Participant	Total Score	Level Of CA
1	40	low
2	96	high
3	47	low
4	29	low
5	41	low
6	33	low
7	62	moderate
8	42	low
9	58	moderate
10	53	low
11	52	low
12	58	moderate
13	44	low
14	48	low
15	not scored	n/a
16	not scored	n/a
17	not scored	n/a
18	53	low
19	58	moderate
20	76	moderate
21	64	moderate
22	24	low

For the first twenty-four questions on the survey there was one individual with high communication apprehension. This participant was a white female who was raised in a rural household and began her undergraduate career at a traditional age. Of the six moderately communication apprehensives five were white and one was black, three were male and three were female, five were raised in urban households while only one was raised rurally. Three began their undergraduate career at a traditional age while the other three postponed their college career until well into their adulthood. The remaining twelve individuals demonstrated low communication apprehension. Of these individuals eleven were white and one was mixed race, nine were female and three were male, eleven were

raised in urban households while only one was raised rurally. Seven began their undergraduate career at a traditional age while the other five postponed their college career until well into their adulthood.

Survey 6 Groupings

The grouping of the survey questions were as follows: 1) In regards to small group communication there were ten items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 27, 37, 38, and 39); 2) In regards to public communication situations there were six items (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18); 3) In regards to class participation there were eighteen items (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 40); 4) In other interpersonal communication situations there were six items (23, 24, 25, 26, 30, and 32). A factor analysis and measure of central tendency was performed on the new questions developed for this study.

Small Group Communication

The first data analysis ran on the four new *small group communication* questions was a reliability analysis. The reliability analysis showed that these questions had a 90.9% response rate and a Cronbach's alpha of .760. As mentioned earlier, Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency ("reliability"). It is most commonly used with multiple Likert-type scales in surveys to determine if the scale is reliable. According to J. Reynaldo A. Santos (1999) alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 with a rating scale below .60 being poor; between .70 and .80 being respectable; and between .80 and .90 as being very good. Therefore, a value of .760 is evidence that the items measured have an underlying strong construct.

Table 46. Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items	
.760	.787	4	

The item-total statistics table presented the value of Cronbach's alpha if each of the new questions were deleted. We can see that removal of any item except item thirty-nine would result in a lower Cronbach's alpha and less reliability. Therefore, we would not want to remove these questions from any future study. However, removal of item thirty-nine would lead to a small improvement in Cronbach's alpha, but not substantially enough to remove it from future study.

Table 47. Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q27	12.25	2.724	.661	.439	.675
Q37	12.75	3.355	.662	.471	.642
Q38	12.25	4.513	.645	.432	.687
Q39	11.65	5.292	.446	.223	.771

Class Participation

The reliability analysis on the eight new *class participation* question showed that these questions had a 95.5% response rate and a Cronbach's alpha of .627. The reliability statistics for these questions was .627. A value of .627 is evidence that the items measured have a small to moderate construct.

Table 48. Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items	
.627	.635	8	

The item-total statistics presented the value that Cronbach's alpha would have been if one of the items were deleted. We can see that removal of any item except items twenty-nine and thirty-three would result in a lower Cronbach's alpha and less reliability. However, we might want to remove these questions in future studies for an improvement in Cronbach's alpha.

Table 49. Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q28	26.55	18.261	.336	.500	.596
Q29	26.50	19.947	.050	.281	.657
Q31	26.50	17.000	.529	.723	.554
Q33	27.00	18.947	.080	.420	.666
Q34	27.70	15.274	.486	.625	.543
Q35	26.95	15.208	.470	.658	.547
Q36	27.20	15.011	.476	.636	.544
Q40	27.90	17.463	.248	.446	.617

Other Communication

The reliability analysis on the four new *other communication* question showed that these questions had a 90.9% response rate and a Cronbach's alpha of .264. A value of .264 concludes that these items had an underlying weak construct.

Table 50. Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
.264	.324		4

The item-total statistics presented the value that Cronbach's alpha would have been if one of the items were deleted. We can see that removal of any item except item

twenty-five would result in a lower Cronbach's alpha and less reliability. Therefore, we would not want to remove these questions. Removal of item twenty-five would lead to a large improvement in Cronbach's alpha.

Table 51. Item-Total Statistics						
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	
Q25	11.85	3.503	.060	.025	.374	
Q26	11.65	5.082	.103	.035	.245	
Q30	12.00	3.684	.200	.303	.109	
Q32	11.30	4.958	.259	.306	.139	

CHAPTER FIVE: INTRODUCTION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate and identify factors that contribute to communication apprehension among nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University. This chapter includes a discussion of the results of this study, conclusions, and recommendations that may be drawn from the results.

Research Questions

Previous research on communication apprehension in the classroom has primarily been focused on young children, high school students, or traditional aged college students. Prior to this study no research was found on communication apprehension as it related to nontraditional graduate students in the classroom. In addition, only limited research was found on communication apprehension as it related to growing up as an impoverished child and no research was uncovered regarding communication apprehension as it related to having a limited graduate vocabulary. To address this lack of research the following research questions were developed:

1. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communicating in group discussions?
2. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communication in the classroom?
3. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during interpersonal communication?

4. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during public communication situations?
5. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of perceived inefficient vocabulary skills?
6. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of their seating arrangement in the classroom?
7. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in an impoverished household?
8. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in a rural environment?
9. Do nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they began their undergraduate college career at a nontraditional age?

A summary of the findings for each question in the study follows.

Results

Research Question #1

Research question #1 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communicating in *group discussions*. The qualitative results revealed that overall the interviewed participants expressed little or no anxiety in this area. However, one participant expressed a measureable amount of anxiety in regards to group discussions:

- Participant #3 commented that when he is required to participate in either whole group or small group discussions he cannot speak as eloquently as his peers.

The quantitative results for this research question were derived from questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 27, 37, 38, and 39 of the survey. Those results are as follows:

1. Question: I dislike participating in group discussions. **Result:** 66.7% of respondents like participating in group discussions.
2. Question: Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are comfortable while participating in group discussions.
3. Question: I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions. **Result:** 81.9% of respondents are not tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
4. Question: I like to get involved in group discussions. **Result:** 72.7% of respondents like to get involved in group discussions.
5. Question: Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. **Result:** 81.9% of respondents are not tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
6. Question: I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
27. Question: Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. **Result:** 96.4% of respondents do not get tense and nervous while engaging in a group discussion with new people.
37. Question: I have a high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives (such as "you know") in group discussions. **Result:** 63.6% of

respondents do not have a high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives in group discussions.

38. Question: I avoid expressing disagreement in small group settings. **Result:** 86.3% of respondents do not avoid expressing disagreement in small group settings.

39. Question: I would rather miss class than have to participate in group activities. **Result:** 95.4% of respondents would not rather miss class than have to participate in group activities.

The results for this research question showed that thirteen participants (59.1%) had little to no communication apprehension while participating in group discussions; six participants (27.3%) had no feelings either way; and only three (13.6%) participants had anxiety when participating in group discussions.

Research Question #2

Research question #2 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during communication in the *classroom*. The qualitative results revealed that overall the interviewed participants expressed moderate anxiety in this area. The qualitative results revealed the following:

- Participant #1 concluded that she does have a form of communication apprehension in the classroom, but mostly because she does not feel that she is allowed to express her true feelings about the participant of discussion.
- Participant #6 does not communicate in classes unless he is required to.
- Participant #9 was very shy and did not like to talk in class.

However, three participants expressed no anxiety in regards to group discussions:

- Participant #2 indicated that, although she was not as brilliant as some of the others, she was not intimidated at all about speaking up.
- Participant #3 was an active participant in class discussions and could become very passionate about topics being discussed.
- Participant #7 said she was happy to participate in classroom discussions and never minded speaking in class. As a graduate student she indicated that she liked to participate in classroom discussions. She stated that she was not intimidated by other students and actually struggles to limit her participation so that others can join in discussions.

The quantitative results derived from this research question were from questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 40 on the survey.

7. Question: Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in class discussions. **Result:** 72.8% of respondents are not nervous when participating in class discussions.

8. Question: Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in class discussions. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed while participating in class discussions.

9. Question: I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in class. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents are calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion in class.

10. Question: I am afraid to express myself in class. **Result:** 95.5% of respondents are not afraid to express themselves in class.

11. Question: Communicating in class usually makes me uncomfortable. **Result:** 81.9% of respondents are not uncomfortable communicating in class.
12. Question: I am very relaxed when answering questions in class. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents were relaxed when answering questions in class.
19. Question: I have no fear of giving a speech in class. **Result:** 54.6% of respondents have no fear of giving a speech in class and 36.3% do have a fear of giving a speech in class.
20. Question: Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech in class. **Result:** 73.7% of respondents do not feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech in class.
21. Question: I feel relaxed while giving a speech in class. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents feel relaxed while giving a speech in class and 36.4% of respondents do not feel relaxed while giving a speech in class.
22. Question: My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents do not have their thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech in class.
28. Question: I see little need to communicate in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents see a valid need to communicate in class.
29. Question: I do not participate in class discussion because I do not want to be perceived as being stupid. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents do not hesitate to participate in class discussion because they do not want to be perceived as being stupid.

31. Question: I see no benefit by communicating in class. **Result:** 90.9% of respondents see a benefit to communicating in class.
33. Question: I prefer to sit in the back row or along the side of the room when I am in a classroom. **Result:** 81.8% of respondents do not prefer to sit in the back row or along the side of the room when they are in a classroom.
34. Question: I prefer not to draw attention to myself when I am in a classroom setting. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents are okay with drawing attention to themselves while in a classroom setting and 45.4% of respondents prefer not to draw attention to themselves while in a classroom setting.
35. Question: I hate it when an instructor makes participation part of an overall course grade. **Result:** 77.3% of respondents do not hate it when an instructor makes participation a part of an overall course grade.
36. Question: I prefer to sit front and center in the classroom. **Result:** 72.7% of respondents prefer to sit front and center in the classroom.
40. Question: I am more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students. **Result:** 45.4% of respondents are not more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students and 36.4% of respondents are more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students.

Research Question #3

Research question #3 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during interpersonal communication. For this study interpersonal communication was defined as sending and receiving information between two people. The qualitative results revealed the most nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University did not have any anxiety in this type of communication situations.

- Participant #1 did not have a problem with interpersonal communications with her peers. She stated that most of the traditional aged students actually looked to her for advice and academic support.
- Participant #4 stated that as an older student she focused on communicating with people at all communication levels, not just graduate students and instructors. She concluded that in verbal communications situations she does not have any problems
- Participant #5 found communicating with traditional aged students was very interesting and thought that the communication issues brought up by these students were both deep and wide.

However, two participants expressed high anxiety in regards to interpersonal communications situations:

- Participant #6 does not like to meet new people and would prefer not to have to be in that situation. He does not like to approach people to initiate conversation and does not like to be approached by others.

- Participant #9 might talk to the student sitting next to her on occasion, but it was not something she liked to do.

The quantitative results derived from this research question were from questions 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, and 32 on the survey.

23. Question: face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence. **Result:** 50.0% of respondents face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence and 36.3% do not face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

24. Question: While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Result: 86.4% of respondents do not get so nervous that they forget facts that they really know while giving a speech.

25. Question: I have insufficient vocabulary skills to communicate effectively. **Result:** 63.7% of respondents do not feel they have insufficient vocabulary skills to communicate effectively.

26. Question: I prefer to be alone most of the time. **Result:** 81.8% of respondents do not prefer to be alone most of the time.

30. Question: I was an outgoing, talkative child. **Result:** 68.2% of respondents were outgoing, talkative children.

32. Question: I am an effective communicator. **Result:** 86.4% of respondents believe they are an effective communicator.

Research Question #4

Research question #4 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety during public communication situations. Research has shown that

public communication situations are one of the most feared types of verbal communication situations. The qualitative results from this study concurred with prior research as all but one participants experienced anxiety during public communication situations.

- Participant #4 has no problems with verbal communication. She gives presentations in front of groups in her administrative role and has no difficulties speaking or being understood.

Research Question #5

Research question #5 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of perceived inefficient vocabulary skills. Although this question was not well addressed in the online survey it was well addressed in each interview. This was a particularly intriguing investigation because no prior research could be found regarding this area of communication apprehension. Of the nine interview participants six participants had comments regarding graduate level vocabulary deficiencies.

- Participant #1 stated that she has always thought she had an extensive vocabulary until she started her undergraduate work at Ohio University. She stated that in one of her first classes she had to look up the meaning of the word "rubric." She commented that most of the books and research related information required in her courses were difficult for her to comprehend.
- Participant #2 stated that the vocabulary used by the instructors and textbooks in her graduate classes was very difficult to comprehend. She indicated that the

extensive use of uncommon words, terms, and research jargon makes learning difficult because the vocabulary that she grew up with in the 1970s.

- Participant #3 stated that she was intimidated by her younger peers because what they say in class is more intelligent sounding than what she says. They say things that she would like to say, but she does not possess the vocabulary to do so. She has resigned herself to listen and not speak up in class so that she does not sound stupid in front of her peers.
- Participant #4 stated that her younger peers are better at using five dollar words than she is. This was especially true in written communications, but still relevant in verbal communication as well.
- Participant #5 stated that he would easily get lost when communicating on cultural issues with his younger peers. Their understanding of modern technology and the terminology that went along with that industry left him lost. He stated that his cultural references were from the 1960s and 1970s and theirs were the 1990s. He stated that he never came up to par with these younger peers and really did not want to. He preferred to never speak so that no one would know his vocabulary deficiencies.
- Participant #9 stated that because her peers were much younger than she was she sometimes felt like she did not have the background or vocabulary that they did. Their vocabulary and background were more contemporary, more up-to-date.

Research Question #6

Research question #6 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because of their seating arrangement in the classroom. For

nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University seating preferences has nothing to do with verbal communication and almost everything to do with being a nontraditional student. All of the interviewed participants stated that they preferred to sit next to other nontraditional students when they were in the classroom. This was mostly because they had more in common with each other and also because they seemed to have a higher level of commitment to their studies. Bonding and friendship development was almost a social consequence of their scholarly pursuits.

Research Question #7 and #8

Research question #7 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in an impoverished household. Research question #8 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they were raised in a rural environment. These two questions are linked due to the fact that research has shown that many impoverished household are located in rural areas. These two issues were important components of the study for several reasons. First, the increasing prevalence of poverty in the United States due in large part to the ongoing economic recession. Second, the Housing Assistance Council (2012) is aware that approximately 10 million persons, or 16.3 percent of the rural and small town population, which includes Ohio, live in poverty (p. 1). Third, the Foundation of Appalachian Ohio (2006) reported that only one-third of adults in Ohio over age 25 have any formal education beyond high school. That is compared to approximately one-half of adults across the rest of the United States. Of those who do attend post-secondary institutions, the Appalachian Ohio student population has far more first-generation students and a higher drop-out percentage than non-Appalachian peers ó fifty-one percent

of our students are first-generation college students versus 40% of their non-Appalachian counterparts (p. 1). With Ohio University being a critical resource for Appalachian area students it was important to see the impact these two issues played in the study.

All interview participants were asked about their family's economic position while they were growing up. Eight of those participants interviewed grew up in a working, middle class family with only one participant growing up very poor. None of the participants interviewed lacked verbal communication skills due to their economic background. For those participants who participated in this study via the online survey the question of being raised in an impoverished household was restated to ask about the location of their family home. Participants chose between being raised in an urban or a rural environment. All survey participants responded to the question regarding the community in which they were raised. Four respondents (18.2%) were raised in a rural community and eighteen (81.8%) respondents were raised in an urban community. However, none of the participants lacked verbal communication skills due to being raised in either an urban or rural community.

Research Question #9

Research question #9 asked if nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University experience anxiety because they began their undergraduate college career at a nontraditional age. This question was added to the study to see if nontraditional graduate students were at an advantage or disadvantage to their traditional aged counterparts when it comes to communication apprehension in the classroom. For traditional aged students they have more in common with their peers. They have started college right out of high school, they have little to no outside responsibilities, they may have several high school

classmates attend with them, and they have similar goals and paths. For nontraditional graduate students they can be the only older student in the classroom, they usually have many outside responsibilities, yet they are expected to do all the readings, papers, and other academic demands as their younger counterparts.

In regards to nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University the actual measure of central was 3.9861 for those participants who attended college right out of high school and 3.9250 for those participants who delayed entrance into college until later in life.

These scores are out of a possible high score of 5.0. Therefore, this research question was not considered any further.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to ascertain if and how nontraditional graduate students at Ohio University show any signs of communication apprehension in the classroom. As stated in Chapter One, this study aimed at exploring communication apprehension in regards to this population of students. The findings have indicated that there are different levels of communication apprehension among this population of students. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is how the lack or perceived lack of a graduate vocabulary plays an important role in how participants communicated in the classroom. This issues was not addressed in previous research, but was very prominent in this study. Therefore, the findings from this research will serve as a basis for future studies and will make a significant contribute to the research on this topic.

Recommendations

This study revealed some interesting perspectives on communication apprehension and opportunities for further study. In regards to admissions of nontraditional graduate students it is recommended that institutions of higher education to be more vigilant on admission criteria. Many nontraditional students, especially those who did not begin an undergraduate career at the traditional age, have never taken an aptitude test such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing (ACT). In addition, many graduate level programs do not require nontraditional students to take and/or pass the Graduate Records Examination (GRE), instead deferring to life experiences. For those programs that do require the GRE it might be beneficial to raise the acceptable minimum score to encourage better preparation for graduate level coursework.

Once the nontraditional graduate student is admitted it is recommended that Ohio University consider establishing a first-year enhancement program for these students. This enhancement program would be similar to those offered to first-year undergraduate students and would give nontraditional graduate students a way to transition to college life. A second recommendation would be to have the Academic Advance Center in Alden Library offer assistance to nontraditional graduate students. This would be especially helpful in light of forgotten or neglected areas of study that these individuals may have received in previous education situations.

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APPENDIX A

Communication Apprehension Survey

The following information is being requested for research purposes only. This information will not be shared with anyone and will be used to collate constructs and organize comments into similar categories only.

Racial or Ethnic Group.

	American		Asian/Pacific		Black/African
	Indian/Alaskan		Islander		American
	Hispanic/Latino		White/Caucasian		Other _____

Gender.

	Female		Male
--	--------	--	------

Is English your native language.

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

Community where you were raised.

	Rural		Urban
--	-------	--	-------

(population under 5,000) (population 5,000 or higher)

Did you attend undergraduate college at a “traditional” age.

Yes No

Directions: This instrument is composed of forty statements concerning feelings about communication with others in the classroom. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by filling in the circle next to the comment you are most associated with.

Please record your first impression:

1. I dislike participating in group discussions.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4. I like to get involved in group discussions.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in class discussions.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in class discussions.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in class.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. I am afraid to express myself in class.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. Communicating in class usually makes me uncomfortable.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

12. I am very relaxed when answering questions in class.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

19. I have no fear of giving a speech in class.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech in class.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech in class.

22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech in class.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

25. I have insufficient vocabulary skills to communicate effectively.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

26. I prefer to be alone most of the time.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

27. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

28. I see little need to communicate in class.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

29. I do not participate in class discussion because I do not want to be perceived as being “stupid”.

☐☐☐☐☐

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

30. I was an outgoing, talkative child.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

31. I see no benefit by communicating in class.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

32. I am an effective communicator.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

33. I prefer to sit in the back row or along the side of the room when I am in a classroom setting.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

34. I prefer not to draw attention to myself when I am in a classroom setting.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

35. I hate it when an instructor makes participation part of an overall course grade.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

36. I prefer to sit front and center in the classroom.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

37. I have a high level of verbalized pauses and rhetorical interrogatives (such as "you know") in group discussions.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

38. I avoid expressing disagreement in small group settings.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

39. I would rather miss class than have to participate in group activities.



Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

40. I feel more comfortable in a class that has other nontraditional students.

A horizontal row of five yellow rectangular boxes, each containing a radio button. Below each box is a label: "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Undecided", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree". The boxes are arranged in a slightly staggered, descending fashion from left to right.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

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McCroskey, J. C. (1982b). An introduction to rhetorical communication (4th Ed.).
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.



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