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## An Audience Analysis of the Effectiveness of a Speech: A Blueprint for Planning Successful Motivational Speeches

Robert Gerald Lawrie

Nova Southeastern University, [roblawrie64@gmail.com](mailto:roblawrie64@gmail.com)

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An Audience Analysis of the Effectiveness of a Speech: A Blueprint for Planning Successful  
Motivational Speeches

by

Robert Gerald Lawrie

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the  
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2021

## **Approval Page**

This applied dissertation was submitted by Robert Gerald Lawrie under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Nova Southeastern University.

Steven Hecht, PhD

Committee Chair

Dana Mills, PhD

Committee Member

Kimberly Durham, PsyD

Dean

## Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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April 10th, 2021

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## **Abstract**

An Audience Analysis of the Effectiveness of a Speech: A Blueprint for Planning Successful Motivational Speeches. Robert G. Lawrie, 2021: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice.

Keywords: Audience analysis, myriad, delivery condition, audience centered, non verbal.

This applied dissertation was designed to provide specific information as to how a person can become a better motivational speaker. The current literature on the topic of effective public speaking, especially in light of this growing trend in the nation and around the world is outdated, cumbersome, or inadequate. Even though there is an abundance of material on the topic of public speaking, most of it has not included empirical evidence concerning what characteristics of the speaker might affect an audience's perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech.

The researcher adopted an audience analysis framework to examine the variables that may foster audience perceptions of an impactful speech. Areas identified within the study that would lead to effective public speaking are (a) the role of enthusiasm displayed by the speaker, (b) depth of knowledge of the speaker, (c) the role of emotion in an audience response to the speaker, and (d) the audience's response to a question and answer format at the end of the speech.

An analysis of the data revealed that an audience's perceptions about the speakers depth of knowledge was the best predictor of the audience's perceptions about the overall effectiveness of speech. Further, the data also showed that there are no significant differences between those participants who view a speech with questions included and those who viewed the speech without a question and answer period.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Statement of the Problem

Audiences attending speeches and presentations across the United States and, for that matter the world, is big business. What factors or traits about a speaker do they find appealing? According to the most recent statistics by the National Speaker's Association (NSA, 2015), there are 53,006 speakers in this nationally recognized community. Of that number, 3,414 are members in the United States and are spread out among 35 chapters. The people who engage in this profession have unique philosophies or life stories to share. These speakers give inspirational and motivational speeches to groups of people on a variety of topics, although most specialize in a particular area of expertise. Many of these speakers focus on self-improvement, which for the purpose of this research study will be defined according to McGinn (2000) as the process of personal development covering activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. McGinn (2000) also states that self-improvement becomes less like therapy and more like physical training: stigma-free and beneficial for everyone. On Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, attending public speaking events can aid the attendee to move closer to Self Actualization (reaching full potential, becoming everything one is capable of becoming.) Motivational speakers present on a plethora of topics, amongst them being social issues, self help, educational success and financial success.

Due to their own personal and financial success, motivational speakers advocate on behalf of the profession. Kinsey et al. (2018) of the NSA, stated that the median annual salary for motivational speakers is \$107,173, with the lowest earners in this field making \$10,860 and the

highest earners receiving upwards of \$312,000. The average pay for a motivational speaker is \$197 per hour. The pay range annually across the United States is between \$31,000 (25<sup>th</sup> percentile) to \$119,000 (75<sup>th</sup> percentile; Kinsey, 2018). With the growing trend of public speaking as big business, and a lack of consensus on best practices for public speaking, especially motivational speaking, there is a need to identify the factors that influence how individual audience members deem the effectiveness of a speech. This study identified some of those factors and they will be made available to the general public.

Audience perceptions about speeches are important for a variety of reasons, including:

- Audiences who come to events are seeking a return on investment from attending an event. This Investment can be in the form of knowledge acquired from the speaker that will in some way enhance the audience members' lives either personally, professionally, or both. Is there a value in an individual participant's attendance?
- Audiences crave engagement by a speaker. Will an individual be engaged by the speaker?
- Growing a speaker's platform, including crowd sourcing, is essential to a speaker's success. What efforts has the speaker undertaken to expand his platform?
- Due to the number of public speakers, one must develop an individual niche to identify and separate himself from others. Has the speaker accomplished this?

According to Quinn (1993), companies have made a change of their own, even for political speakers. To reinforce the prominence of politicians as motivational speakers, Quinn (1993) stated groups want serious dialogue, and planners now tend to believe that a question and answer (Q&A) section of a political speech is often the most popular critical ingredient of an event. There may be other approaches that a speaker can use to

get his message across to the audience. To address this issue, the current study employed an audience analysis framework to examine the variables that may foster audience perceptions of an impactful speech.

### ***The Research Problem***

In recent years there has been an explosion in the public speaking field. According to Kinsey (2018) of the NSA, there are more than 40,000 paid speakers in the United States, and roughly a third, around 13,000, work primarily in the motivational arena. Further, according to Palmer (as cited in Kinsey, 2018), who runs the Chicago-Based National Speaker's Bureau, the best time to be a motivational/public speaker should be now. With this growing number of people engaging in the field of public speaking, and with a finite number of people attending these events, there is a growing need to identify audience members' reasons for attending presentations. Being able to analyze one's audience and its reasons for attendance using proven scientific strategies, as were provided by this research, addressed the need for a comprehensive and effective approach to maximizing success as a public speaker.

An extensive literature review has indicated that being able to understand the perceptions of one's audience about a speech is pivotal to understanding the characteristics of an effective public speaker (Butsch, 2000; Livingston, 2004). Further, Daly and Redlick (2016) hypothesized that perceptions about speeches can be substantially impacted by whether or not speakers allow for questions and answers during the speech. Further, if they do not or are unable to incorporate questions, their speech may be viewed negatively. Regarding other gaps in the literature, Daly and Redlick indicated that a determination had not yet been made as to how best a speaker should respond when asked questions. Daly and Redlick specifically focused on the role that time allotment occupied in determining the ideal amount to be most effective in one's

presentation. They provided a speech to participants that lasted 15 minutes. Then, participants were provided a question-and-answer session that was either 7 minutes or 12 minutes long. Findings indicated that participants preferred the 7-minute question-and-answer session better than the 12-minute version. This interesting finding has not been replicated in later studies and therefore would be useful to examine in another research setting. Another dimension that has not been studied is the quality of answers that speakers provide to questions, which in practice can be vastly different from speaker to speaker (Daly & Redlick, 2016). Responses to questions might be vague, unclear, evasive, or irrelevant. Thus, it is important to understand whether the quality of the speaker's answers to questions can impact perceptions that the audience has for the attended speech.

Various audience perceptions of speeches have been identified, most notably speaker's enthusiasm, speaker's depth of knowledge, audience emotional response to the speech, and likability of the format of the speech. According to Gousie (1997), importance should be given to factors such as level of sincerity as well as the level and variety of skills used. Such skills include the way the speaker connects with the audience, tone of voice, hand gestures, nervousness, eye contact with the audience, use of language, and pace of delivery. Additionally, the level of interactive listening, along with the speaker's organization of the speech and their level of general and specific concepts are skills that affect an impactful speech. The speaker's enthusiasm and knowledge are also pivotal factors that affect an impactful speech (Daly & Redlick, 2016). It is unknown how impactful the length of a question-and-answer period as well as the quality of answers given to questions can impact these various audience perceptions of the speech that was viewed. In addition, there are no studies that have examined the unique effects of an audiences' perceptions concerning the speakers' enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, and

emotional response in the same study. To address this gap in the literature, this study determined whether or not answering questions can impact audience perceptions of a speech and also whether or not audiences' global perceptions about the effectiveness of a speech can be affected by speakers enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, and emotional response.

### ***Background and Justification***

Motivational speaking is an extremely important and fast-growing global industry. However, no extensive study has been conducted as to the most effective way for a speaker to motivate an audience. This study addressed that need. For a speaker to be effective in this competitive industry, it is critical for them to know what characteristics of the speech can promote or fail to promote audience perceptions in terms of perceived effectiveness of the speech.

Lawrence (2015) asserted a fundamental challenge all public speakers face is getting and keeping the attention of the audience. The importance of audience analysis cannot be emphasized enough. According to Nguyen et al. (2004), Discursive Realism is a sign for the methodological traditions that Schroeder et al. (2003) have drawn from, and a technical challenge for researchers to re-conceptualize the means by which knowledge is acquired on and through audiences. Further, Schroeder et al. (2003) states that in the network society, empirical studies on audiences have become increasingly important in academic, policy, and commercial settings. Being able to understand one's audience in terms of its level of comprehension, attitudes, and beliefs is an invaluable asset to any public speaker for the reasons listed above, but so is the ability to craft the most impactful presentation based on solid empirical evidence.

### *Deficiencies in the Evidence*

Although oration has been around since the classical era, there is no consensus concerning which variables best characterize an effective motivational speech. Indeed, this lack of a well-developed knowledge base might lead some to argue that effective speaking is more an art than a science. Indeed, the literature review for this study has demonstrated that the evidence of speakers' effectiveness based on audience analysis and other available research material is inconclusive and very limited due to the relative novelty of the industry. Various audiences may respond to a speaker differently depending upon several interrelated factors. The most prominent factors which determine an audience's response include the delivery of the speech, audience familiarity with the content in the speech, speaker anxiety, and the way the speaker responds to questions and objections by the audience. Further, according to Billings and Giles (2004), a speaker's language choices shape others' impressions of the speaker, and thus impact the decision-making process in an array of critical social and applied areas. Additionally, Congile (1994) has argued that language does more than just convey a person's intent, but by its very nature, the way language is conveyed, and by whom, can have important consequences. He enhanced this point by referencing how a "cultured" British accent as opposed to a Southern drawl may have significant influence on individual audience members from the United Kingdom and the United States.

Another factor that impacts speech effectiveness as it relates to the audience is communication apprehension, which according to McCrosky (1977) is an individual's level of fear or anxiety with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. When a public speaker suffers from communication apprehension, this overt anxiety may have a direct impact on the quality of their speech. Research has shown that when highly apprehensive

people are unable to avoid situations in which communication is expected, they tend to talk less than people low on the trait (Beatty, 1987; Beatty et al., 1986; Jablin & Sussman, 1978). Further, Daly and Redlick (2016) suggested that listeners evaluate well-delivered presentations more positively than those that are poorly delivered.

Additionally, the speaker's social status as well as that of his audience is another important factor in determining the effectiveness of a speech. According to Castelan and Giles (1997), when people listen to a speaker their reactions can be affective, as well as cognitive, in nature. Emotions may be associated with the experience of interacting with or thinking about a speaker, especially one who represents a clearly defined social group. According to MacIntyre and MacDonald (1998), even though there has been considerable research in the area of public speaking anxiety as a whole, there has been less research focusing on it as a situational variable.

Another factor that may impact the effectiveness of a speech as it relates to the audience is the language status of the group or speaker, especially as it relates to ethnic minorities. According to Castelan and Giles (1997), in the context of language attitudes study, it is believed that the unfavorable social meanings attached to certain socially disadvantaged and low prestige minority groups may be translated into negative moods among minority group members when representative voices of the minority group are encountered. However, a study conducted by Giles et al. (1995) did not support this prediction. The researchers' belief that listening to a Hispanic rather than an Anglo-accented speaker would induce Hispanic listeners to experience a more negative (e.g., unhappy) mood state was not confirmed, notwithstanding Hispanic-accented speakers are judged regularly to exhibit less prestige than standard-accented speakers of American English.

According to Daly and Redlick (2016), while surprisingly there are a number of theoretical reasons to anticipate how presenters' responses to objections and questions will affect listeners' evaluations of speakers, little research has examined these suppositions. This deficiency in the current body of literature in understanding the most effective way to deliver an impactful speech is a critical area that is the focus of this study. The candidate has found in the literature review that effective audience analysis (i.e., ascertaining the perceptions that the audience has about a speech), the focus of this research study, is needed to better understand effective public speaking. As such, while public speaking instructional guides are filled with intuitively reasonable advice, there is little empirical work on what makes a successful presenter.

The preponderance of the studies that have been conducted are limited to examining the variables that affect audience evaluations of speakers (Bowers, 1965; Holladay & Combs, 1994). Building on the current research in this field, this study addressed three areas as they relate to audience analysis and successful motivational speaking. First, the effect of the audience's perception of the depth of knowledge of the speaker was measured. Does the audience's perceived depth of knowledge of the speaker cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker? Would the audience be harsher in its assessment of the speaker? Second, the effect of the enthusiasm level of the speaker on the audience was examined. Does the perceived level of speaker enthusiasm cause the audience to be more receptive? Would the audience be harsher in its assessment of the speaker? Third, the effect of the audience's emotional response to the speech was examined. Does the audience's emotional response to the speech cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker? Would the audience be harsher in its assessment of the speaker? Finally, what would be the effect of the presentation in a questioning and non-questioning format as it relates to the previously stated factors? Speakers who make a few

fumbles in responding to questions and objections may be more endearing to the audience.

Alternatively, too many mistakes could result in negative evaluations (Bowers, 1965; Holladay & Combs, 1994). These are the areas of deficiency that were addressed in this study.

### ***Audience***

A foundational assumption of this study is that a speaker's effectiveness while giving a speech is based on their ability to satisfy his audiences' reasons for attending a particular speech. The main audience of the research is those who directly affect the study and are affected by it. These are the thousands of motivational speakers around the world, the researcher as participant included, as well as public speakers in general. This list includes people within myriad professions who elect to speak publicly at some point in their lives. Prominent among this group would be teachers, lawyers, actors, administrators, members of the media, and students making presentations at all levels of learning. In addition, the audience further expands to other researchers and other interested individuals. This research is intended to bring a comprehensive, empirical-based approach to the most effective way to deliver a speech to a particular audience.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to employ an audience analysis in order to examine the factors that contribute to the perceptions that audiences form while watching and listening to a speech. The candidate's focus on speaker enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, audience emotional response to the speech, and the effects of including a question and answer period on the audience's global perceptions about the effectiveness of a speech, is but another step in the process of crafting a comprehensive effective approach to public speaking.

## Definition of Key Terms

<i>Term:</i>	A word or expression has a precise meaning in some uses or is particular to a science, art, profession, or subject.
<i>Audience Analysis:</i>	To understand what factors contribute to an audience's perceptions about a speech, an audience analysis is the process of determining the values, interests, and attitudes of the intended or projected listeners or readers.
<i>Crowd Sourcing:</i>	The practice of obtaining information or input into a task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet.
<i>Disfluency:</i>	An involuntary disruption in the flow of speech that may occur during normal childhood development of spoken language or during normal adult speech but is most often symptomatic of a speech impairment.
<i>Ethos:</i>	Appeal based on the character of the speaker.
<i>Interactive Listening:</i>	A pattern of listening that keeps you engaged with your conversation partner in a positive way.
<i>Logos</i>	Appeal is based on logic or reason
<i>Pathos:</i>	Appeal based on emotion
<i>Audience:</i>	The viewers of a speech.
<i>NSA:</i>	National Speakers Association
<i>NSB:</i>	National Speakers Bureau
<i>PR:</i>	Public Relations
<i>PVLES:</i>	Poise, Voice, Life, Eye Contact, Gestures, Speed

<i>QUAL:</i>	Qualitative Research Method
<i>QUANT</i>	Quantitative Research Method
<i>SCT:</i>	Source Credibility Theory

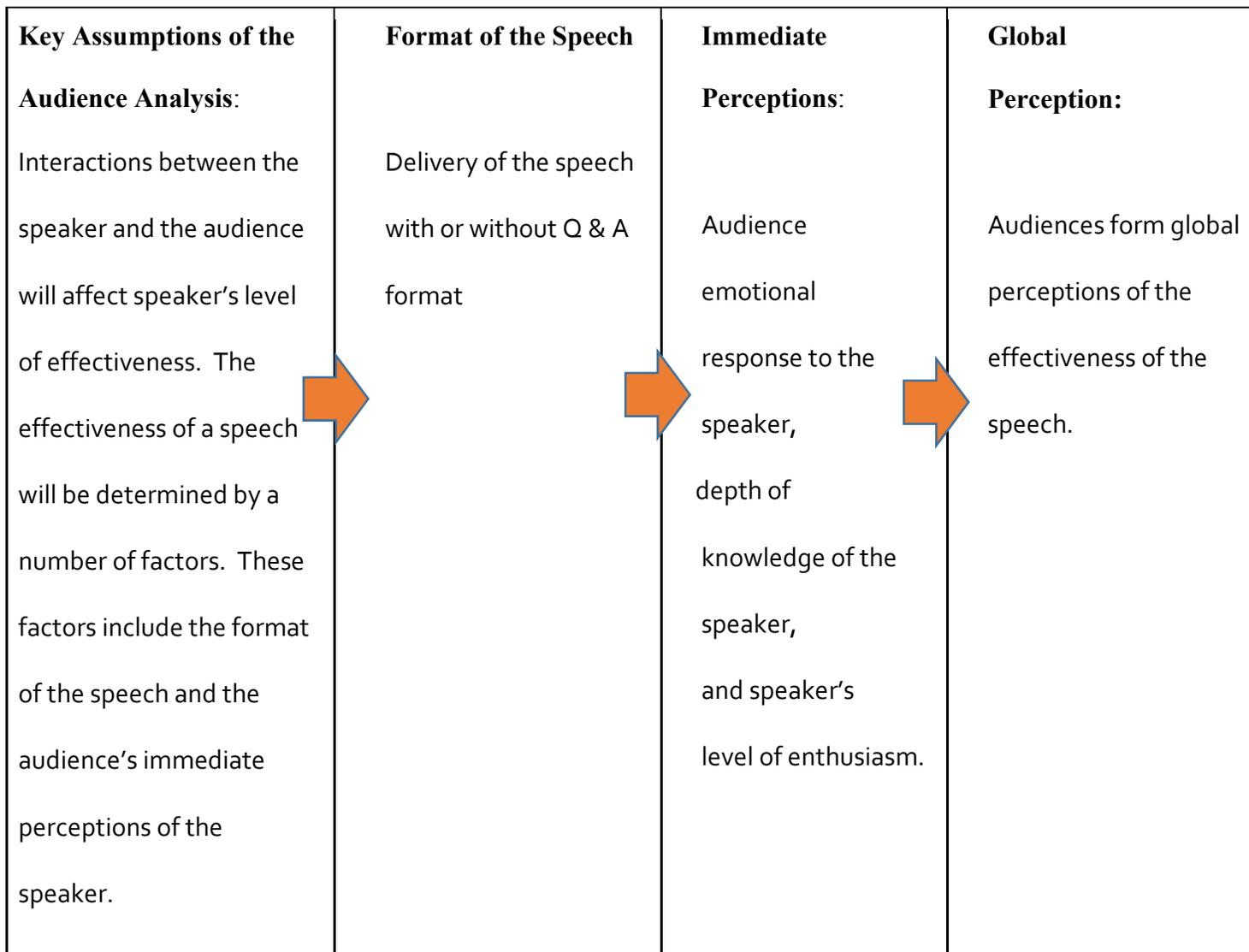
## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Public speaking and motivational speaking have been practiced since the time of the Greek era, a time when public speaking was considered an art form. The Greek orators, such as Sophocles, Aristotle, and Demosthenes, demonstrated a style that was imitated and rivaled by the great Roman orators, such as Cicero, Gnaeus Domitus, and Julius Africanus. Throughout the generations, mankind has been seeking to perfect the skill of oration, the ability to enthrall one's audience by the sheer power of words and personality. However, 75% of the population of the world struggles with the fear of public speaking, otherwise known as glassophobia (Pull, 2012). This research aimed to address the elements of successful public speaking. The results will assist in enhancing one's ability to engage an audience and help others overcome the obstacles which serve as inhibitors to being successful public speakers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was guided by a conceptual framework that describes the key assumptions of an audience analysis study. The audience analysis approach assumes there are specific factors that lead to audience perceptions about the effectiveness of a speech (Callison et al., 2004). To understand audience perceptions about a speech key factors, need to be identified that describe how a speaker interacts with their audience. The format of a speech pertains to how the speech is delivered—this is the speech input that the audience is provided. The format that was examined in the current study concerns the speaker's response to audience questions. Either the speaker will respond to audience questions or will defer or minimally react to audience questions. An audience will immediately respond by forming perceptions about the speech. These immediate perceptions will ultimately lead to audience members forming an overall global perception of the effectiveness of the speech.

**Figure 1.** Logic model for describing the audience analysis approach for determining how an audience formulates perceptions about the effectiveness of a speech.



### ***Key Assumptions of the Audience Analysis***

The main obstacle faced by the public speaker is in determining how to impart one's delivery in an impactful manner that will form a connection with one's audience. According to Lawrence (2015), the idea of taking an audience-centered approach to public speaking is emerging. An audience-centered approach to public speaking is defined as the focus of the effectiveness of the speech as determined by the audience's perception of the effectiveness of the speech through an audience analysis incorporating a number of predetermined factors. Based on research conducted on public speaking, it has been concluded that what a speaker says to the audience is nearly as important as how it is said.

Further, in an audience analysis study conducted by Holladay and Coombs (1994), the researchers focused on how message delivery and the content of a speech affects the perception of leader charisma. The researchers used a measurement system where delivery (weak and strong) and content (visionary and non visionary) were manipulated independent variables, while members' evaluations of speakers was the dependent variable (Holladay & Combs, 1994). The respondents in this study were 197 undergraduate students. By using a set number of charismatic leadership style items, two different delivery conditions were created to test for the impact of delivery and perceptions of charismatic leadership style. The two hypotheses were as follows: H1: Subjects exposed to the "strong" delivery condition of increased eye contact, use of gesture and facial expression, and increased vocal variety will make stronger attributions to leader charisma than subjects in the "weak" delivery condition, and H2: the communicator style sub-constructs of dominant, animated, attentive, open, friendly, and dramatic will distinguish between the strong and weak delivery conditions (Holladay & Combs, 1994). While pretending to be a new supervisor, Michael Armstrong, a trained speaker, was recruited to deliver the speech

in a corporation. In one condition, called the “strong” delivery condition, the speaker was told to maintain eye contact with the audience, to gesture freely and naturally, to use facial expressions, alter pitch, and to maintain vocal fluency. In the second condition, the “weak” delivery condition, the speaker was instructed to avoid using gestures, to avoid using facial expressions, to have a monotone use of voice, and to use occasional disfluencies (Holladay & Combs, 1994). The speeches were videotaped and the respondents were exposed to one of the two message delivery conditions ( $n = 80$  for weak delivery condition,  $n = 11$  for strong delivery condition). Using Bass’s (1985) assessment instrument that utilized a 5point scale ranging from frequent to not at all for measuring transformational leaders, respondents were asked to comment on the speech given by the fictional manager. The correlation ranged from .16 to .74, with an average correlation of .64. The reliability of the charismatic measure was .95 (Cronbach’s Alpha). The response to the 18 charisma items was averaged to create the composite charisma variable, which is the dependent variable for the analysis., With utilizing a Stepwise regression analysis with communicator style sub-constructs as predictors, the results of the study revealed the friendly attentive, dominant and open sub-constructs to be significant predictors of charisma (Holladay & Combs, 1994). This format and technique utilized by Holladay and Combs (1994) is very similar to the format and technique the candidate utilized in his study.

### ***Format of the Speech***

In a study conducted by Daly and Redlick (2016), the researchers sought to examine how effectively answering questions and responding to objections affect listeners’ evaluations of speakers. The research question for the study was: Will the quality of a speaker’s delivery or the quality of how the speaker responds to questions and objections matter more in audiences’ evaluations of the speaker? (Daly & Redlick, 2016). The researchers had a wide sample of 133

people. The mean age of the sample was 39.4 and the participants' gender was 52% female and 48% male. The speech delivered by the participants in the study was 5 minutes long and variables such as stammering, speech rate, eye contact, excessive use of note cards and awkward tones were noted as well as pauses and postural shifts. A criteria was established for what would be a high quality speech and what would be a low quality speech as well as the same for speaker responses. Four conditions were established to determine quality of speech and then a measurement scale was set up based on those qualities. Scales were coded so that higher values represented more positive evaluations of the speaker on a given dimension (Daly & Redlick, 2016). The scale that was used to determine source credibility was McCroskey and Taven's (1999) semantic differential scale. Additionally, participants rated the speaker using a five-item measure of persuasiveness. This is a Likert-type scale that was chosen for both its brevity and its demonstrated ability to assess persuasiveness separately from other related speaker characteristics (Daley & Redlick, 2016). The scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .92 which is highly accurate. A two-way multivariate analysis of variance was calculated using competence, trustworthiness, and persuasiveness as dependent measures. The independent variables were the quality of the speech (weak, strong) and the question and objection-handling (low, high). The results of that study revealed there was a significant main effect for the quality of the speech:  $F(3,125) = 5.29, p < .01, \text{partial} = .11$ . There was also a significant main effect for objection-handling:  $F(3,125) = 13.70, p < .001, \text{partial} = .25$ , H1 and H2 received initial support. In regards to RQ1, partial values suggested that question and objection handling played a larger role in determining audiences' evaluations of a speaker than delivery quality (Daly & Redlick, 2016).

Continuing along the trend of questioning of a speaker as a means of acquiring desired knowledge, a study conducted by Walton (2006) sought to provide an analysis of a special type

called examination dialogue. By this method, one party questions another party for the purpose of acquiring deeper knowledge and understanding. The questions can range from general to critical or even antagonistic inquiries between the parties all with the intent of obtaining complete understanding of the topic. When a speaker and audience engage in examination dialogue, the result will be a more accurate reflection of the audience's perception of the speaker's depth of knowledge. After experiencing the exchange of questions and answers, the audience will have a better understanding of the speaker's depth of knowledge after seeing how effectively he has handled this interaction. These findings offer invaluable information as to audience preferences when it comes to speech receptiveness and effectiveness. In this analysis one party tries to find out what the other party knows about something. Quite often this is the case in any presentation. Audience analysis on a scientific level cannot be ignored, or it would be done so to the detriment of an effective speech delivery. Since engagement results in a more memorable experience for an attendee, this factor indicates that sufficient time should be allotted to allow the audience plenty of opportunities to ask questions and interact with the speaker.

### ***Immediate Perceptions***

The common theme the researchers found in the communication research is that delivery plays a significant part in the audience's perception of the speaker (Holladay & Combs, 1994). In his study, the candidate focused on the theme of delivery as related to the variables of enthusiasm, and the audience's emotional response to the speaker that the candidate focused on. Additionally, for Holladay and Combs (2015) the results of their evaluation showed that both delivery and content are important in the development stage of charisma, however delivery's impact is stronger. Further, other variables such as attentiveness, a relaxed, friendly and

dominant style were also important predictors of a leader's charisma (Holladay & Combs, 1994).

### ***Global Perception***

Additionally, research in the field of audience analysis considers factors such as levels of understanding, attitudes, and beliefs (Hanna, 1998). An audience centered approach is important in terms of speaker effectiveness if the presentation is perceived as being created and delivered in an appropriate manner. Further, in audience analysis, adapting a speech to an audience is not simply telling the audience what one thinks it wants to hear, grandstanding or playing to the audience, rather the adaptation one makes for the audience serves as a guide to the content and style choices the speaker makes for a particular audience (Hanna, 1998). An effective speech is striking the right balance between adapting too much or adapting too little. The speaker can best find that balance by being aware of their skill level and skill set. An effective speaker must make themselves aware that when an audience attends a speech, it is bringing with it certain expectations regarding the occasion, the topic, and the speaker. If the speaker is not aware of these factors when making their presentation, a negative effect on their speech will certainly result (Kosicki, 1998). Again, in being aware of an audience's expectations, which of course would be achieved through an audience analysis, a speaker will be well-served to know how much prior knowledge an audience may have about a topic he will be speaking about. If the speaker does not have an accurate understanding of the audience's level of knowledge of the topic, the audience will either be bored or overwhelmed when listening. It behooves the speaker to know the appropriate starting point and depth of information to discuss in order to most effectively reach the audience. Making assumptions about an audience's depth of knowledge about a particular topic can cause

frustration on both ends of the spectrum, for those who have a great deal of knowledge as well as for those who do not have a great deal of knowledge.

Another area of audience analysis that would be helpful to a speaker is knowing his audience's level of emotional response to his speech in terms of effectiveness of speech. This study analyzed the role emotional response plays in determining the effectiveness of a speech. Additionally, the role of enthusiasm of the speaker from the audience's perspective was explored as a contributing factor to the effectiveness of a speech. It would be prudent for the effective speaker to be aware of these factors when presenting a speech. The last thing a speaker wants to do is to misjudge their audience based on some misplaced, misconstrued, or misunderstood factor. A speaker's goal is to deliver their message as effectively as possible, and the more familiar they are with the audience the more likely they are to deliver an impactful speech. A speaker can determine this receptivity through an analysis of the audience. Finally, an audience analysis would enable a speaker to be aware of egocentrism in an audience (i.e., interested in things that directly affect oneself or one's community) and thus allows the speaker to make the necessary adjustments to appeal to that particular audience.

Further, the effects of audience pleasantness, audience familiarity, and speaking contexts all play a critical role in the effectiveness of a speech. According to McIntyre and Thivierge (1995), among the audience characteristics that have been examined, audience familiarity has received some attention. The general belief is that the more familiar a speaker is with his audience, the more positive the speech will be received. Based on the current literature, one can conclude that an audience who is familiar with a speaker will be predisposed to see the speaker in a positive light. The converse can also be concluded so that an audience who is not familiar with the speaker will be expected to perceive the speaker negatively.

Based on current literature, one of the key hurdles in delivering an impactful speech is being able to determine what factors are necessary for an effective speech. Trying to determine the role that the factors of speaker enthusiasm, speaker's depth of knowledge and the audience's emotional response to the speaker, were the focus of this research. However, the main focus of the research was to address the main research question of the study: What characteristics are necessary for an impactful speech? Based on the findings of the research, recommendations were made on how to effectively deliver a speech in the public domain.

### **Discussion and Summary**

Based on the literature review, one can ascertain significant gaps remain in the literature as to the factors that contribute to an effective speech. The candidate's focus on speaker enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and audience emotional response to the speech, is but another step in the process of crafting a comprehensive effective approach to public speaking. Thus, even upon completion of this study, much remains to be pursued in the perpetual search for what comprises a universal blueprint for effective public speaking. Therefore, this research study assessed whether there is a most effective strategy or method in delivering a speech based on an audience analysis. Factors that were considered in the analysis are as follows: speaker enthusiasm; depth of knowledge of the speaker and the emotional response of the audience to the speaker; in a question and answer format and one without.

In summary, determining the qualities of an effective speaker in both a public and private setting addresses a critical area in the emerging field of public speaking, especially as it relates to motivational speaking. In a field where the median income salary is \$107,173 and top speakers earn \$312,00 annually, there is a trend for growth. Additionally, with a growing need for

speakers in the home health services, information services, and individual family services, one can see the need to determine the most effective way to be a successful public speaker.

## **The Current Study**

### ***Rationale***

Many detailed and exhaustive studies have been conducted in the area of public speaking and audience analysis separately. However, this research took an audience analysis approach to studying the variables that affect audience perceptions about a speech. To ensure added credibility and rigor to the research, this study explored an area that had been neglected. That area is the role of audience questioning and challenges in the form of seeking clarification on points and assertions made by the speaker that arise during or immediately after presentation (Daly & Redlick, 2016). Buttressing the work of Daly and Redlick (2016) on the role of audience challenges, Mearle and Craig (2017) have found college students responded more positively to a speaker when the speaker moved away from the traditional lecture style and utilized a question-and-answer format.

The three areas that this study addressed relating to audience analysis and successful motivational speaking included three spheres. First, the effect of the audience's perception of the depth of knowledge of the speaker was measured. Would the audience's perceived depth of knowledge of the speaker cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker? Would that perception influence a more critical assessment of the speaker? Second, the effect of the enthusiasm level of the speaker was examined. Would that perception influence a more critical assessment of the level of speaker enthusiasm or cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker? Would it be harsher in its assessment of the speaker? Finally, the effect of the audience's emotional response was examined. Would the audience's emotional response to the

speech cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker? Would it be critical in its assessment of the speaker? What would be the effect of the presentation in a questioning and non-questioning format as it relates to the previously stated factors?

### ***Research Design***

Based on the literature review, the researcher's role of researcher as participant, and his experience in the public speaking arena, four quantitative variables were measured to answer the research questions for this research project. The dependent variable was audience members' ratings of the global effectiveness of the speech. The independent variables were: (a) audience emotional response to the speaker, (b) speaker's depth of knowledge, and (c) speaker enthusiasm.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine what characteristics or factors are necessary for a highly effective speech as indicated by audience member's global perceptions about the effectiveness of a given speech. The study determined the role of several factors believed to be necessary for a highly effective speech, among those being the enthusiasm level of the speaker, the depth of knowledge of the speaker, and finally the audience's emotional response to the speaker. Stated differently, the ideal conditions necessary for a highly effective speech. Based on this goal and using the literature review as a guide, two primary questions were constructed. They are as follows:

#### ***Research Question 1***

Are there differences in mean enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, emotional response to the speaker and global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech between those participants

who view the speech with questions included versus those who view the speech without the questioning?

***Research Question 2***

To what extent do the factors of enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and emotional response to the speaker uniquely correlate with the audience members' rated global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech?

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

### Introduction

The following chapter covers an overview of the methodology that was used in this study. The discussion is focused and structured around the research design, population sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

### Participants

The participants in this research study were attendees of speeches given by the researcher in his role as public speaker. The population from which the sample was drawn were public middle school teachers with experience working with students who are at-risk due to low economic status. These teachers served as the audience. The inclusion criteria were public school teachers who have at-risk students in their classrooms. At-risk refers to students from low-income families or students who exhibit behavior issues in the classroom. The targeted sample size were at least 140 participants. For comparing means, a power analysis was conducted using G\*Power (Erdfeiler, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) assuming a medium effect size ( $d = .5$ ), a  $p$  value of .05, power at .80, and equal sample sizes in both the questions allowed group versus no question and answers provided group. For correlational research questions, the power analysis for the required sample size for a medium size effect with five predictors in a multiple regression was less than 100 participants for both testing the overall variance accounted for and unique effects of individual predictors. Thus, the intended target sample size of at least 140 participants seemed reasonable. Participants were obtained from the Audience Feature of Survey Monkey.

## Instruments

For the purposes of this study, data collection is defined as the process of precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research sub-problems. The method utilized was a quantitative survey (Burns & Grove, 2003). Further, according to Hox and Boeije (2005), surveys using structured questionnaires are another important method that typically involve data collection of a large number of variables from an extensive and representative sample of respondents. Four surveys were designed to gather information regarding the four factors that reflect audience perceptions of an effective speaker. Those factors are: (a) enthusiasm of the speaker, (b) depth of knowledge of the speaker, (c) emotional response of the audience to the speaker, and (d) perceived effectiveness of the speech. Please see the Appendix for the survey subscales.

1. *Enthusiasm of the speaker*: A survey was administered with eight items to measure the audiences' perceptions about the enthusiasm of the speaker. Does the perceived level of speaker enthusiasm cause the audience to be more receptive or less receptive of the speech? Examples of qualities of enthusiasm include the following: tone of voice, eye contact, smiles, variation in pitch, and energy level in terms of animation. Relative to the items tone of voice and variation in pitch: Is the speaker delivering their speech in a monotone voice, or are they delivering it in variations of pitch and tone? Is their tone of voice reflective of the subject matter they are speaking about (i.e., serious, contemplative, happy, emotional, inspiring)? Relative to the item eye contact: Is the speaker delivering their speech while making eye contact with the audience, or are they averting eye contact with the audience? According to Vogel (2018), eye contact establishes rapport and a feeling of being genuine. Relative to the items smiles and energy level: Is the speaker

displaying a friendly, warm, and welcoming disposition by smiling? Are they energetic and animated in the delivery of their speech or not? All these items are critical elements in the delivery of an effective speech (Vogel, 2018).

2. *Depth of knowledge of the speaker:* A survey was administered with eight items to measure the audiences' perceptions about the depth of knowledge of the speaker. Does the audience's perception of the speaker's depth of knowledge cause the audience to be more receptive to the speech or less receptive to the speech? Examples of depth of knowledge include the following: educational achievement, years of experience in regard to the content of the speech, and credibility and reputation of the speaker. Relative to educational achievement: What are the educational credentials of the speaker as related to the topic of the speech? Do they possess the necessary educational skills? Are they a relative novice to the field or a veteran possessing several years of experience on the topic? Finally, according to Stiff and Mongeau (2003), a speaker's competence and trustworthiness are indispensable in a successful speech.
3. *Emotional response of the audience:* A survey was administered with eight items to measure the audiences' perceptions about their emotional responses to the speech. Does the audience's perceived emotional response to the speech cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker or less receptive to the speaker? Examples of perceived emotional response include the following: levels of optimism, levels of excitement, and levels of attentiveness to the speaker. Further, relative to emotional response of the audience to the speech, does the audience feel optimistic, inspired, pessimistic, excited, angry, happy, etcetera about the speaker after listening to the speech? Is the speaker

dynamic? Are they perceived by the audience as being outgoing and animated?

According to Stiff and Morgan (2003), dynamic speakers possess charisma and charismatic people are attractive to other people, thus charismatic speakers have an innate advantage as public speakers.

4. *Global perceived effectiveness of the speech*: A survey was administered with eight items to measure the audiences' perceptions about their global impressions concerning the effectiveness of the speech. Does the audience's perceived effectiveness of the speech cause the audience to be more receptive to the speaker or less receptive to the speaker? Examples of perceived effectiveness of speech include the following: level of engagement of the audience, level of clarity of the speech to the audience, level of relatability, and level of audience interest relative to the speech. Relative to perceived effectiveness of speech, being able to convey ideas effectively (i.e., being able to bridge differences of opinions) and with great clarity can lead an audience to believe that a speech has been effective (Dewan & Myatt, 2008). Further, according to Dewan and Myatt (2008), a leader with clarity in their communicative ability will have great influence with an audience. An audience will be more inclined to listen to the most coherent speaker (Dewan & Myatt, 2008).

## **Procedures**

### ***Survey Development Procedure***

1. Create a pool of items for each of the three factors that will be measured.

2. Items were provided to 2 expert researchers who reviewed the items and provided feedback. The two researchers were deemed experts because of their own published research studies that utilized surveys for data gathering.
3. Items for each section of the surveys are provided in the Appendix.

### ***The Speech Procedure***

As the speaker, the researcher delivered two persuasive speeches in which the only variation was whether or not the speech provided the audience with a question-and-answer segment. The speech advocated the merits of education as a way of upward mobility and self-improvement. The focus was on forging relationships with middle school students who are at-risk. The speech lasted for 25 minutes and was presented via the internet application Zoom.

### ***General Procedure***

1. Participants went to the survey link in Survey Monkey and read the anonymous survey consent document. They were provided a video link to view the speech.
2. Participants were randomly assigned to watch either the speech with questions and answers or the speech without questions and answers.
3. Participants used a link provided after the speech to access the post-speech survey about the speech.
4. Once participants completed the survey, they were thanked, and the research protocol ended.

### ***Data Analysis Procedures***

Data analysis procedures for each research question are provided.

***Research Question 1***

Are there differences in mean enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, emotional response to the speaker, and rated global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech between those participants who view the speech with questions included versus those who view the speech without the questioning?

**Analysis.** t-tests were conducted to determine if the mean differences between the two questioning conditions were significantly different from zero. Cohen's (1988) *d* value was employed to examine effect sizes.

***Research Question 2***

To what extent do the factors of enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, and emotional response to the speaker uniquely correlate with the audience members' rated global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech?

**Analysis.** Multiple regression was used to examine the unique correlates of audience members' global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech. The predictors were examined with respect to both combined prediction and unique prediction of variance in the outcome. The total  $R^2$  value was used as an indicator of the overall effect size, while the separate regression coefficients were used to gauge the effect sizes for each of the individual predictors.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### ***Introduction***

The following chapter will cover the results of this study. First, demographics of the sample are provided. Next tables representing the different analyses and their findings are provided. Finally, the answers to each of the research questions are presented.

### ***Demographic Characteristics***

Participants in the research consisted of 194 adults (50.5% males, 49.5% females) teaching in public middle or high schools who had experience working with students who were at risk due to low economic status. The mean age of the sample was 38.8 (range = 18-60). The participants were drawn from Survey Monkey, a technology site that pays people to participate in research studies. Survey Monkey is recognized as one of the top online tools, as it is user friendly for online surveys and very helpful for academic research (Radha & Trivedi, 2015).

### ***Data Analysis***

#### ***Research Question 1***

The first research question asked: “Are there differences in mean enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, emotional response to the speaker and global perceptions about the effectiveness of the speech for those participants who viewed the speech with questions included versus those who viewed the speech without questioning?”

An independent sample t test was conducted to determine if there were any mean differences in the indicators (enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and emotional response to the speaker,) between those participants who viewed the speech with questions included versus those who viewed the speech without the questioning.

Setting the hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis: There are no significant mean differences in the indicators between those participants who view the speech with questions included and those who view the speech without questioning.

Alternative Hypothesis: There are significant mean differences in the indicators between those participants who view the speech with questions included and those who view the speech without questioning.

Means and standard deviations for each of the two experimental conditions are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Mean Ratings on Each of the Measures, with Standard Deviations in Parentheses, for the With Questions (n = 97) and Without Questions (n =63) Groups.*

Measure	Group		t-test	p-value
	With Questions	Without Questions		
Emotional Response	3.01(0.14)	3.00(0.02)	1.171	0.24
Depth of Knowledge	3.01(0.06)	3.01(0.06)	-0.10	0.92
Enthusiasm of the Speaker	3.01(0.11)	3.00(0.03)	1.58	0.12
Global Effectiveness of Speech	3.03(0.23)	3.01(0.10)	0.69	0.49

Table Note: Degrees of freedom for the t-tests were 158.

From Levene's test for equality of variances, the p values are all greater than the alpha of 0.05 in this study which suggests that the variances were not significantly different between each other. Therefore, for each indicator, the first row with "equal variances assumed" was employed. Participants who viewed the speech with questions had a slightly more emotional response to the speech ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) than those who did not ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = .02$ ). Participants who viewed the speech with questions ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .11$ ) compared to those who did not ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = .03$ ) viewed enthusiasm of the speaker as slightly more significant. Participants who viewed the speech with questions ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .23$ ) compared to those who did not ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .10$ ) thought the speech was slightly more globally effective. These overall positive mean findings were not significant enough to change H1. H2 is not supported.

For each of the indicators, the specific p value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. So, the conclusion is that there are no significant mean differences in the indicators between those participants who view the speech with questions included and those who view the speech without questioning at a 5% level of significance.

### ***Research Question 2***

The second research question asked, "To what extent do the factors of enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and emotional response to the speaker uniquely correlate with the audience members' rated global perception about the effectiveness of the speech?"

To answer this research question, both correlations and multiple regression analyses were conducted. The results are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

**Table 2.** *Inter-Correlations Among All Variables*


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Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Enthusiasm	1.0			
2. Depth of knowledge	0.33	1.0		
3. Emotional response to the speaker	0.48	0.72	1.0	
4. Global effectiveness of speech	0.18	0.56	0.40	1.0

---

A value close to 1 indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables, while a value close to zero indicates weak to no association. All correlations were significant at p less than at most .025. Interestingly, all of the predictors were significantly related to each other, which suggests that to some extent the various perceptions about the speech seem to all reflect a common audience receptiveness factor. In fact, a principal axis factor analysis suggested that about 68% of the variance amongst the three predictors can be explained by a common receptiveness factor. The significant correlations between all of the predictors and Global effectiveness of speech supports the Audience Analysis approach which assumes that an audience relies on multiple variables when forming opinions about the quality of a speech.

**Table 3** *Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Global Perceptions About the Global Effectiveness of Speech (Standard Errors in Parentheses).*

Variable	Regression Coefficient	Unique Correlation	p-value
1. Enthusiasm	-0.01(0.08)	-.006	.937
2. Depth of knowledge	1.77(0.30)	.43	< .001
3. Emotional response to the speaker	-0.01(0.18)	-.004	.958

The total variance explained from the above analysis was 31.1%. Thus, over a quarter of the variance in the audience's perceptions about the speech were explained by the predictors. From the regression output, with p values greater than 0.05 level of significance, Enthusiasm (.937) and Emotional Response to the speaker (.958) were found not significant in predicting global effectiveness of speech. Depth of knowledge variable is the strongest predictor of Global effectiveness of speech. Thus, it would seem that the audience's perceptions about the speaker's depth of knowledge was the most important factor when deciding about the overall effectiveness of the speech. Depth of knowledge variable was a significant and unique predictor of the global effectiveness of speech.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction

This study was conducted with the intent of determining empirically specific information as to how a person can become a more accomplished motivational speaker. Based on the findings of this study, one would be able to develop a blueprint for effective motivational speaking in light of the growing trend of audiences attending speeches and presentations for a variety of reasons nationally and internationally. An audience analysis was conducted to examine variables that might foster audience perceptions of an effective speech. The areas that were identified in the study to determine whether they would lead to effective motivational speaking were (a) the role of enthusiasm displayed by the speaker, (b) the depth of knowledge of the speaker, (c) the role of emotion in an audience response to the speech, and (d) the audience response to a question-and-answer format at the end of the speech.

This research study was built upon previously conducted studies and their findings relative to effective public speaking. While a plethora of scholarly and non-scholarly literature exists on the factors necessary for effective public speaking, limited scholarly research exists based on empirical findings regarding the specific factors identified in the paragraph above and their impact in determining a globally-recognized effective speech.

The data set analyzed in this study was of responses based on four surveys conducted with 194 adults teaching in public middle or high schools who had experience working with students who were at risk due to low economic status. The titles of the four data collection instruments were *Enthusiasm of the Speaker*, *Depth of Knowledge of the Speaker*, *Emotional Response of the Audience*, and *Global Perceived Effectiveness of the Speech*. The data obtained from these four instruments completed by the participants of the study was analyzed using a

multivariate approach and provided the findings as they relate to specific factors that determine effective public speaking. Initially, an interpretation of the study's findings will be offered, which will then be followed by a detailed examination into the strengths as well as the limitations of the study. Lastly, strategies for improving the current methodology for future research on this topic will be examined.

### **Summary of Findings**

An analysis of the data utilizing t-tests, Pearson Correlations, and Multiple Regression yielded the following key findings concerning variables that contribute to audience perception about the effectiveness of a speech:

- There are no significant differences in rated global effectiveness of the speech between those participants who view a speech with questions included and those who view the speech without questioning.
- The simple correlation matrix indicated that all of the predictors, enthusiasm, emotional response, and depth of knowledge correlated with each other. This suggests that to some extent these perceptions about the speech seem to all reflect a common audience receptiveness factor.
- The simple correlation matrix indicated that all of the predictors, enthusiasm, emotional response, and depth of knowledge correlated with (i.e., predicted) global ratings of the effectiveness of the speech.

### **Interpretation and Context of Findings**

Based on indicators from the literature review, 75% of the population of the world struggles with the fear of public speaking (Pull, 2012), yet there is a paucity of information about specific factors which underlie effective public speaking. The interpretation of findings that

follows serves to address some of the questions and allay some of the fears relating to the variables in public speaking that will allow one to become more effective in this realm.

This study as it pertains to the first research question, the effectiveness of a speech whose impact is determined through a questioning versus a non-questioning format, produced a surprising result. It debunked the candidate's original assumption that a question and answer format would be more impactful in determining the effectiveness of a speech than it actually turned out to be. Notwithstanding the candidate's expectation from the outset, the findings of this study indicated that a question-and-answer format included along with a speech is no more impactful in determining the speech's effectiveness than not including a questioning opportunity. This result stands in contrast to the findings of Daly and Redlick (2016), who reported that audiences' evaluations of speakers are significantly and positively affected by how well speakers respond to questions and parry objections. This contradiction of findings will be more thoroughly discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

The variables in the study are all positively correlated. This correlation would indicate that all the factors identified in the study (the emotional response of the audience to the speaker, the depth of knowledge of the speaker, and the enthusiasm of the speaker) are essential when preparing and delivering an impactful speech. These findings will apply to either a speech in a question and answer format at the end or one without. Further, the results from the analysis also indicate, and it can be logically concluded based on the correlation matrix in Table 3, that the stronger the positive relationship is among the variables the more impactful the speech will be to the audience. These findings also apply to a speech with or without a question and answer segment.

Of all the variables in the study, the strongest positive correlational relationship existed between the depth of knowledge variable and the emotional response variable (0.72) and demonstrated that this relationship is the most significant of all the other relationships among the variables in predicting the global effectiveness of a speech. This finding would suggest a public speaker should not only be well-versed in the content of his speech but also have a clear understanding of his audience's reason for attending that particular speech before making his presentation. By understanding the audience's purpose for attendance, the speaker would be better able to appeal to the audience's expectation and thus evoke a more positive emotional response from the audience. Utilizing an audience analysis would be most beneficial in determining those reasons for audience attendance. This is a key finding in the research even though it was not the primary focus of the study.

Additionally, as it relates to the variable of enthusiasm of the speaker, Table 2 (weak positive correlation between the enthusiasm variable and global effectiveness of speech variable) as well as Table 3 (p value .937, well above the level .05 of significance) seem to indicate that being enthusiastic is not enough for an impactful speech. This finding also applies to the emotional response to the speaker variable (with a p value of .958). In fact, if any of these individual variables are used solely in a speech, with the exception of the depth of knowledge variable, they will not result in an impactful speech.

Of the three independent variables in the study, the depth of knowledge variable with a p value less than .001 is the strongest unique predictor of global effectiveness of speech. In fact, as a consequence of the positive correlation between the variable depth of knowledge and the other variables in the study, all indications are that this unique variable (based on the findings in the study) used in conjunction with any other variable would seem to indicate a positive impact in

determining global effectiveness of speech. Thus, this variable is indispensable when delivering a speech. This finding confirms widely accepted common beliefs about the role of knowledge in public speaking. One such belief is that anyone taking a position on an issue, as public speakers do, needs knowledge about that issue to have any degree of impact. Further, this finding is not surprising, based on the respondents' chosen profession (educators). According to Lewis and Robinson (2017), an effective teacher possesses considerable depth of knowledge pertaining to qualities that promote kindness, caring, love, and knowing their students' unique circumstances and needs.

Further, indicators are that the enthusiasm of the speaker (0.48) has a relatively strong positive impact on the emotional response of the audience. The format of the speech has no influence on this finding as the positive impact is evident in either a speech given with a question and answer format or one without. Though including questions and answers did not appear to be sufficient to significantly impact the speech, as demonstrated by the findings of the study, they can affect a speech in a positive manner.

Additionally, even though there is a weak positive correlational relationship between the depth of knowledge and enthusiasm variables (0.33), a speaker would be well-advised to incorporate these two factors into a speech if the intent is to be an effective public speaker. As is the case with all the variables in the study, incorporating any of them into a speech will not take away from the impact of the speech. However, as seen by the findings of the study, with the exception of the depth of knowledge variable, they are not significant enough by themselves to impact the speech.

Finally, the findings illustrate a relatively strong positive correlation between the variables of global effectiveness of a speech and the emotional response to the speaker by the

audience. This correlation would indicate that the emotional bond a speaker establishes with the audience is an important factor in the delivery of an impactful speech. Again, the format of the speech (one with a question and answer format and one without) is not a factor as it relates to these two variables.

Some of the unexpected results of this study seem to suggest that perhaps there are other extraneous factors besides the ones targeted in this research study that contribute to the perceived global effectiveness of a speech. Thus, fertile ground exists for future research studies to build upon the findings of this study and other similar studies.

### **Implications of Findings**

Theoretically, the candidate's findings that show no significant differences between audience members who view a speech with questions as opposed to those who do not have the opportunity to ask questions, as well as the additional findings that enthusiasm and emotional response to the speaker are not significant in predicting global effectiveness, both refute and corroborate some of the commonly held beliefs about effective public speaking based on the philosophical and heuristic models of discourse analysis. Utilizing Aristotle's three pillars of impactful public speaking found within *The Rhetoric*, O'Quinn (2009) suggested there are three critical elements necessary for impactful public speaking: ethos (the speaker's credibility and character), logos (a logical and rational argument), and pathos (the speaker's emotional bond with his audience). All three of these elements are necessary for effective public speaking. O'Quinn argues that it would be difficult to craft an impactful argument or speech without these three principles working in harmony. Further, he extends his argument that a persuasive speech or argument will fail if it is one-sided or if no audience analysis was conducted prior to the study. An implication from the above reasoning for the candidate's study suggests that utilizing only

pathos, as was the case in this study, is insufficient for a globally effective speech. Conversely, utilizing ethos and logos in conjunction with pathos, may result in effective public speaking. The depth of knowledge variable as it is shown in Table 3 with a regression coefficient of 1.77 and a p-value of .000 further buttresses the finding that the single most significant predictor of audience perception about the global effectiveness of a speech is the speaker's knowledge of the topic.

Additionally, one cannot discount the role of a speaker's emotional appeal to the audience, though this single variable being utilized in a speech unto itself as a predictor of global effectiveness of a speech with a regression coefficient of -0.01 and a p value of .937 is not significant to an impactful speech. Using this variable in conjunction with the depth of knowledge variable, however, a speaker's emotional appeal to the audience becomes significant in predicting the global effectiveness of the speech. The implication of this relationship between knowledge and emotional appeal to the audience would strongly suggest that a key to successful motivational speaking is the speaker's implementation of both variables. Again, an audience analysis would be beneficial in assisting the speaker in his evoking emotional appeal from the audience. The speaker would be prudent in recognizing the uniqueness of each audience and thus preparing and delivering his speech based on those unique expectations. The role of the audience's emotional response to the speaker should not be discounted, as evidenced by the study's findings as well as the researcher's personal experience as a public speaker.

Another key implication of the findings from the study is that one cannot assume that an impactful or effective speech in one environment or with one particular demographic will have the same results in another. The findings in the study are restricted to a specific audience, namely public middle school teachers working with students who are at risk due to low economic status.

Extending a future study to cover all demographics incorporating the same variables used in this study, would go a long way in filling the gaps in the research on this topic.

Further, based on O'Quinn's (2009) audience analysis conceptual approach to effective speaking, an implication for the study's findings would suggest conducting an audience analysis prior to giving the speech. Knowing the characteristics of one's audience does not negate the need for a detailed audience analysis to determine the critical factors necessary for an impactful speech based on the unique composition of the sample, in this case, that of public middle or high school teachers working in an urban environment.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Source Credibility Theory, a philosophical approach to public speaking that postulates the impact of a speech is determined by the public's perception of the speaker. Based on the results of the study, one implication is abundantly clear: to be an effective speaker, in addition to catching someone's attention, one must also be able to retain that attention. Umeogu (2012) posited that the secret to being an effective speaker is source credibility. He further suggested there must be something discernible about these speakers that enables them to captivate an audience with their rhetoric. The findings as outlined in Table 2, that all the variables were significantly related to each other, with some correlations being higher amongst specific variables and lower amongst others at  $p$  less than 25%, and with a variance amongst the predictors of 68%, show that discernible "something" Umeogu (2012) references in his study, may well be the perspective that participants have of the speaker when attending a speech. The fact that the respondents were slightly more enthusiastic and slightly more emotional in their response to the speaker in a question and answer format as opposed to one without would suggest that a speaker would be wise to utilize a question and answer format. Further, an audience analysis would further serve to specifically identify other

factors that would comprise that “something” that makes for a globally effective speech. When engaging in public speaking, a speaker will be more impactful with his audience when it is given in a question and answer format.

Although the previously stated factors may play a role on the impact of a speech, other factors may be necessary to be used in conjunction or individually with the previously stated variables to craft a globally effective speech. In fact, in Table 2 of the study, it shows that all the predictors were significantly related to each other and that there is a common audience receptiveness factor. In buttressing the previous statement, a principal axis factor analysis further suggested that about 68% of the variance amongst the predictors can be explained by a common receptiveness factor. For these reasons it is crucial for a speaker who intends to deliver an impactful speech to complete an audience analysis in order to identify the variables and the common audience receptiveness factor that each unique audience would find most appealing in a speech. This audience analysis approach which assumes that an audience relies on multiple variables when forming opinions about the quality of a speech shows a strong positive correlation amongst all the variables (Table 2). This finding is supported by not only the findings of this study but even more importantly, throughout the reference literature that was utilized in developing this study. Determining what those other factors may be, would certainly be fertile ground for future research.

Notwithstanding the findings of the study regarding the importance of the independent variables, the implications would suggest that the factors of emotional response, depth of knowledge, and enthusiasm of the speaker should not be the main focus of effective rhetoric when one is preparing to embark into the field of public speaking. There is a myriad of other variables which have been examined in other studies as well as yet to be examined that influence

the global effectiveness of a speech. Conversely, these independent variables which this study has focused on should not be neglected, especially with respect to depth of knowledge. They may, in fact, be contributing factors in effective public speaking, though in a limited role in comparison to other factors such as the credibility of the speaker, persuasiveness of the speaker, and the argument strength of the speaker (Daly & Redlick, 2016).

Finally, the current study replicated a similar type of methodology utilized by Daley and Redlick (2016) for gathering data. The methodology applied by Daley and Redlick was Mechanical Turk, an online technology that allows people to participate in research studies for monetary rewards. This study utilized a competing online technology, Survey Monkey. The drawbacks of this form of data gathering will be discussed in the forthcoming limitations section below.

### **Limitations of the Findings**

Notwithstanding the fact that there are significant strengths to this study, a number of limitations exist that are avenues for future research in this field. Understanding these limitations will be instrumental in designing upcoming research studies relative to effective public speaking. The most conspicuous limitation was the fact that the researcher as participant had to present the speech on a virtual platform. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic reality of limited social interaction, virtual simulations have become a more typical way of making oral presentations as opposed to the traditional live venue. Subsequently, it is not clear whether a live speech would have made a difference in the data derived from the sample. The platform that was utilized in this case was Zoom.

Additionally, even though there was a high response rate to the measures in the study (56.77%), reliance on self-reported data is only as good as the responses that are submitted. Even

though the researcher was prudent in incorporating exclusionary and inclusionary criteria in creating his measures, there are still inherent limitations in online surveying. According to Salon and Miller (2017), even though online research allows for more convenient broad-based sampling, there are drawbacks. Some of these drawbacks are as follows: physical disconnection from the research (as exemplified in the previous paragraph), careless responding, personality differences in terms of participants being serious or not serious in responding to the surveys, and time issues, whereby a respondent may rush to complete the measures and thus make careless mistakes.

Further, the possibility that a significant number of respondents may not have had the experience of being in the audience of a public speaker could result in their responses being conjecture. The candidate, as researcher, is in the arena of public speaking and is aware of and familiar with the realities of the profession; therefore, he has a different understanding of the variables that affect efficacy of a speech. One's understanding is hugely impacted by whether one has personal experience in that realm. Without that experience, the answers to the questions on the survey may not be accurate.

Further, in light of the fact that only public school teachers were utilized as respondents and the concern that enthusiasm is not emphasized in that professional training, as discussed earlier, perhaps expanded criteria could be used to see if other professions would view the influences of these variables differently. Using respondents from varying backgrounds could produce different results, as their experiences and professional training would have varying influences on their perceptions and, ultimately, their responses to the surveys.

Along the same lines of expanding the criteria for respondents, the interest level of the respondents could also be expanded in future studies. As the criteria for the present study was

specified more homogeneously, perhaps another criterion that could influence an audience's perception of an effective speech would be the individual respondent's interest level in the topic of the speech. The dependent variables as rated by a respondent could be impacted by whether they demonstrated a greater amount of interest in the content of the speech.

Finally, even though audience members were given the choice of asking questions in the question-and-answer portion of the speech, no objections were raised by the audience so that the speaker could respond. A question and answer format being handled by the speaker has been shown to be significant in an impactful speech. Given the opportunity to debate a speech's content with the audience, a speaker's impact has been shown to increase. The findings of Daly and Redlick (2016) and the abundance of literature available on this topic support this conclusion. In fact, the handling of objections to the content of a speech by audience members can affect the success of a speech. Including audience objections in the current speech could have affected the results in a different direction had it been incorporated into the question-and-answer portion of the speech.

### **Future Research Directions**

In the unending quest to understand and instruct on the ways to achieve more perfect rhetoric, researchers would be prudent to continue to dissect and study the factors that comprise effective speech. They should consider the findings, strengths, and limitations of this study. First, researchers could extend this study to see what, if any, impacts would be made if there was a response to objection-handling included in the question-and-answer version of the speech. In order to accomplish this task, researchers would be best served by replicating this study and simply adding the additional variable of objection-handling in a speech with questions and answers. According to the findings of Daly and Redlick (2016), effectively handling questions

and objections leads to positive evaluations of speakers and fits well within discourse analytic, philosophical, and confidence heuristic models. Accomplishing this objective would equip public speakers with an additional tool in the field of persuasive and effective public speaking.

An interesting area in public speaking that the researcher believes would bear tangible fruit for the public speaking profession would be the weight of experience versus that of expertise of the speaker in determining the impact of a speech. Based on the researcher's relatively new experience in the field of public speaking along with his lack of findings in the literature review, there is practically no indication as to whether a speaker's experience in giving public speeches will outweigh his depth of knowledge. Is an experienced public speaker who may not have the defining qualities described in this study more effective than a speaker who is new to this arena but possesses the qualities of an effective speaker? Does the role of experience supersede the crucial factor of depth of knowledge in the delivery of an impactful speech? Findings to these questions would be especially interesting in light of the age old argument as to the role of experience as opposed to other factors in determining success. In this case, success in the delivery of an impactful speech.

Another area of future research related to this study would determination of the role of emerging visual technology in enhancing the effectiveness of a speech. New technologies have vastly expanded the reach of the public speaker, e.g., TED Talks. These public conferences have access to a global audience at the touch of a button. This form of public speaking has the ability to reach audiences in both urban and rural areas and the potential to expand the platform of the public speaker immensely. As a result of the popularity and novelty of this technological explosion in presentation aids, it would seem logical to pursue empirical research to determine the impact of this oratorical medium. Utilizing the findings of this and other similar studies, then

incorporating the technological aspects of some future study, will help enhance a public speaker's presentation.

Finally, a topic related to this study that would be of profound importance, though unassailably controversial but certainly worthy of study, would be the issue of the race of the speaker in delivering an impactful speech. During the exhaustive literature review that was conducted for this research study and with the plethora of literature relevant to effective public speaking, a paucity of studies exists relative to the topic of the race of the speaker in delivering an impactful speech. Does the race of the speaker impact his effectiveness in an audience not of his own race and, conversely, is the speaker more effective when speaking to an audience comprised of his own race? This is an area that would be fertile ground for future research, especially in light of the growing popularity of public speaking across all racial demographics, especially in the area of motivational rhetoric.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Research Surveys**

A survey of audience members' satisfaction on attending a particular speech.

Target respondents: To be completed by audience members attending a motivational speech.

Purpose: The information gathered through these surveys will be used as part of empirical research into reasons for audience members attending a particular speech. The research is being conducted for the completion of doctoral research (for PhD-Research Methodology in Education).

Confidentiality: Please note that the responses provided are completely anonymous and confidential. The research outcome and report will include references to any individuals. The compiler of the survey has sole ownership of the completed survey and the survey will be destroyed after completion of the research.

Instructions: Please give your answers or comments in writing, or indicate the extent to which a factor related to you on a scale of 1 to 5, utilizing the following criteria.

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Enthusiasm of the Speaker Scales (McCrosky & Teven, 1999) (adapted for the present study)**

Responses on 5 points

Please indicate your impressions of the speaker by clicking the appropriate button between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer the button is to the adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

*Enthusiasm*

1. Excited/Unexcited
2. Animated/Unanimated
3. Happy/Unhappy
4. Passionate/Dispassionate
5. Positive attitude/Negative attitude
6. Enjoyable/Unenjoyable
7. Likable/Unlikable
8. Inspired/Uninspired

**Communicator Enthusiasm (Boster et al., 2011) (adapted for the present study)**

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. The speaker was energetic in the presentation of the material.
2. The speaker was excited and animated about the topic.
3. The speaker was passionate about the topic.
4. The speaker generally displayed a positive attitude when presenting the speech.
5. The presentation was inspirational.
6. The presenter had a high level of likability.
7. A lot of warmth was exuded during the speech.
8. The speaker presented eagerly.

**Perception of Speaker's Depth of Knowledge Scales (Semantic differential Items for the present study)**

Responses on 5 points

Consider the presentation you have just observed, kindly indicate your impressions of the speaker by clicking the appropriate button between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer the button is to the adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

*Depth of Knowledge*

1. Rational/Irrational
2. Practical/Impractical
3. Reasonable/Unreasonable
4. Expert/Novice
5. Intelligent/ Unintelligent
6. Informed/Uninformed
7. Experienced/Inexperienced
8. Competent/Incompetent

**Communicator Depth of Knowledge Questionnaire (Backman et al., 1982) (adapted for the present study)**

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. The speaker had extensive experience on the topic.
2. The speaker expresses his ideas clearly.
3. The speaker responded to questions concisely.
4. The speaker presented multiple experiential examples.
5. The speaker presented the topic fluidly.
6. The speaker stayed on topic during the presentation.
7. The speaker was well versed on the topic.
8. The speaker appeared comfortable about the topic.

**Emotional Response Scales (McCrosky & Teven, 1999) (adapted for the present study)**

Responses on 5 points

Please indicate how you felt in response to listening to the speech by clicking the appropriate button between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer the button is to the adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

*Emotional Response*

1. Optimistic/Pessimistic
2. Sad/Happy
3. Inspired/Uninspired
4. Angered/Contentment
5. Excited/Unexcited
6. Reflective/Dismissive
7. Surprised/Expected
8. Appreciate/Criticize

**Emotional Response to Speech (Boster et al., 2011) (adapted for the present study)**

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. The speaker made me feel optimistic about my future.
2. I felt very sad after hearing the speech.
3. The speech has motivated me to move forward with my goals.
4. I felt angry after listening to the speech.
5. The speech made me feel empathy for the speaker.
6. I felt that the speech was boring.
7. I feel anxious after listening to the speech.
8. The speech made me feel confused about life.

**Likability of Format of Speech Scale (Schuler et al., 2012) (adapted for the present study)**

Responses on 5 points.

Please indicate your impressions of the format of the speech by clicking the appropriate button between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer the button is to the adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

*Likability of Format response*

1. Organized/Unorganized
2. Interesting/Uninteresting
3. Relatable/Irrelevant
4. Practical/Impractical
5. Realistic/Unrealistic
6. Ideal/Lacking
7. Inspiring/Uninspired
8. Useful/Useless

**Likability Response to Format of Speech (Shuler et al., 2012) (adapted for the present study)**

Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. The formation of the speech was engaging.
2. The format of the speech led to greater clarity of the speech.
3. I liked the way the speech was organized.
4. I found the format of the speech to be very practical.
5. The format of the speech was realistic.
6. The format of the speech was comprehensive.
7. The speech format was the ideal length.
8. I was comfortable with the format of the speech.