Are We Really *Basic Bitches?* A Call for Resistance and Recognition

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Abstract

We explore the history and position of the foundational communication course (FCC) in communication education. The material impact of calling the course basic since the 1940s has caused internalized oppression, which results in a lack of innovation and general disempowerment. The use of the term basic to describe the foundational communication course reflects little cultural awareness of the impact of the word. The term basic also demonstrates a need to adapt the course to meet the needs of its constituents. Failing to adapt may result in more oppressive conditions for communication education, a problem if the discipline is to make significant progress towards equity and inclusion. We argue that among other action items the first step to resist internalized oppression is to abandon the use of basic in relation to the foundational communication course.

Keywords: power, basic, oppression, advocacy, foundational

The National Communication Association's Legislative Assembly passed a resolution in April 2023 reaffirming the fundamental value of the foundational communication course (National Communication Association [NCA], 2023a). The authors were surprised to learn of the resolution's existence, and we spent the greater part of our spring and summer looking for the document or discussion of it in and around the NCA's online materials. In early fall, we were asked to participate on a panel about implementing the resolution for the NCA 2023 Chairs' Institute. Unfortunately, we were not given the resolution to review until we requested the NCA staff person

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share the resolution with us and with Institute participants. As we reviewed the resolution in preparation for the Institute, we, the authors, were struck by the use of the term foundational communication course (FCC) throughout the document. We were taken aback by the NCA's movement away from its historical usage of basic to refer to the course. Despite passage of the resolution and using the term FCC throughout the document, at the time of this writing, the NCA uses basic to refer to the course on its website.

The NCA's use of the term foundational throughout the resolution recognizes the fact that basic does not communicate the FCC's value to external constituents, institutional administrators, state legislators, federal accreditors, and all employers. Why, then, does basic permeate the discipline's ideological ecologies (Keith, 2016) despite the harm calling the FCC basic has on its internal constituents (Fassett, 2016; Fassett & Warren, 2008; McRae, 2010)? The choice to ignore a problem, like the incongruence between the use of foundational externally and basic internally is, according to Heumann (2020), "an intentional display of power" (p. 143) which works to defy resistance and results in internalization of oppression. Basic must serve some powerful purpose if we have been unable to shift the internal language that defines who we are as constituents of the course and the discipline. The language of the resolution can be instructive and can be a place for constituents of the FCC to begin the difficult task of looking inward to determine whether we are benefiting from the ways we communicate about ourselves. By making a shift away from basic, foundational course constituents can reject internalized oppression, resist subjugation from the discipline, and reclaim our power.

Positively, the resolution models using a new name to refer to the course while offering claims about the importance of the course and its contributions to higher education. What we know from cultural competency is that we must model how to treat others with respect. If we know to not call ourselves basic to those outside the discipline, we question the value of basic as a way to identify ourselves internally. The resolution does not resolve the course's bifurcated internal identity; an identity that pits basic knowledge against seemingly advanced studies (Valenzano, 2020) and subverts the value of the course by casting it as inferior. We argue that the use of basic to name the FCC reflects the discipline's positioning of the course as lesser than other communication courses. In doing so, the FCC can be seen as the "basic bitch" (Olson, 2020, p.166). Olson (2020) argued the public knows a basic bitch, as someone who craves popularity, favors blending in, is predictable, traditional, and unchallenging. Similarly, the FCC can be seen as the course that lacks innovation

and accepts its position as lesser, as evidenced by calling itself basic. This acceptance of itself as lesser than and deserving of our subsequent treatment is the definition of internalized oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Internalized oppression is a result of failing to do the difficult internal work to understand what beliefs and habits limit the discipline (Gunn & Dance, 2015; Morris & Palczewski, 2015, Philipsen, 2015). These ideologies are always present (Morris & Palczewski, 2015) and must be called out (Rudick, 2022). This self-work is important if the FCC is to reclaim its power.

Conversations in several recent communication education publications reflect concerns about how the course is valued (Young & Brenneise, 2023), its purpose (Morreale & Myers, 2023), and its problems with both equity (Ruiz-Mesa & Broeckelman-Post, 2023) and inclusion (Prentiss & Strawser, 2023). Ultimately, these concerns are compounded by an evolving higher education landscape which employs and serves a more diverse contingent faculty and body of students than ever before. These concerns underscore our identity crisis (Sellnow, 2023) in communication education and impact the FCC. We are tasked, again, to question the value of basic as an identity for the course. In this paper, we ask how using basic to identify the course oppresses those in and around the FCC.

By reshaping our discourse around the FCC, we empower ourselves to reject internalized oppression—whether it manifests as misogyny or any other form. Thus, we embark on a review of the discourse, tracing the historical tensions that have marginalized the FCC within communication education. It is time to expose the power dynamics that have rendered the FCC subservient to compulsory whiteness, able-bodymindedness, and heteronormativity. We dissect the impacts of the harm perpetuated by the term basic. In our implications section, we pivot toward transformation. We aim to model compassion[1] while holding the discipline accountable. Our stance is unwavering: we resist any attempts to weaken our field. Let us commence by boldly striking basic from our lexicon—a symbolic act that signifies our commitment to reclaiming agency and dismantling oppressive narratives.

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[1] In the spirit of compassion, we will not cite the names of individuals, nor will we provide citations for any examples or evidence of our claims that could potentially result in punishment or other retaliation from or towards individual actors.

Discourse on Basic Communication

Some have already realized the harms of basic and advocated for change (Fassett, 2016; Fassett & Warren, 2008; McRae, 2010), while many others have not recognized the problem with calling ourselves basic (Morreale et al., 2023). Resistance to internalized oppression is particularly difficult if it cannot even be acknowledged. In this section, we trace a history of misogyny that leads to degradation and marginalization of the FCC.

The FCC is considered integral for communication education and the discipline (Dance, 2002; Gersten, 2012; Valenzano, 2013; Broeckelman-Post et al., 2023). However, the course is wrapped up in a history of the discipline questioning its own legitimacy (Condit, 1990; Gunn & Dance, 2015; Philipsen, 2015; Wilson et al., 2022) and questioning the value of speech within communication studies (Burgoon, 1989; Beebe, 2013). In nearly every longitudinal study, the FCC is defined as "that course, which provides the fundamental knowledge for all other speech courses," (Gibson et al.,1990, p. 234; LeFebvre & LeFebvre, 2020), and as such, is an entry into the discipline for students and future scholars (Dance, 2002; Beebe, 2013). Regardless of the course name at individual institutions, most people identify the FCC as the speech class, that is, the class where students perform speeches and presentations (Valenzano, 2013; Gehrke, 2016).

The Othering of the Foundational Communication Course

The discipline has struggled with its relationship to *speech* because speech has historically been seen as a means to bring funding through student enrollment to communication departments and not legitimate enough for scholarship in communication studies (Burgoon, 1989; Dance, 2002; Gunn & Dance, 2015; Philipsen, 2015). This is reflected even today, as less scholarship is published on communication education than on other areas of research, and there are fewer opportunities to publish on the FCC (LeFebvre & Keith, 2023). Speech has been labeled the "harlot of the arts," (Condit, 1990), and as a "dame" and a "whore" (Burgoon, 1989). The foundational *speech* course is subjugated because it is "unmanly or adolescent," (Condit, 1990; Gunn & Dance, 2015, p. 65) and that is reflected in the 22% of nascent scholars (i.e., graduate students) who end up teaching the FCC (Morreale et al., 2023). In plain words, the NCA's own history of the discipline reported "speech is feminine or unmanly and consequently not academically respectable" (Gunn & Dance, 2015, p. 7). We want to be clear. We do not wish to

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perpetuate misogynistic descriptions of communication education or the FCC, nor do we think that femininity is inferior to masculinity, or other gender expressions. What we do want to say is that the discipline's positioning of communication education in general and the FCC in particular is a consequence of the discipline's prejudice against speech and marginalized others.

Repercussions of these misogynistic depictions led the discipline to exorcize the term *speech* via a series of name changes. The discipline's national professional organization changed names from the Speech Communication Association to the National Communication Association (Gunn & Dance, 2015; NCA, 2024). Efforts to divorce the discipline from *speech* led to changes in journal titles from *Speech Education* to *Communication Education* (Philipsen, 2015) and *Speech Teacher* to *Communication Teacher* (Philipsen, 2015; NCA, 2024). *Speech* was linguistically forced out of NCA journals because it was seemingly inferior. Philipsen (2015) noted that the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* began by publishing research on teaching speech that was quickly replaced by rhetorical analyses of culturally relevant, prominently white male speeches (Hallsby, 2022; Shome, 1996). Publishing speech pedagogy research in the flagship journal of the discipline was thought to corrupt the superior scholarship of *advanced* scholars in the discipline (Gunn & Dance, 2015).

On Identifying the Course as Basic

Long before the move from s*peech* to *communication* studies, s*peech* became *basic* (Davidson & Sorenson, 1946). Some certainly do not consider it communication studies (Burgoon, 1989; Beebe, 2013; Morreale & Myers, 2023), but the discipline benefits from having a course that funnels resources (Dance, 2002; Valenzano, 2013) to *legitimate* communication studies. The FCC is a service course; it serves the general student population because it is required at most institutions (Morreale et al., 2023), and it serves to recreate the discipline itself (Dance, 2002). Keith (2011) calls for all within the discipline to accept their identities as the speech teachers. Many of us teaching the FCC know who we are– the harlots, the whores, and the bitches because speech and our labor to teach speech is not valued (Gunn & Dance, 2015; Philipsen, 2015) unless it benefits those considered advanced, developed, and productive. Our labor relieves the 75% of the professoriate that do not have to teach the FCC (Morreale et al., 2023).

Sprague (2002) called on communication education scholars to align conceptualizations with those readily understood by the public in order to better

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communicate what we teach. In this case, we are concerned with mundane understandings of the word *basic,* not some systematic, methodological examination. Rather, we see links between the discipline's discourse on *speech* reflected in a general public understanding of the term *basic.* Communication scholars have identified *basic* to mean traditional (Valenzano, 2020). Valenzano (2020) argued that a course reliant on repetitive, formulaic assignments stifles innovation. *Basic* as a failure to innovate aligns with its public circulation as common or lacking originality. Fassett (2016) noted the way we communicate about the course as *basic* harms our ability to innovate and makes the task of teaching the course itself synonymous with "chores" (p.34) or drudgery. Coupled with the marginalization of the FCC that we explained in the previous section, these conceptualizations of *basic* reflect Olson's (2020) "basic bitch" (p.166).

Employing the *Basic Bitches*

Basic fits seamlessly with the term "bitch" in the public lexicon (Seeliger & Sukhan, 2020). Olson (2020) noted how calling someone a "basic bitch" is a popular tactic in United States (U.S.) American political discourse to reinforce "the denigration and depreciation of everything that is associated with the feminine" (p. 167). "Bitch" is a word often used to denigrate women and deny their value (Kleinman et al., 2009; Sobieraj, 2018). "Bitch" can also be used to describe women that challenge the patriarchy (Kleinman et al., 2009). Necessary work that is challenging, monotonous, menial, and unvalued is often called "bitch work" (Rodino-Colocino & Berberick, 2015). Basic bitches are mundane and compliant (Olson, 2020). "Bitch" is also used to describe men who do not prove their masculinity, present as more feminine, or are oppressed themselves (Eckstein & Cherry, 2022). Ironically, some masculinities are proven by having a bitch, particularly having one that has internalized this treatment as normal which renders any harms as benign and mundane (Blair et al., 1994). Women in these relationships may justify the abuse (Walker, 2009/1984; Walker, 1977) because they fail to recognize how this internalization causes self-harm in both practice and beliefs.

In communication studies, advanced studies need the FCC to be its bitch. The FCC does the necessary work of bringing in people to the major and prepares them for more specialized training. It is repetitive work. If the course does not change with the times, students may act out (hooks, 1994) toward the basic bitches that teach them the same old content and making it harder to teach.

Teaching the FCC is challenging and/or monotonous because few of our course texts, materials, assignments, or rubrics have changed (Key, 2022; Morreale & Myers, 2023; Valenzano, 2020). There is little time for innovation with all of the growing content that must be delivered per employer or university request. Additionally, that content requires enforcing and disciplining normative communication practices (Key, 2022; Rouse, 2022), even as prioritizing them works against our own marginalized bodyminds. We acknowledge that there may be microcosms of innovation that are unique to a particular instructor or maybe even an institution. However, the common refrain from the research is that there is little innovation (Morreale & Myers, 2023). This means we either are not researching and publishing about our innovations or that we are not as innovative as individual instructors or as a discipline as we might hope to be.

In the intricate landscape of communication studies, the FCC occupies a paradoxical space. Once known as *speech*, it grapples with its own identity. By suggesting that the course, the work it does, and the people doing that work are *basic* the discipline makes them its bitch. Before pursuing change, we had to review our history. With it as a backdrop, we begin to identify the harms of *basic* and its impacts on the discipline, its teachers and students.

Internalizing the Discourse of Basic

With an understanding of how *basic* can be conceptualized, we begin to identify the ways communication educators have internalized it. FCC instructors, caught in this web of conflicting perceptions, navigate the delicate balance between tradition and innovation. *Basic* itself carries dual implications: a foundation for learning, yet also a potential constraint. It hints at both creativity's birthplace and the risk of conformity. As we engage with this tension, we recognize that the very act of questioning is an essential part of growth and evolution.

Capitulating to Power

Gersten (2012) noted that colleges and universities will have to consistently shift to meet demands of employers, further noting the role of communication education in general education curricula. Each time external constituents want the FCC to do more work, the course capitulates because it must bow to the pressures of power (Valenzano, 2013; Keith, 2016). Valenzano (2013) identified several compelling reasons why the FCC should be integrated into the general education curriculum beyond its relevance within the discipline. This means the FCC will also be required

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to change to meet market demands. Some are disgusted by the notion that we would "whore" ourselves out like that (Burgoon, 1989, p.305), while others may have legitimate concerns about the impact of neoliberalism in such a system (Young & Potter, 2018; Kahl, 2023). This is not to say we should not teach skills for employability. Students will need skills to secure employment, but Kahl (2023) identified the harmful ways neoliberalism has impacted the communication classroom and has called for compassion. We can offer ourselves compassion by reclaiming the name we use to internally refer to ourselves and in claiming our power as foundational to the discipline. We are more than a porch to be trampled on in order to facilitate entry into the discipline.

The course further subjects itself to being the basic bitch as the most scrutinized course in the communication curriculum. As often the only communication course in the general education curriculum, it is constantly assessed to make sure it is compliant in meeting student (benignly read employer) needs related to speech (Gehrke, 2016; Valenzano, 2020). We continue to try to assess communication competency through a standard measure of appropriateness that has consistently been questioned (Dunbar et al., 2006; Hugenberg & Yoder, 1996; Young & Brenneise, 2023). Communication education rubrics continue to enforce powerful and harmful ideologies (Ashby-King et al., 2021) such as whiteness (Key, 2022) and ableism (Rouse, 2022; Young & Brenneise, 2023) because employers want students who communicate well (read appropriately) and *appropriateness* is almost always steeped in whiteness, ability, and heteronormativity (Bourassa, 2021; Brenneise & Young, 2023; Kafer, 2013). That the FCC capitulates to outside pressures (Keith, 2016) prevents it from innovating, which might include the expansion of our understanding of good communication to types of communication currently understood as non-normative or lacking appropriateness. Not only do rubrics for the discipline bend the FCC to power, but the subjugation is intimately felt by those teaching the course, who are made to be a bitch.

Marginalizing the Course and Its People

Nearly three-quarters of the FCC labor force is contingent (Morreale et al., 2023). Many are women and people of color (Mapes, 2019). Their contingent status puts them in precarious positions (Mapes, 2019; Murray, 2019). They may struggle to teach enough classes to meet their financial needs and may have to engage in gig work (Nelson et al., 2020). This might impede what time remains to conduct

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research (Reichman, 2021) that might be necessary to get a tenure stream job or promotion within the contingent hierarchy. While they may consider researching what they are finding in their classrooms (Fassett, 2016), they may have internalized the notion that teaching is not on par with research or that the type of research that they are interested in doing would be considered inferior (Gunn & Dance, 2015; Philipsen, 2015), and might be subject to discipline (Blair et al., 1994; Morris & Palczewski, 2015). One of us has been told that the university does not pay us to research, and we should not spend our time doing it. Most of those who teach the FCC do so for little thanks, especially in terms of financial remuneration for the labor. We may justify our treatment (internalizing outward signs as a natural consequence) because it is what we were taught to expect if we did not land a tenure stream job.

Many students have biases about the teaching effectiveness of adjunct instructors (Sprinkle, 2008; Baglione et al., 2022) and many adjuncts may be perceived as lowering rigor and simplifying course content to achieve better teaching evaluations (Carpenter et al., 2020) as the evaluations seem to be more reflective of student satisfaction than teacher effectiveness (Carmack & LeFebvre, 2019). The discipline has made it nearly impossible to recognize our basic bitch status because many of us are just trying to exist. Between cobbling together employment to financially survive and trying to maintain that employment, contingent faculty run the risk of barely meeting their own needs, which limits the general wellness of teachers (hooks,1994). How can one create or innovate in an environment where they cannot thrive? One way to begin caring for ourselves is to resist accepting and internalizing what we do as basic.

We do ourselves more harm when, in efforts to meet external power demands, teachers prioritize teaching to students considered to be ideal which normalizes that ideal as the measure for standardization (Brenneise, 2020). This is problematic when that normalization leads to enforcement of ideologies which marginalize people who cannot or do not, through no fault of their own, produce the standard. Some FCC teachers are forced to deny themselves when they are expected to teach what is in some of our materials. For instance, think about instructors who use mobility devices because they cannot stand having to use rubrics that score standing as part of excellent delivery. What impact does that have? Consider the case of instructors who use African American Vernacular English regularly but have to teach that saying "aks" is inferior to saying "ask." Do they skip teaching that material or do they discipline themselves in front of their students? Imagine the position of instructors

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who require international students to make eye-contact consistent with Westernized expectations despite the student's belief that what they did was sufficient for their speech goals. To resist compulsory able-bodymindedness (Kafer, 2013), teachers and students of the course will require some not so basic supports, resources, and coalitions. We create our own barriers to resistance by telling ourselves this work is basic and thus, we limit the resources that are available to help us.

Silencing Resistance and Innovation

The concept of *basic* stifles creativity in many forms including innovation and invention (Fassett, 2016; Valenzano, 2020) because we are unable to resist clinging to its limitations. While individuals are undoubtedly creative in their individual classrooms and in their individual programs, there has been little systemic imagination in the FCC (Valenzano, 2013; Morreale & Myers, 2023). Specifically, Morreale & Myers (2023) reported a general lack of engagement with technology and a lack of technological training. Morreale et al. (2023) reinforced what Valenzano (2020) wrote, including the recommendations that assignments in the FCC needed to be changed. Additionally, Morreale et al. (2023) recommended that course materials, readings, and activities needed to be updated. The research findings about a lack of innovation are also evident in FCC teacher social media posts. For example, one colleague claimed that being asked to teach the FCC last minute was *no big deal* because nothing had changed in the course since Aristotle.

Basic defines the skills that are taught in the course as standardized across the discipline, despite the diversity of how the course is deployed, the varying perspectives of that deployment, and the plethora of choices of medium (Valenzano, 2020). Some may think that this is innovative, but we disagree. The standardized nature of the course reinforces the status quo because it limits its ability to adapt to diversity and to change. It warns those who seek to create change that doing so may cause a problem for the rest of the discipline. The message that we have not and should not change and evolve is strong. The basic bitch is unwilling to innovate and challenge their position. We do not have to accept our fate.

There are also a significant number of seemingly mundane and benign conversations about the FCC that occur backstage, which means that they are not for consumption of a general audience, specifically not the audience who has gathered for the show (Goffman, 1959). It is important to note that we are also our own audience and if communication is constitutive, as we believe it to be, our

communication about the course and its students often reveals the internalized harm that calling ourselves *basic* has done (Fassett & Warren, 2007). These are the things we tell ourselves and one another at conferences, social media, and in anonymous peer review. For instance, no one seemed to flinch when the FCC was called the "*bitch* course" in an annual business meeting. It was not a challenge to the status of the course nor did any of us challenge it. We accepted what we were calling ourselves in that meeting. Internalized harm was manifested in the closed-door and expedited process to pass the NCA (2023b) resolution, the lean thought process as to how the resolution became the focus of the 2023 NCA Chairs Institute, and the lack of transparency or knowledge when asked to explain to general members how and why the resolution came to exist. While well-meaning people guessed, no one in the room could answer how the document came to be or what its purpose really was. During the Chairs' Institute, there was silence from NCA staff about why resources on the NCA website for the course have not been updated in nearly ten years, and there was confusion about who to talk to or how to even go about getting those resources updated. Bitches are disciplined in reviewer feedback that NCA has already dealt with issues related to the course back in 2013 and remade when the evidence demonstrates that the issues still exist (Golsan, 2021). Many of us have been silent witnesses complicit in and to this treatment. Each has their own stories. Strategically, the sensitive nature of these stories and the impacts they have on individuals make it difficult to publish these stories for fear of being disciplined and further internalizes the oppression of calling ourselves *basic*.

Rippling out to Students, Course Directors, and the Discipline

Really, our use of *basic* and internalizing the way it oppresses us harms anyone who has life experience with communication, even if they are non-speaking. The notion that students of the course have little to no experience with basic communication concepts is antithetical to an understanding of communication as constitutive (Fassett & Warren, 2007). Growing up in a communicative society means that people in that society know some basics about communication.

Instructors who see students as empty vessels to be filled (Freire, 1970/1993) enforce compulsory able-bodymindedness and prompt student perceptions that the course and its instructors are basic bitches. Students can see through our veneer should they detect teacher misbehaviors (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2016) by the way we comport ourselves and use our power to discipline their bodyminds. For

example, graduate student teachers may not prepare for class because they prioritize their graduate studies and they may cancel class because they do not know what to teach. Is the course so *basic* that some do not think they have to prepare? Has the term *basic* infiltrated the discipline so deeply that some course directors do not prepare young graduate students necessarily to prevent this behavior? Do those directors have the agency to hold the graduate students accountable for their behavior? If students have not seen this behavior firsthand, then they may have overheard us talk about teaching as a chore or undergraduates as unworthy of our time and resources. Undergraduates, too, know communication is not *basic* and that only a *basic* bitch would try to convince them as such.

Our internalized oppression leaves the use of "foundational" in the NCA resolution empty because it is so dissonant from how the constituents of the FCC treat themselves when they believe they are *basic.* Using "foundational" in the resolution with no further action simply covers and ignores the wounds *basic* inflicts. Why would an external audience considering the resolution respect our claims if those who represent the FCC do not demonstrate our claims of value to and for ourselves?

The FCC in communication education is not *basic* at all. It is a complex and vital part of the discipline that deserves respect and recognition. By calling ourselves *basic*, we undermine our own value and potential, and we harm ourselves, our students, and our field. We need to challenge the external and internal forces that oppress and marginalize us, and we need to embrace the diversity and creativity of communication. We move now to understanding what it means to resist the use of the term *basic.* In those understandings lie the seeds for transforming the course and the discipline for the better.

Implications and Hopes of Resisting *Basic*

The resolution is a prime example that our discipline's words do not align with its actions as it dresses up the course for public consumption but denigrates it at home. One problem with the well-intentioned resolution is that it lacks evidence as to why the FCC is so valuable. Perhaps it is because the authors of the resolution wanted to make us grapple with our internal usage of the term basic. The internal work remains and without it, we cannot rid ourselves of internalized oppression. Nevertheless, external readers will expect the discipline's national professional organization to say that its most valuable offering can only be taught by communication scholars. If outsiders dig any deeper and look closely at local and

national evidence, a different problem arises. Nine percent of those who teach the FCC do not have a communication degree (Morreale et al., 2023). Even if the NCA claims that it wants communication scholars to teach the course, the research shows that some people think the course is so basic that one does not need a communication degree to teach it. This statistic shows that on this issue, approximately 10% of the time, our actions do not match our words.

Advocating and Evidence-Based Practices

Advocacy should begin by striking *basic* from our internal vocabulary, but it does not end there. We should hold each other accountable as we navigate new language and ideologies. This involves changing division names within professional organizations to something else, changing any website references to *basic*, and changing any journal names. We can do this as evidenced by myriad examples of our abilities to adapt messages. Recently our professional organizations have begun asking members how they would like to be referred to (pronouns) and many are actively working to honor our identities. This shows it is feasible for us to change the way we historically communicate. Even if, despite the evidence provided herein, it is hard for some to appreciate the negative effects the term *basic* has had on the discipline, we encourage those in doubt to heighten their awareness of the term and reflect upon its usage and impacts.

The failure of the discipline and NCA to nurture and value the FCC has impaired our access to the proper resources to provide evidence of our claims. This lack of support has the potential to make the FCC (and communication education as a whole) look like a house of cards. The resolution may be perceived as another façade. Therefore, our internal wording needs to be consistent with our external wording. Our internal practices need to be consistent. Resistance means providing the resources to advocate for the course, including the provision of evidence that is reliable and valid. We expect our students to provide evidence; the U.S. American public will expect us to do the same.

When we include others historically not accounted for in *basic*, there is ample opportunity for innovation. Previously we wrote that our inability to assess what we say we do could hurt the discipline (Young & Brenneise, 2023), a problem compounded when political discourse questions the value of higher education (Balzer, 2020; Bok, 2015) and when the liberal arts are under attack (Ju, 2023; Strauss, 2019; Dutt-Balderstadt, 2019; Harris, 2018). Our own disciplinary

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scholarship suggests that we struggle to know what the FCC is (Morreale & Myers, 2023). There is little construct validity in our assessment rubrics outside of reinforcing whiteness and able-bodymindedness (Young & Brenneise, 2023). To be clear, we are not advocating that this content should not be taught, nor that we should not assess student learning. When we approach this content, we need to do it with intentionality to demonstrate options for how students can strategically communicate amongst and within various audiences. Similarly, we must be careful to ensure assessment practices are equitable for all.

With increased public scrutiny of higher education (Gaston, 2023/2014; Berman, 2020; Kelchen, 2018) our identity crisis is becoming existential (Frye, 2022) and we've got to be able to back up our practices with evidence. Resisting *basic* means expanding our understanding of different types of communication to be inclusive and equitable of all the bodyminds that produce it. It means innovating with that knowledge. It means reporting new knowledge back to the public so that they can evolve their understanding that different bodyminds can produce quality communication. It means better aligning our newer understandings of equitable communication by translating it for administrators, employers, editors, and accreditors that have the power to make society as a whole more inclusive.

Innovating and Transforming

Identifying the course as *basic* dismisses what it is. It leads to the belief that the course is not that valuable even as many refer to this course as our "bread and butter" (Dance, 2002, p. 355). Although we do not like to think about the functionality of this course, it is in part what funds tenure stream faculty and provides work experience for graduate students. This course is too important to continually refer to it as *basic* and the labor involved in service to these members should not be the work of *basic* bitches.

Rejecting *basic* is acknowledging the tension between who teaches foundational courses versus more specialized courses. The fact remains that we need both. "Specialized" can be a euphemism for "advanced" and those courses do not have the large audiences that the FCC does; hence they do not need a lot of teachers. Those courses need instructors with specialized knowledge to teach students who are developmentally ready (Fassett, 2016).

We also need to develop the knowledge of nascent scholars and those whose passions are primarily teaching while at the same time ensuring undergraduate

students get quality instruction for their hard-earned money. Some may wonder if discussion of money perpetuates a consumer model of higher education, but failing to consider it reinforces class hierarchy errantly assumed to be equalized in the classroom (hooks, 1994). As two people with advanced degrees, the authors, too, still have undergraduate debt to pay. Some graduate students receive varying amounts of pedagogical support from their programs, but many do not. Nascent scholars and others who teach the FCC need pedagogical training or reinforcement. We should make a commitment to hold our national and regional organizations accountable for providing the training. Additionally, they should provide up-to-date resources and scholarship of the most effective practices, free-of-charge for those who teach the FCC, at least on their websites.

Furthermore, the FCC needs representation in all discussions and actions related to provision of such resources, such as a representative from the division for the FCC on the NCA's Teaching & Learning Council, as previously agreed to but since abandoned (Basic Course Task Force, 2013). In turn, our professional organizations should hold departments and programs to new ethical standards. Lest we forget, we are our professional organizations; these commitments extend to us all, particularly to those in privileged positions of power with agency to enact change.

Fassett (2016) and Valenzano (2020) suggested opportunities for innovation when we resist *basic*. We add that rejecting the false dichotomy between teachers of *basic* versus *advanced* courses can help develop real meaningful communities of practice. In communities, scholars who share concerns and passions about communication education can meet frequently to work together to solve shared problems (Wenger et al., 2002). Mentorship can take place as novice and seasoned scholars learn from and with one another to deepen their knowledge and approaches to communication education. What innovative practices at the undergraduate and graduate levels could arise or what new scholarship can come from these relationships? For instance, what solutions can a community of practice innovate for the struggles of newly arrived international graduate students expected to be teachers of record in U.S. American classrooms when they themselves have just arrived and have little experience with U.S. educational cultures and norms? What could we learn ourselves if we understood that these types of situations are not *basic*?

Continuing the Difficult Work

In order to break the cycle, we need to continue to do the challenging internal work. More questions must be asked in future reflection on the FCC's identity. What would happen to the people who teach or avoid the course, who take the course, and so on if we did not call this course *basic*? What would happen to the content if we did not view the course as *basic?* What would it mean to the discipline's ideologies? We believe the answers to these questions get to the heart of the course's identity and value.

As we do the difficult work, we should figure out what the course is in terms of its identity and values. When we know, we should enact practices that demonstrate those values. All of this should utilize a fair and representative process to make decisions about the course and its place in the discipline. We do not claim to have the perfect name that captures all perspectives or ideologies despite our usage of "foundational" herein, nor do we believe we are accountable for this. Instead, an organic movement among communication scholars must address any potential harm committed in the name of *basic.* Further, any name identifying the FCC should reflect the value of the discipline as a community and be named by the community. A new name must be matched by practices that reflect its value and its people. This is the beginning of the internal work we call for. It starts with rejecting *basic* but then pushes towards a deeper commitment to reflexivity. We should continually be evaluating the way we name and teach the course with feedback from constituents. Even if we agree that FCC is the name for now, future scholars should continue to do the internal work. They should all have the freedom to argue for any change that is needed in the future.

Finally, we have to be careful not to shoot the messengers when they report internal weaknesses. The authors write from extreme vulnerability. We are aware that our message may not be well received by colleagues or by the outlets we seek to publish our work. The discipline must be mindful of the assumptions made about those who bring these issues to light. We ask why we two bitches have to put our bodyminds on the line? We advocate in spite of the potential of harm because we deeply care about the important work that is done in and around the FCC. Some may suggest that resistance might look like doing a bad job. We disagree. Students are paying exorbitant prices for their education and deserve more than that basic bitch attitude. Young (2011) wrote that in psychology circles this is known as "low-effort syndrome" (p. 75) and is equated with tactics those with imposter syndrome

use to protect themselves from vulnerability while ensuring any failures are attributed to laziness rather than stupidity. This thinking ensures little systemic change.

Internalized oppression can make it difficult to want to be vulnerable because learning and emotions occur simultaneously and are interdependent (CAST, 2022). When we have internalized negativity associated with our profession, we have far fewer resources to persist in bettering it (or just doing it) than we do when we have positive experiences to draw from. This is another place where we need a community to help us be our better selves. Resistance can look like acknowledging each other publicly or sharing resources to help one another persist. The potential to push the discipline to be more equitable and inclusive is worth the danger. We wonder what new innovations will now blossom?

Conclusion

Our exploration into the naming of the FCC reveals how the term basic is rhetorically constructed and wielded—a double-edged sword that has both a blunt, mundane side, giving it structural substance, and a side that is sharp and used for self-cutting. Within this simplicity lies a glaring absence of cultural awareness and adaptability. Caught in seductive yet perilous binaries—competent versus not, basic versus advanced, valued versus dismissed—we overlook the fluidity of identities. These identities, far from static, evolve and intersect.

For communication education, particularly as we strive for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, these implications are profound. The very discipline that houses us perpetuates an identity—one that devalues and restricts. It is time to bridge the gap between our outward discourse and our internal understanding of the course. While some may perceive no issue with the name, we echo Touraine's call to reject disempowering narratives: "How can we continue to speak a language that contradicts our very essence?" Touraine's (2001/1998, p. 116) question urges us to reclaim agency. The discipline must collectively hold itself accountable, ensuring that the FCC reflects the worth of its people. In this pivotal moment, we assert that we resist basic. Let us redefine, reimagine, and rise.

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