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## "Welcome, fellow toastmasters": The history and membership of a public speaking phenomenon

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**“WELCOME, FELLOW TOASTMASTERS”: THE HISTORY AND MEMBERSHIP  
OF A PUBLIC SPEAKING PHENOMENON**

by

**Ellen Beth Levine Bremen**

**Associate of Arts  
Community College of Southern Nevada  
1998**

**Bachelor of Science  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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Hank Greenspun Department of Communication Studies  
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Master of Arts

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“Welcome, Fellow Toastmasters”: The History, Membership, and Dynamics of a Public Speaking Phenomenon**

by

Ellen Levine Bremen

Dr. Erika Engstrom, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Communication  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Since 1905, Toastmasters International (TI) serves as the most recognized organization for voluntary oral communication practice in the world. Due to the dearth of scholarly communication research regarding TI, this thesis details the history, educational structure, and program dynamics of the organization. Literature review included the nature and extent of post-secondary communication education, as well as social affiliation and leisure theories. Finally, an Internet survey of 343 international TI members revealed the demographics of the “typical” TI member: a male or female college graduate between the ages of 36-50, who works in a wide range of professions. The study also indicated that participants mainly join TI for professional purposes or for self-fulfillment. Similarly, participants remain in the organization for personal fulfillment and friendships. The author concluded that TI remains a fertile research area for communication scholars, particularly communication professors’ perceptions of the organization, and longitudinal membership studies.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since 1924, when Dr. Ralph Smedley assembled a group of young men for public speaking practice in the basement of a Santa Ana, California YMCA, Toastmasters International (TI) continues to incorporate modern communication trends. For the past seven decades, this international phenomenon has served as the most widely recognized organization for voluntary oral communication practice in the world. Today, the organization spans some 170,000 members in 68 countries, and provides a supportive, voluntary venue for adults who wish to gain personal self-esteem and enhance their professional skills through communication study and practice. Some of the more famous Toastmasters include US astronaut James Lovell, former Wimbledon champion Billie Jean King, James Brady, US President Ronald Reagan's press secretary, and actor/comedian Tim Allen; all have sought out this organization for speech training.

Little academic research exists regarding TI. Articles pertaining to public speaking found in business publications, such as The San Francisco Business Journal, newspapers like the Union Tribune, professional publications, such as Financial Planning and Internal Auditor, and even Redbook, a women's magazine, readily mention TI as an outlet for professional public speaking skill development. One can find information about TI or suggestions pertaining to membership in the organization can even be found in unlikely

publications. For example, Corrections Today, a directory of rehabilitative corrections programs in the US, cites that of the 200-plus men who have joined the “Men of Vision Toastmasters” chapter—a Toastmasters chapter for rehabilitating criminals—only three have returned to prison. Another publication, the Journal of Environmental Health, contains an article which recommends Toastmasters International as an inexpensive, direct way to improve public presentations (Hagevik, 1999). Even niche publications, such as Physician Executive (Linney, 1995) and Black Enterprise (Wynn, 1992) suggest readers join Toastmasters as a way to improve their public speaking skills. In a segment titled “Fear of Public Speaking” on ABC’s “Good Morning America” (Dagostino, 1999), Charles Gibson and Diane Sawyer interviewed Terry Daily, a Toastmasters International President, for tips regarding overcoming communication apprehension and to learn about TI. The only other means to learn about TI is through the corporate headquarters’ press releases regarding demographic and membership information, or articles in the organization’s journal, The Toastmaster.

One reason for the neglect of TI research in academic communication journals might be due to communication researchers’ perceptions of the organization. In his self-composed memoirs, Dr. Ralph Smedley explicitly and repeatedly states he never intended Toastmasters International to serve as a substitute for formal academic education. He wrote, “Our organization is not qualified to award any sort of academic degree” (Toastmasters International, 1998, p. 33), and, “It was not my intention to write ... a formal public speaking course” (Toastmasters International, 1998, p. 47). Smedley also states that he specifically held the first Toastmasters Club meeting in 1905 as a dinner meeting to avoid “... any suggestion of the classroom” (1959, p. 9): He simply started

The Toastmasters Club to give people a non-academic venue for public speaking practice.

In late 1999, this author invited members of the National Communication Association's (NCA) listserv—an online forum open to communication professionals with e-mail addresses to discuss job openings, queries, and conference announcements—to comment on their opinions of TI. The following question was posed to members, “How do communication professors perceive Toastmasters International?” Twelve communication professors and doctoral candidates submitted their opinions via e-mail. Their feedback varied and did not appear to offer a consensus regarding the organization. Mostly, the professors' reactions were mixed. One professor from Ripon College in Wisconsin offered this perception of the organization:

I (and most others in the field) see Toastmasters as harmless, but slightly negative; it is largely soft-side forensics for retirees, and as such is a community service for the demographic it serves... The groups' focus on rather corny motivational speeches is much of the problem with its reputation.

Another professor from Texas A & M University wrote,

We faculty members want the teaching of public speaking to be an academic enterprise. We see Toastmasters as ‘non-academic’ as teaching the techniques of facile delivery without much concern for the intellectual content of the speeches, nor much concern for the intellectual analysis of the process of communicating... I have never attended a Toastmasters meeting, but from the descriptions of their activities, ... I have come to suspect that the organization has more intellectual substance than most communication professors are aware.

Other statements alluded to Toastmasters International's attempts to serve as a substitute, rather than a supplement, for formal academic communication education. In this vein, one professor who didn't give his/her university's name stated, "I do not believe the program should substitute for our basic public speaking course in the university because Toastmasters does not have the academic basis that I believe the university speaking course must have."

Some respondents expressed spirited support for the organization. A doctoral student from Penn State simply stated, "I think Toastmasters is a wonderful organization." A faculty member from the University of New Mexico wrote, "The Toastmasters program is not confined within a single semester, and since the concepts are repeated within each 'chapter' of the materials...one could make the argument that the Toastmasters program is more comprehensive than university speech courses." Another faculty member who didn't give his/her university's name reported, "Anybody who calls Toastmasters an unstructured social club has never been to a meeting ... Toastmasters is about practical speaking skills, not theoretical knowledge. There's no market for good speaking skills in the professoriate anymore, unfortunately." Another professor from the University of Northern Iowa stated,

I gather the academic complaints focus on its formulaic structure and pragmatic content ... I am actively promoting the formation of an on-campus chapter here as an opportunity for students to elevate their presentational skills beyond the very basic general education standards.

One area of agreement existed among the respondents: their recommendation of Toastmasters as a place to send students who desire continued public speaking practice.

For example, a Texas A & M University professor stated, "I consistently recommend that students attend Toastmasters after my class and join it again when they settle into a permanent position. It is also an organization of talented and ambitious individuals; hence, a perfect place to network." This professor added, "I believe that the extra academic study of public speaking is a fertile area for research."

The statements described here represent only a few academic opinions of TI; however, these comments do provide some insight regarding how professors view the organization. Future research in this area should specifically focus on speech instructors perceptions of Toastmasters International.

This author offers two reasons why Toastmasters International deserves further academic study. First, if academic scholars examine the history and mission behind TI, it might bridge the gap between academic speech programs and the organization. Little academic research exists regarding TI, which could result in academic scholars' misunderstanding of the organization's mission, program structure, and educational dynamics. A detailed account of these topics, based on literature published by TI's founder, Dr. Ralph Smedley, and the organization's headquarters, would offer a base of factual information regarding TI for academic purposes.

Next, TI unites participants to voluntarily practice a communication phenomenon which research and communication textbooks continually describe as anxiety-provoking (Wallechinsky, Wallace, & Wallace, 1977; Lucas, 1999). Principles of social affiliation, membership, and volunteerism and how they apply to this unique organization might offer further explanation for TI's appeal. Thus, in order to learn about the "typical"



Toastmaster, and why members join and remain in this organization, this author includes an international membership survey as part of this study.

To further understanding regarding Toastmasters International, this thesis will examine the history of the organization, as well as describe its program dynamics and educational structure. Next, relevant literature regarding the status of communication education in post-secondary institutions will be reviewed, as well as psychological and sociological theories regarding social affiliation, leisure, and affiliation motivation. Finally, this thesis will discuss the results of an international Toastmasters membership survey. Through this thesis, this author hopes that the information regarding Toastmasters International will not only broaden communication scholars' perception of the organization, but also will help people, such as students, professionals, and everyday citizens, who wish to improve their public speaking skills for personal or professional benefit.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND OF TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL: HISTORY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

#### History of Toastmasters International

##### *“How Did You Happen To Start the Toastmasters Club?”*

Since 1905, Dr. Ralph Smedley, founder of Toastmasters International, fielded this question from members (1959). He responded with a question of his own: “Why did you join the Toastmasters Club?” (1959, p. 8). Responses were relatively similar. People joined Toastmasters because they needed help in talking, in learning how to face an audience, or they simply wanted to better express their thoughts. In short, people sought their local Toastmasters Club to become better communicators—the precise reason why Smedley, a 1903 graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University, started the club: To help male YMCA members become better speakers and meeting conductors.

As Educational Director of the Bloomington, Illinois YMCA, Smedley, in *The Story of Toastmasters*, recalls seeing “an evident need for training in speech” from established special interest clubs that included boys and young men (1959, p. 8). He didn’t want to teach an academic course. Rather, he envisioned a weekly social club with programs devoted to the practice of short speeches, debates, and work in chairmanship. George Sutton, General Secretary of the YMCA, came up with the name “a Toastmasters Club”

(Smedley, 1959, p. 9), which invoked pleasantry and a non-work atmosphere. Smedley (1959) recounts,

So far as I know, ours was the first club ever organized on the simple plan of short speeches, with criticism by the members, and the rotation of speakers and presiding officers. (p. 9).

The first official club meeting, a 15-cent dinner meeting, was held on March 24, 1905. Working out their own methods to conduct the meeting, the members took turns presiding and speaking; they limited their speeches to five to six minutes. The elder men did not give speeches, but only served as speech evaluators. Smedley reported prompt improvement in the young members' speeches and leadership abilities.

When the YMCA transferred Smedley to Freeport, Illinois in May 1906, he wanted to expand his brainchild to a new city. YMCA board members wanted to expand The Toastmasters Club to include older men since the board members wanted to practice public speaking themselves. The next Toastmasters Club meeting on March 27, 1907 included lawyers, doctors, salesmen, industrialists, and merchants—leading men of the city. The men had no farming connections, yet Smedley named that first meeting “The Annual Banquet and Convention of the Stephenson County Farmers’ Association” (Smedley, 1959, p.10), asking for speeches coinciding with that topic. The men embraced the “simulated” situation, giving speeches titled “The Hog, His Nature and Values,” and “Corn is King” (p. 10).

In this new Toastmasters meeting of adults, a new dynamic arose: the aura of fellowship. The Freeport Toastmasters Club soon became an organization of “substantial citizens”—fifty men who garnered intelligence and status. Over time, the breadth of

speech training within this first adult Toastmasters club expanded. In 1959, when Smedley reminisced about the club's debates, panel discussions, symposiums, and impromptu speeches, he stated, "We must have been considerably ahead of the times without realizing it" (Smedley, 1959, p. 11)

News of the successful Freeport club spread rapidly and followed Smedley in his YMCA travels. The enthusiasm of men in Illinois and California prompted him to start other Toastmasters Clubs. Unfortunately, as Smedley's career demanded his perpetual relocation, without his supervision and motivation, the clubs disbanded.

#### A Turning Point for Toastmasters

Upon Smedley's relocation to Santa Ana, California in 1924, he renewed his fledgling idea for a public speaking club. On October 22, 1924, 24 men attended yet another start-up Toastmasters club. Smedley recounts that the Santa Ana meeting would signify a turning point for his fledgling idea: "If I had realized the historic significance of that meeting...I would have provided for a complete record to be made, with pictures of the men present" (Smedley, 1959, p. 13).

The publisher of the Santa Ana Register, J.P. Baumgartner, spoke first, followed by Thomas Glenn, a Santa Ana Junior College faculty member. These prominent men spoke to the all-male membership of the value of public speaking for the ordinary citizen. The members also raised the question of whether or not a teacher should oversee future meetings. Smedley recommended that they "start with the regular program of short speeches, with comments by the members, leaving further details to be worked out as needed" (Smedley, 1959, p. 13).

That inaugural Santa Ana meeting spawned a temporary board of officers, and by November 5, 1924, the Toastmasters Clubs adopted a one-page “Memorandum of Organization.” The statement of purpose developed at that time remains the organization’s hallmark to date: “To afford practice and training in the art of public speaking and in presiding over meetings, and to promote sociability and good fellowship among the members” (Smedley, 1959, p. 14).

Other initiatives included that members must be age 18, that individual clubs were limited to 30 *male* members, and that a member’s dismissal would follow two consecutive unexcused absences. Officers served for three months to afford leadership benefits to the maximum number of members. A general program was also implemented: meetings would last one-and-a-half hours and include business proceedings, then five-minute prepared speeches, and, finally, 10 minutes for critical evaluation of the entire meeting. By 1934, when the members desired to give all members the opportunity to speak at every meeting, an impromptu “current events” segment began. This impromptu segment, renamed “Table Topics,” became an official portion of the TI program.

News of the Santa Ana club encouraged visits from neighboring Anaheim, California men who wanted their own Toastmasters club. Finally, two Toastmasters Clubs enjoyed simultaneous success. Smedley recalls that the wives of Toastmasters members formed unofficial “Toastmistress Clubs”—unofficial since the organization did not allow female members until the 1970s.

A momentous occasion for the burgeoning clubs occurred in 1926 when a Los Angeles YMCA Educational Director, J. Gustav White, also a teacher of public speaking, saw the club as a venue for students after they completed formal public speaking

instruction. Smedley recalled, “He realized what so many of us have come to understand, that success in speech is a matter of keeping in practice” (Smedley, 1959, p. 16). Soon Los Angeles and Long Beach hosted Toastmasters Charter Clubs 3 and 4.

Smedley proposed The Federation of Toastmasters Clubs in 1927 after six clubs became chartered. He copyrighted an operational manual, as well as start-up material for new members, entitled Ten Lessons in Public Speaking on October 25, 1928—the fourth anniversary of the Santa Ana club which spawned lasting success.

### Toastmasters Goes International

Expansion of the Federation of Toastmasters Clubs led to Smedley’s development of a monthly bulletin, The Gavel, which connected all members through written communication. By 1932, the bulletin became The Toastmaster, a slick magazine. Also in that year, with British Columbia residents expressing interest in forming a club, Smedley and his Federation board members expanded the Toastmasters name. In the spirit of Rotary International, Smedley named himself the “sole proprietor” of The Toastmasters Club, and the organization became Toastmasters International (TI) (Smedley, 1959, p. 20).

Officiating the Toastmaster name also required substantiation of its mission. First Vice President Paul Demaree proposed “The Famous 15”: a list of purposes and ideals for the organization’s promotion and protection, which later became the explanation behind the theory and practice of Toastmasters Club. With the 15 principles set, TI incorporated as a non-profit, noncommercial movement on December 19, 1932. Smedley stipulated, “... if it should ever engage in profit making, the profits would revert to me or

my estate” (1959, p. 24). Smedley felt certain that “no group of directors would care to start making money which would simply flow into my pocket” (p. 24).

During the Great Depression, however, Smedley stated that though money flowed into few pockets, including his own, TI thrived. As California members moved to other states, they established new clubs—the first in Seattle, Washington. Evidence of TI’s continual growth appeared at its first convention in Santa Barbara in 1936, which enjoyed a record attendance of nearly 200 delegates.

The expansion of TI made Smedley even more motivated to promote good order within individual Toastmasters meetings. He had long respected parliamentarian and General Henry Martyn Robert, creator of Roberts Rules of Order. On March 15, 1937, Smedley published a biography of General Robert, copywritten under TI. Roberts Rules of Order remains the standard conduct for all Toastmasters Clubs.

Smedley’s commitment to the organization was most apparent when, after 37 years with the YMCA, he devoted himself full-time to TI by 1941. World War II erupted, and to Smedley’s surprise, military training centers recruited some of his top officers and placed them in US War Bond sales campaigns and educational programs due to their superior ability in public speaking. Smedley encouraged all TI members to help initiate short-term clubs for men in military training camps. These temporary clubs brought fellowship to many military men.

Smedley’s humanitarian nature garnered recognition when, in 1950, his alma mater, Illinois Wesleyan University, conferred upon him the L.H.D., Doctor of Humane Letters. Smedley modestly wrote of this achievement in his memoirs: “I suppose the service they recognized was in connection with Toastmasters ...” (Smedley, 1959, p. 64).

In 1960, TI received its most far-reaching publicity. A Readers Digest article on the organization drew international inquiries from people in the Middle East, Latin America, and Japan. Ironically, as TI reached international populations, there were still some to whom TI would not offer official membership: women. Wives of male Toastmasters members formed unofficial Toastmistress Clubs since the 1930s, but these clubs were considered auxiliaries of TI, not welcomed partners. The women did not regard this neglect lightly. In 1937, many wives and “sweethearts” of male TI members published a statement in The Toastmaster magazine: “... We will agree not to cause trouble if you will give us a chance to associate with you... We believe the general cause of Toastmasters clubs can be helped if you will let us enlist...” (TI, 1998, p. 14). By the 1970s, as the workforce became more diversified, more Toastmasters members encouraged opening the club to women. By 1973, clubs had the option to accept or deny female members; however, just five years later, the bylaws prohibited the restriction of membership by gender. As the “Toastmistresses” prophesized in 1937, the inclusion of women undoubtedly helped the organization’s general cause: TI literally doubled in population.

### The Greatest Toastmaster Is Silenced

From the early 1900s until the 1960s, Dr. Ralph Smedley achieved unprecedented success with a nonprofit organization in light of “political assassinations, social reforms, and international conflicts” (TI, 1998, p. 7). On October 27, 1962, at 84 years of age, TI’s founder dedicated the Toastmasters International World Headquarters building in Santa Ana, California. By the 1990s, the organization relocated to Rancho Santa Margarita.

Smedley died on September 11, 1965 at age 87. Tributes poured in from all 50 states and every country a Toastmasters Club could be found, including South Africa, the



Philippines, India, and Great Britain. TI consisted of 3,500 clubs and over 60,000 members at the time of Smedley's death (TI, 1998). Near the end of his life, Smedley simply remarked, "It must have met a real need" (TI, 1998, p. 10).

### The Toastmasters International Education Program

#### Smedley and TI Refine Speech Training

Although Smedley appeared to focus on TI's "managerial" functions, he remained largely committed to refining the organization's educational program. In fact, Smedley wrote or supervised all of the Toastmasters educational materials, and personally evaluated every award application submitted to TI's home office until the mid-1950s (TI, 1998). Since his death, staff members at TI Headquarters solely generate all manuals and other educational materials.

In addition to his original Ten Tips For Toastmasters bulletin, Smedley also wrote bulletins to assist all members with various club duties: The Amateur Chairman and The Officers Manual advised club officers; Constructive Criticism, renamed Speech Evaluations, offered tips regarding constructive speech feedback; and The Man Behind the Rules provided a biography of General Robert and outlined Roberts Rules of Order.

When Smedley later revisited the basic bulletin, Ten Tips for Toastmasters, he realized that neither that publication, nor the others, specifically served the needs of the beginner:

It was not my intention to write a book on public speaking, nor to present any formal course...I had worked out the series of projects or studies, designed to give

a man some grounding in the art of speech by directing his attention to some of the fundamentals. (Smedley, 1959, p. 47).

Smedley's new Basic Training manual, which contained 12 speech projects, won favor within TI, and some colleges and universities used it as a textbook for beginners in speech. Salesmen in several important business organizations also used the manual in sales training courses. Today, the manual, titled The Communication and Leadership Manual, contains 10 speech projects designed to build upon basic speaking foundations, such as organization, hand gestures, and vocal variety.

When members first received the Basic Training manual, they expressed desire for a certificate of completion. Smedley resisted the idea, believing there was "danger that some would take any such certificate as a 'diploma' marking their 'graduation'" (Smedley, 1959, p. 47). At club officers' insistence, a "Certificate of Merit" was granted to men who successfully completed the assignments.

To explain his resistance to an award structure, Smedley printed a "Special Note from the Founder" on all advanced club manuals in 1950:

Our organization is not qualified to award any sort of academic degree, but we are going so far as to confer on the man who completes Beyond Basic Training, and does it well, the honorary title of Able Toastmaster... If your work does not appear to me to warrant the granting of the certificate, I shall try to be courageous enough to tell you so, with all frankness (TI, 1998, p. 33).

By the 1970s, TI also expanded into other audio-visual media instruction, including audiocassette programs, such as "The Effective Speaker," which includes recorded speeches by Will Rogers, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King, Jr. (TI, 1998). The

success of the audiocassettes inevitably spawned the next production: videocassette programs. The success of the premiere step-by-step videotaped guide to public speaking, “Be Prepared to Speak,” led to the development of an entire “Be Prepared” video series, now widely used in corporations and colleges. Stephen Lucas, a University of Wisconsin professor, and author of the popular textbook The Art of Public Speaking, also uses TI materials:

...one of the supplements that accompanies the book is a Toastmasters videotape called Be Prepared to Speak. We also use the tape for students here at Wisconsin because it does a nice job of reinforcing major points in the book (personal communication, 1999).

As TI experiments with various instructional mediums, the project manuals remain the cornerstone of the educational program since successful completion of these projects leads to awards and achievement designations. Although TI staff members produce all manuals, due to the high cost of manual production, TI performs extensive market research among its membership before publishing a manual.

#### Toastmasters International Achievement and Awards Structure

Prior to 1997, all members followed the same requirements for achievement levels and awards. These included performing manual speeches inside and outside the club setting and serving in various leadership capacities. The number of required speeches and nature of leadership service increased with each award. While some members easily achieved awards, others, due to time constraints or other obstacles, found themselves unable to perform outside speeches or fulfill leadership obligations. Some members simply preferred to strengthen their speaking skill, rather than to fulfill leadership duties.

With the goal of developing educational awards which accurately represented members' activities and accomplishments within the club, in 1997 TI premiered two educational tracks: the Communication Track and the Leadership Track. The Communication Track enables members to advance through higher-level speech projects, without the pressure of leadership duties (TI website, 2000). For those members who actively fulfill club or district board positions, the Leadership Track recognizes members for speaking skill, community promotion of Toastmasters, and other leadership duties. Members may select one track or the other, or work on both simultaneously.

Regardless of the chosen educational path, all new members begin with the Communication & Leadership Manual. The manual states,

The key to getting the most out of the Toastmasters Communication & Leadership Program is *active participation*. People learn best by doing. No method of skill development can match the power of actually experiencing what you're learning...The Toastmasters program is not a formal course in public speaking. It is an ongoing series of experiences that will directly involve you in a variety of communication situations (1984, p. 4).

Three other manuals also offer tips for new members regarding evaluations and delivery mechanics: Effective Speech Evaluation, Gestures: Your Body Speaks, and Your Speaking Voice.

The C & L manual also contains general information about the TI meeting structure and how to perform certain "jobs" for meetings. As mentioned, this manual mainly serves as a guide for the new member's first 10 speech assignments. In fact, the speech exercises in the basic C & L Manual, which focus on hand gestures, speech organization, language,

and persuasive speaking, still contain nearly every chapter topic covered in Stephen Lucas' The Art of Public Speaking, a popular basic speech course textbook (Levine-Bremen, 1999).

As a TI member performs one of the approximately five- to seven-minute speech projects, such as The Icebreaker—an introductory speech—his/her individual evaluator appraises the speech based on how well the speaker met the objectives. The personalized individual evaluation from a peer member serves as a hallmark of the TI mission. If an evaluator is dissatisfied with a member's performance, he/she can request that the member fulfill that particular speech assignment again. Members follow no specific timeframe in which they must give assigned speeches. After successfully completing all of the C & L Manual projects, the member becomes eligible for the Competent Toastmaster (CTM) award.

Whereas the basic C & L Manual does not limit members to a certain speech topic, but helps them build upon basic public speaking skills, the Advanced C & L manuals offer themed projects and a gateway to earning higher-level achievement awards. These five-speech assignment manuals include: (1) The Entertaining Speaker, (2) Speaking to Inform, (3) Public Relations, (4) The Discussion Leader, (5) Specialty Speeches, (6) Speeches by Management, (7) The Professional Speaker, (8) Technical Presentations, (9) The Professional Salesperson, (10) Communicating on Television, (11) Storytelling, (12) Interpretive Reading, (13) Interpersonal Communications, (14) Special Occasion Speeches, (15) Humorously Speaking, and (16) Persuasive Speaking.

Completion of a certain number of requisite speeches within the Advanced C & L manuals leads to higher-level achievement awards. The Advanced Toastmaster-Bronze

(ATM-B), Advanced Toastmaster-Silver (ATM-S), and Advanced Toastmaster-Gold (ATM-G) awards in the Communication Track require the completion of advanced speeches, as well as completion of Success/Leadership Programs, or Youth Leadership Programs. Awards within the Leadership Track—the Competent Leader (CL), the Advanced Leader (AL), or the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM)—require members to hold varying levels of board positions within the individual club, areas, divisions, or district levels. According to TI Headquarters, four to seven clubs in fairly close proximity comprise a grouping. Up to four areas in either one state or surrounding states comprise a division. Once a division has 35 operational clubs, the division may become a district. Districts hold semiannual conferences, as well as other educational programs that help individual members and clubs. Regardless of the level, various leadership opportunities exist (N. Espinoza, personal communication, February 24, 2000).

For members with professional-level speaking skills, the Accredited Speaker Program, developed in 1980, offers a rigorous two-stage pass/fail judging process. Candidates must demonstrate exemplary speaking skill in informative, motivational, inspirational, and entertaining delivery styles. “Only a handful of Toastmasters have what it takes to become Accredited Speakers” (TI, 1998, p. 35), which might account for its less than 25 percent success rate.

For members who enjoy out-of-meeting speech competitions, TI hosts international public speaking contests. The contests begin at club levels and culminate at the annual convention, which now attracts between 1,200 to 2,000 attendees worldwide (N. Espinoza, personal communication, February 24, 2000).

TI also bestows an annual distinguished speaker award to people outside of the organization. TI granted the first “Golden Gavel Award” in 1959 to Dr. Frank C. Baxter, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, for “service in bettering the arts of communication” (TI, 1998, p. 46). Other recipients include Walter Cronkite, Dr. Joyce Brothers, and Dr. Deepak Chopra.

### Non-Traditional Toastmasters Programs

Speechcraft. “Speechcraft” is the title of a condensed eight-session speech study programs for people who may not feel ready to commit to a regular club. These short-term clubs, similar to the military training clubs formed during World War II, offer people a “bird’s eye view” of the organization. TI clubs recruit “students” for the training, and TI club officers lead these sessions. The programs offer dual benefit: Non-TI members can glimpse the nature of organization, and club officers exercise leadership abilities. Individual TI clubs now organize Speechcraft programs in such locations as libraries and military units.

Gavel Clubs. TI founder Ralph Smedley wanted to offer TI training to “a great many men who need it, but are not in a position to be recognized as regular Toastmasters members” (1959, p. 54). Hence, TI decided to sponsor clubs which, for financial reasons or reduced membership, could not meet the traditional club requirements. These “Gavel Clubs,” which enabled the formation of “Men of Vision Toastmasters” in Alhambra, California, the first club for blind men, can now be found in prisons, hospitals, and in populations with special needs.

Youth Leadership. The Youth Leadership program symbolizes Smedley’s original mission to offer public speaking training to young people. TI members voluntarily

promote and organize the Youth Leadership programs; elementary and high school students participate in the program similar to the regular Toastmasters program structure.

Success/Leadership and Success/Communication Programs. The 1980s transition in workforce attitudes that led companies to refer to managers as “leaders” resulted in TI’s development of The Success/ Leadership and Success/Communication Programs. The programs, delivered by TI members for TI members, offer seminar-style modules in leadership training, parliamentary procedure, and effective speech evaluations.

### The Toastmasters Program Structure

#### · Meeting Structure

Toastmasters represents itself as a “learn-by-doing” workshop, which is exactly what happens within each one-and-a-half to two-hour meeting. Members conduct the formal meetings, which include four major parts: (1) the business portion, (2) “Table Topics,” (3) formal prepared speeches, and (4) the evaluation session (Frischknecht, 1977)—a uniform structure among all Toastmaster clubs.

The President calls the meeting to order at the designated meeting time with the same verbiage, “Good Evening, Fellow Toastmasters.” He/she conducts a brief 10-minute business meeting. Prior to the meeting, the “Toastmaster”—the host of the meeting—develops an engaging meeting theme, creates a formal printed agenda, and confirms attendance of program participants. Then, this member leads that particular meeting and discusses the other participants’ job duties: The “Timer” keeps time for and signals time limits for the impromptu, prepared, and evaluation segments of the program, and reports whether or not time limits were followed. The “Grammarian” reports exceptional and



incorrect usage of the English language within all speaking segments. The “Ah” Counter counts every member’s audible pauses, such as “ah” and “um,” and reports them accordingly. The “Vote Counter” tallies up the members’ votes for the best prepared speaker, “Table Topics” participant, and evaluator of the evening (some clubs opt to eliminate this segment from their meetings). A Table Topics Master conducts the impromptu speaking portion of the meeting. The General Evaluator introduces the evaluators and monitors their performance and nature of constructive feedback, and evaluates the meeting as a whole in terms of the Toastmaster’s performance, procedural compliance, and adherence to time limits. Meetings also include the “Educational Minute,” in which a member offers a one-minute tidbit of pertinent information about public speaking, current events, or TI itself.

Three to four prepared speakers highlight Toastmasters meetings; members work on specific basic or advanced manual projects. Each speaker has an evaluator who reads his or her project objectives aloud before the delivery. This way, the entire membership becomes aware of the speaker’s goals for a particular speech. Later on in the meeting, each “Evaluator” will present his/her speaker (and the rest of the membership) with two to three minutes of constructive feedback. The speaker not only receives feedback from the evaluator, but throughout the meeting; the general membership passes written notes of encouragement/critical feedback to the him/her. Toastmasters International encourages this accepted practice within its “culture.”

After evaluators give their feedback, the Toastmaster resumes control of the meeting, and the Vote Counter reports the members who won “Best Table Topics Speaker,” “Best Speaker,” and “Best Evaluator” awards for the evening (some clubs opt to remove the

voting portion from their meetings). At the meeting's conclusion, the President invites all guests to comment on the meeting.

When not working on project speeches, all members participate in all "jobs" at any time. The smaller tasks—conducted by the Educational Minute presenter, the grammarian, and Topics Master—help newer members who feel apprehensive about making lengthier speeches become desensitized to their fears.

### Toastmasters Today – A Subculture

TI World Headquarters' 1998 figures reported approximately 174,900 members with 8,642 Toastmasters chapters in 69 countries (TI website, 2000). TI currently receives charter applications for two new clubs per day. Club meetings occur at restaurants, bars, meeting rooms, and churches. Similarly, over 1,000 corporations, including Delta Airlines, Dow Chemical, and Magnavox, have TI chapters.

The earliest club names represented regional areas, such as "Anaheim Toastmasters," yet these names did not accurately represent the membership. Club names now reflect societal changes and the diversified membership (N. Espinoza, personal communication, February 2, 2000).

Some club names reveal what people "do" in TI, such as "Word Wizards" (Dothan, Alabama; Phoenix, Arizona), "Word Processors" (Phoenix, Arizona), and "Thrill Speakers" (Denver, Colorado). Other clubs modify the Toastmasters name: "The Flying Toasters" (Englewood, Colorado) or "Toasted Shells" (Houston, Texas). Many club names even reflect the club's meeting time, such as "Lunch Masters" (Orlando, Florida) or "Daybreakers of Westlake" (Westlake, California).

Since TI affiliations extend to myriad worldwide corporations, these clubs embrace names which reflect their corporate pride: “Boeing Chopper Talkers” (Boeing Corporation, Mesa, Arizona), “Say Watt” (Nevada Power Company, Las Vegas, Nevada), “Mayo on Toast” (The Mayo Clinic, Scottsdale, Arizona), “Edison Power Line” (Edison Power Company, Rosemead, California) and “Bose Speakers” (Bose Corporation, Framingham, Massachusetts).

TI encourages international diversity; hence, some clubs’ names proudly reveal their cultural heritage. For example, “Burnt Toast” (Las Vegas, Nevada) represents predominantly African-American members. Latino members may find new friends at “Los Amigos Hablatinos” (Tempe, Arizona). Other “cultures” include “Singles by the Sea” (Los Angeles, California). For newlyweds who find that their home clubs will not allow them to remain members once they have married, “Post Toasties” (Las Vegas, Nevada) serves as a club for “orphaned” members of TI singles’ clubs. Similarly, “Graceful Communicators” (Tempe, Arizona) represents a church group and “First Braille” (Los Angeles, California) caters to blind people.

Naturally, some cities maintain their regional names, such as “Kodiak Toastmasters” (Alaska), as well as the “Boston Speech Party” (Massachusetts) and “Kwanzaa Kenya” (South Africa). Even various Washington, D.C. entities have representation, including the US Senate, the Pentagon, and the “Capitol Hill Speakers.” International clubs commonly use names symbolic of their location, such as “Moscow Free Speakers” (Russia), “Polska Toastmasters” (Poland), and “Milan Toastmasters” (Italy). Rather than describing the city, Saudi Arabian clubs describe their country’s terrain with names like “Oasis” (Al Khobar) and “Desert Diamonds” (Riyadh). Some Asian and African clubs often embody

simple names, such as “Happy” and “Moonlight” (Taipei, Taiwan), and “Village” or “Pyramid” (Bedfordview, South Africa).

The meeting times and locations may vary, but a member who visits any Toastmasters club, from Memphis to the Middle East, finds virtually the same meeting structure. This uniformity provides one reason why Toastmasters feel comfortable visiting other clubs within their cities, or even in other countries. It also offers a common basis for friendship for TI members around the world.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Smedley (1959) stated that public speaking teachers often sought Toastmasters as a place to send their students for ongoing oral communication practice. Little research regarding the history, program dynamics, and membership of Toastmasters International exists, and academic journal articles regarding the organization are even more scarce. However, one can find literature supporting the need for public speaking instruction. Research presented here first explores the nature and extent of current communication education at the post-secondary level. Since Toastmasters International's worldwide membership continues to grow at the rate of two new clubs per day, literature regarding psychological and sociological theories of group affiliation, affiliation motivation, and leisure pursuits may explain the appeal of social clubs, such as TI, and reasons why people select certain leisure activities. Finally, little academic literature discusses Toastmasters International specifically; it consists of mostly dissertations or unlikely publications, such as the Journal of Environmental Health, which analyzes the organization's educational program and social attributes. Discussed here is literature concerning speech communication education and research related specifically to TI.

## Research in Post-Secondary Communication Education

### The Basic Oral Communication Course

As early as 1926, secondary and post-secondary public speaking instructors affiliated themselves with Toastmasters Clubs in order to secure a place to send their students for supplemental public speaking practice (Smedley, 1959). More than 60 years later, researchers such as Cronin and Glenn (1991) conclude that college students still leave the academic setting with inadequate communication skills. The authors attribute this deficiency to the fact that college students experience only one communication course during their post-secondary programs, and non-speech majors typically do not receive further speech communication or interpersonal communication training during their degree programs.

Most college students experience a basic oral communication course, sometimes titled “Oral Communication,” “Speech Communication,” or “Fundamentals of Public Speaking”—the one communication course to which Cronin and Glenn (1991) refer. Some researchers (Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1985; Johnson & Szczupakiewicz, 1987) focus on problems associated with this course in terms of its effectiveness. For example, Gibson, Hanna, and Huddleston’s (1985) investigation of the basic speech course at US colleges and universities found that out of 552 institutions, “students lacking basic communication skills” ranked as the fourth most reported problem in the basic course out of a list of eleven problems (p. 287).

Johnson and Szczupakiewicz (1987) also studied the basic public speaking course in terms of its effectiveness in preparing students for work-related public speaking skills. The authors polled faculty members and alumni from five universities across the United

States to determine similarities between public speaking styles taught in the college classroom versus actual usage in the workplace. The authors report that faculty perceived informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and gathering supporting materials as the three most important public speaking skills. Alumni perceived informative speaking, listening, and handling questions and answers as important speaking skills in the workplace. Faculty and alumni rated extemporaneous and impromptu delivery as important delivery styles, and reported that usage of both these styles occurs in the workplace.

The authors recommend that speech communication educators devote more time to presentational speaking, entertaining speaking, and small group discussion, since the workplace often requires these speaking styles. The authors also conclude that because Introduction to Public Speaking, a basic communication course, lasts only one semester, it cannot possibly cover every aspect of public speaking. As previously mentioned, Toastmasters International's advanced project manuals contain two of the three speaking styles which Johnson and Szupakiewicz (1987) recommend—entertaining and presentational speaking.

### Communication Across-the-Curriculum

Other communication education literature reveals that some post-secondary institutions recognize a need for more substantial communication education, and thus are attempting to offer broader-spectrum communication education. Such programs, called “communication across-the-curriculum” at such institutions as Radford University (Cronin and Glenn, 1991; Cronin and Grice, 1993), University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak & Whitney, 1993), and Pomona College (Smith,

1997), provide an oral communication component in non-communication courses which would not traditionally include such study. For example, a student in a biology course or accounting course may give in-class oral presentations or do impromptu speaking, in addition to other course work.

Cronin and Glenn (1991) comprehensively reviewed original oral communication across-the-curriculum programs in higher education dating back to 1976 by describing assessments of such programs at five US universities. They found similar characteristics of the programs, such as implementation within the past six years, and that across-the-curriculum writing programs provided the model for many communication across-the-curriculum programs. They also reported that most institutions agreed that implementation of the programs ensued due to university or faculty administrators' desire to satisfy college mission statements regarding communication competency. Many of the programs remain viable due to partial support from external funding. The authors concluded that the institutions' preliminary evaluations reveal faculty and students react positively to communication across-the-curriculum courses. In addition, students who participate in such courses show marked improvement in oral communication skills.

Cronin and Glenn (1991) also offer a self-report of a communication across-the-curriculum program at their institution, Radford University in Virginia. The program consists of non-speech instructors pairing with volunteer speech faculty consultants who assist with implementation of oral communication activities. They found that 67% of students reported oral communication activities helped them improve their communication skills, 84% stated that communication activities should be used again, and 73% reported that the course was better due to the activities.



The authors pose concerns for future programs of this type. They suggest that administrators may view programs as an inexpensive way to avoid adding regular speech courses. They also mention that non-communication faculty may assume that teaching speech is easy, and may even mishandle speaking and listening activities so that students do not benefit.

Although many institutions that implement communication across-the-curriculum programs synthesize the program into existing communication programs, Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak, and Whitney (1993) describe the creation of an external communication center: The Center for Excellence in Oral Communication. The Center, located at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS), dedicates itself to the development of undergraduate oral communication across-the-curriculum programs. The Center receives funding from a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant, and offers self-diagnostic communication competency programs for students, as well as individualized laboratories designed to assist with student communication challenges. The Center also develops an additional core communication curriculum for freshmen, and higher-level communication integration for senior-level students.

The authors found that required annual self-evaluations based on student and faculty feedback show they rank the Center's program design and delivery as highly favorable. The authors conclude that based on the Center's experiences, UCCS communication faculty believe other institutions can utilize the programs to merge innovative approaches with traditional academic curriculum.

In lieu of describing an entire communication across-the-curriculum program, Smith (1997) offers a glimpse of Pomona College's integrated communication requirement,

under which students must pass at least one approved “speaking-intensive” course in order to fulfill general education requirements. He states that Pomona College does not offer a traditional public speaking course since it encourages speaking across-the-curriculum. Students must receive some instruction in the course on the principles and practice of effective speaking, even in foreign language courses. Additionally, the author cites that each student must serve as a primary speaker, and he or she should express his or her own thoughts. Students may not recite speeches.

Smith also discusses the integration of speech-intensive curriculum in his own interdisciplinary statistics and finance classes. His curriculum includes two required speeches during the semester, and one group presentation at the end of the course. Based on the success of this integration, Smith concludes, “I am now convinced that students can learn more by speaking than by listening” (p. 51).

#### Resistance to Communication Across-the-Curriculum Efforts in Post-Secondary Institutions

The research outlined here describe institutions which apparently garner administrative and faculty support for their communication across-the-curriculum programs (Cronin and Glenn, 1991; Cronin and Grice, 1993; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak & Whitney, 1993; Smith, 1997). However, Kennedy (1989) offers a possible reason for why similar programs at other institutions fail to emerge: faculty resistance. In an effort to delineate the need for communication integration among engineering students, the author, a communication professor at an engineering institute, states “current communication courses fail to address the needs of the technical student” (p. 130). He describes communication tasks required of a technical graduate and recommends ways

for engineering professors to integrate oral communication in the classroom. Kennedy also poses four potential engineering educator concerns: (1) the unwillingness of engineers to become speech teachers; (2) inadequacy of instructors' knowledge for evaluating speeches; (3) time limitations for existing course material; and (4) instructors' misunderstanding of effective speech length, number of speeches, and speech content. He concludes that educators should devote even a small amount of time to oral communication education for the technical student.

In a follow-up article, Kennedy (1989) summarizes engineering, mathematics, science, and speech communication faculty responses to his previous suggestions. Although respondents agreed that their students are inadequately prepared to meet the communication demands of the workplace, they also said that they lacked the qualifications to teach communication skills, resented a potential "Speaking Across the Curriculum" campaign, and believed that traditional speaking courses should remain in the curriculum. Based on the responses, Kennedy recommends that instructors continue to use speaking assignments in upper-level classes and lab sections, but instead offer extemporaneous assignments, as opposed to impromptu assignments. He recommends that before faculty critique students' shortcomings in oral communication, faculty must conscientiously examine their own effectiveness as communicators.

#### **Toastmasters International As a Continuum for Communication Education**

Although communication scholars illustrate diverse approaches for providing supplemental communication education, they all appear to agree on one basic premise: that students can enhance their communication skills via repetitive oral communication

practice. The “learning by doing” approach (Toastmasters International, 1984, p. 4) sets the foundation for the Toastmasters International educational program, together with repetitive and diverse speaking opportunities. Education scholars such as Caine and Caine (1991) posit that the “learn by doing” concept, especially in terms of repetitive communication practice, has merit. Their brain-based learning theories embody “immersion”—an infinite capacity humans have to connect various complex and concrete experiences. To promote immersion in education, the authors recommend that educators engage students’ ability to not only learn about a topic, but also to discuss that topic with professors and peers:

Language is powerful...the people who are best in their field are also people who can talk about it in many different ways. Speaking and writing are ways of making...experiences understandable...As we talk about a subject or skill in complex and appropriate ways...we actually begin to feel better about the subject and master it. That is why the everyday use of relevant terms and the appropriate use of language should be incorporated in every course from the beginning (pp. 130-131).

While researchers agree that students benefit from consistent communication practice, attempts to refine the basic speech course or provide alternative communication integration programs remain limited at best (Cronin and Glenn, 1991; Cronin and Grice, 1993; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak & Whitney, 1993; Smith, 1997). Faculty resistance and administrative hesitancy to implement these programs result in a majority of colleges that still do not offer extended communication education. Other programs only survive via external funding or grants, which may not remain secure in the long term. Thus, the

stagnation of advanced communication study outside of the basic public speaking course continues to translate into students who receive limited communication practice in college. On-the-job communication training, continuing education courses, and Toastmasters International serve as the only structured options for communication practice since even graduate-level course work does not typically offer advanced public speaking training.

### **Communication Skills as a Professional Prerequisite**

Smedley (1959) reported that in 1906, the YMCA board members wanted to extend the Toastmasters Club to grown men as opposed to boys since they, themselves, saw a need for refined oral communication skills. Although not expressly stated by Smedley, the men of status—doctors, lawyers, and merchants—who initially joined the Toastmasters Club did not necessarily join for social reasons, but more to refine their everyday speaking skills. Current academic literature still supports the fact that communication skills serve as a virtual prerequisite for college graduates who enter the workplace (Jankovich & Powell, 1997; Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier & Lenk, 1998; Kennedy, 1988). Hence, since academic literature demonstrates an underlying communication education deficiency in post-secondary education, communication graduates may inevitably become professionals unprepared for communication skills required in the workplace.

National surveys show that human resource managers and corporate recruiters consider applicants with exceptional verbal and nonverbal communication skills as the most desirable job candidates (Jankovich and Powell, 1997). Thus, for college graduates

who find themselves unable to meet necessary workplace communication expectations, communication practice within TI may provide the answer.

Literature regarding communication deficiencies germane to specific professions also supports an increased need for additional communication practice in a structured setting, such as TI. For example, Kennedy (1988) reports criticisms by supervisors of graduate engineers who need to “speak and write so they can be understood” (p. 130). The author recommends communication integration programs for all technical students to alleviate this problem.

Similarly, Jankovich and Powell (1997) and Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier, and Lenk (1998) pose solutions to the communication deficiencies of college business students. With the mission of helping business students become well-qualified business communicators, Tucker, et. al. (1998) propose communication integration programs through community service learning projects. Jankovich and Powell (1997) also offer professors and administrators step-by-step details regarding how to customize a Communication Across-the-Curriculum (CAC) program for college business departments.

The need for enhanced professional communication skills could offer the main reason why people seek an extracurricular public speaking venue, such as Toastmasters International. Membership in the organization not only promotes the strengthening of communication skills, but also could ignite a renewed interest for communication practice not fostered by communication education in college.

### **Toastmasters International and Social Affiliation**

Whether or not people join Toastmasters International for personal or professional reasons, the fact that they seek to affiliate themselves with a social club for public speaking is unique, especially since authors have documented this activity as universally feared (Wallechinsky, Wallace & Wallace, 1977). Yet week after week, thousands of members across the world unite in their respective meetings for friendship, communication practice, and an overall sense of belonging. For this reason, literature that explores people's motivations for joining groups for social affiliation, as well as leisure pursuits, may offer further insight regarding TI's success.

#### **The Need to Belong—Voluntary Membership and Social Affiliation**

To explore the truth behind the statement “Americans are a nation of joiners,” Curtis (1971) studied six democratic societies, Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico, and their tendencies for voluntary association. Of the 7,617 people from these societies studied over ten years, he found that 50% of US citizens reported voluntary association affiliation, excluding unions. Similarly, Curtis found a direct relationship between educational level and affiliation: 80% of US citizens involved in organizations had some college education.

While Curtis explored the fact that people join organizations, Sze and Ivker (1990) discuss why people affiliate themselves with groups. They maintain that group affiliation can provide unquestioned acceptance of an individual, as well as a basis for self-evaluation, identity, self-definition, place, role, and status. They also state that “the function of the group...might serve to enhance the individual's knowledge base or

professional status. A community of scholars, professionals, or even hobbyists...might meet to share ideas..." (p. 527).

Haggard and Williams' (1992) research also examines the theme of self-definition or identity affirmation as a motivation for leisure activities. In their two surveys of 168 US undergraduates who participated in eight leisure activities, such as backpacking, volleyball playing, playing guitar, and weight training, they found that "individuals experience significant motivation to understand themselves, as well as to be understood more accurately by those around them" (p. 8). They also discovered that participants cited specific identity images associated with certain leisure activities. For example, participants who enjoyed backpacking, outdoor cooking, and kayaking described themselves similarly as "adventurous," "fun loving," and "likes scenic beauty" (p. 9). Based on the results, the authors conclude that "leisure research has not been about self-affirmation as an aspect of leisure...it has been about leisure as an aspect of self-affirmation" (p. 16).

O'Connor and Rosenblood (1996) further explain motivations behind social affiliation by proposing their social affiliation model (SAM) as a framework to determine everyday affiliative behaviors. The authors hypothesized that SAM operates in a homeostatic manner—that people seek relatively stable levels of social affiliation over time. To support their hypothesis, they studied 70 Canadian students in a third-year psychology course who carried beepers which signaled at random intervals over the course of four days. Upon signaling, the participants recorded their state of social contact—whether they were alone or with others and whether or not they wished to be alone at that time—on an experience sampling form. The authors found that when participants elected



solitude, they had a “greater-than-chance occurrence of being alone, and when participants desired social contact, they had a less-than-chance occurrence of being alone” (p. 518).

The authors conclude that individuals who involve themselves in social circumstances will attempt to remain in those circumstances in the near future. They add that even if outside factors in people’s lives change, they will seek to re-establish an optimal range of social affiliation.

Cohen and Metzger (1998) provide an alternative reason for why people seek group membership: they posit that some people join clubs as a measure to control hesitancy and fear of chaos in their lives. The authors explore the idea of “ontological security”—“the development of a feeling of mastery and control over the chaotic and threatening conditions of modern life”—that people perceive in their interpersonal communications and social affiliations (p. 50). With regard to interpersonal communication, they state that “a sense of identity in relation to others is crucial to the process of achieving ontological security” (p. 44). They contend that ontological security requires that people identify with how others think and feel in order to predict others’ reactions. The authors conclude that interpersonal communication offers a valuable, albeit high-risk, sense of social affiliation.

Although some people may join clubs to offset life’s chaos, others, as suggested by Albrecht, Burleson, and Goldsmith (1984), seek social networks for supportive communication. The authors posit that “social support is a fundamental form of human communication, transacted between people within structures of their ordinary and extraordinary relationships and life events” (p. 419). The authors briefly review literature which states that social support and supportive communication may benefit people’s

physical and emotional health. Although the authors largely focus on supportive communication within interpersonal relationships, such as those involving friends, family, and co-workers, they also state that this type of communication “may manifest in network patterns that reflect a sense of community among participants” (p. 439).

While the researchers mentioned here mainly examine people’s motivation to join clubs, other researchers discuss participants’ membership habits in voluntary organizations. For example, Cress, McPherson, and Rotolo (1997) studied 1,050 individuals’ membership habits over a 15-year period to attempt to contradict a commitment thesis that “the more a member participates, the longer duration of membership” (p. 61). The authors found that organizations requiring more from their members have trouble retaining members. This finding offered “strong and consistent support” for an alternative thesis—the competition thesis—which contends that the more a member participates, the shorter the average duration of membership (p. 61).

The authors conclude that their findings directly contradict previous arguments that “organizational demands (via sacrifice) maintain members by making membership more valuable” (p. 73). The authors suggest that future authors clearly distinguish intensity of participation and membership duration in groups since social movements, such as petition-signing and group rallies, require less commitment and less formal membership than social organizations.

#### **Spare Time—The Pursuit of Leisure Activities**

Social affiliation literature offers a rationale for why people join organizations, but researchers should give equal importance to the nature of people’s chosen activities in their leisure time. These “spare time” activities appear as diverse as the people who

participate in them. While some people consider kayaking a leisure activity, others choose to join motorcycle enthusiast organizations or crafting clubs. Toastmasters International members select additional public speaking practice as their leisure activity of choice. Thus, literature which explores the definition of leisure and what motivates people to pursue leisure activities may offer further awareness as to what fulfillment people derive from their outside-of-work pursuits.

With respect to a working definition of leisure, Kleiber (1999) regards leisure as “the combination of free time and the expectation of preferred experience” (p. 3), and states that preferred experiences can range from “intense involvement to relaxed detachment” (p. 5). The author describes elements for intrinsic motivation for leisure, such as autonomy, competence, connectedness, and optimal arousal. Kleiber also mentions the term “flow”—“when energies and personal resources are sufficiently well matched to the challenges of a situation to elicit an extended rapt of attention”—as another consideration for leisure (p. 23). The author discusses changes in leisure behavior over the lifespan, and states that for adults in midlife, leisure activities can alleviate self-expression needs and offer an opportunity to “explore those neglected aspects of oneself” (p. 54).

### Serious Leisure

Stebbins (1982) takes the definition of leisure to an intense level that he calls “serious leisure” (p. 3). The author cites six qualities that distinguish serious leisure from casual leisure: (1) perseverance—participants stick with the activity through “thick or thin”; (2) careers—amateurs, hobbyists, or volunteers often have enduring pursuits of the activity, which includes histories of turning points and achievement stages; (3) personal effort based on acquired knowledge, training, or skill, or a combination of all three; (4) durable

benefits, such as self-actualization, self-gratification, self-expression; (5) unique ethos—participants develop subcultures which embody values, traditions, and moral principles; and (6) identification—participants speak proudly, excitedly and frequently about their leisure activity. Yoder (1997) summarizes Stebbins' definition: "The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge" (p. 1).

Other researchers, such as Roggenbuck, Loomis, and Dagostino (1990), discuss what people derive from their leisure pursuits. The authors cite previous studies which show that men and women who take part in activities such as reading, making crafts, attending plays and concerts, and driving for pleasure, reported that learning served as a more important element of satisfaction than relaxation. Thus, the authors conclude, "Learning is a high priority motivator for engaging in leisure activities, often following only relaxation in importance" (p. 120). The authors suggest that future research regarding learning and leisure encompass (1) the "big issues" of learning, such as environmental sensitivity and stewardship, pride and commitment for the American nation's heritage and ideals, and a sense of who we are as individuals and as a people; and (2) whether or not leisure environments simply facilitate or coincidentally relate to the degree of learning. The authors also suggest that future theory-based learning research and experimental research designs explore learning gains from leisure over long periods of time.

Similarly, Arai and Pedlar's (1997) study of participants engaging in a Healthy Communities initiative—a program for citizens who wish to take an active role in

developing cleaner and safer communities—found a common trend of learning and leisure. The authors stated that based on participant response, five themes emerged from their involvement, primarily “learning and developing new skills,” as well as “becoming more vocal” (p. 167). Participants also reported that joining the activity afforded them themes of balance and renewal, group accomplishment and the ability to influence change, and community development. The authors conclude that “participants in this study were able to clearly articulate the ways in which they had benefited from their individual and collective action” (p. 178).

Toastmasters International does not require its members to undertake a philanthropic activity, as in the Healthy Communities initiative. However, similar outcomes may emerge: TI members do learn and develop new skills, and the communicative nature of the organization may inevitably help those who wish to become more vocal.

When people anticipate that a leisure pursuit will afford them heightened learning opportunities, or even greater relaxation, some researchers perceive that those participants have commitment to their leisure pursuits. Shamir (1988) asserts that the term “commitment” denotes “obligation, duty, restriction, and routine”—terms not typically associated with leisure (p. 238). He states that commitment falls into two categories: external and internal. External commitment revolves around an individual’s obligation to continue a line of action, a role performance, or a relationship. Internal commitment refers to an individual’s motivational disposition to continue the activity, and the way an individual defines him or herself in terms of the activity, role or relationship. The author recommends that future researchers: (1) locate further evidence that internal commitment to “serious leisure” may potentially substitute for absent work

roles or compensate for unsatisfactory work situations; and (2) discover the conditions under which internal commitment to serious leisure pursuits develops.

### **Toastmasters International As a Leisure Pursuit**

Research appears to suggest that people seek membership in organizations for myriad purposes, including self-fulfillment, self-identification, supportive communication, to maintain a pre-established level of social contact, and to control stress (Sze & Ivker, 1990; Albrecht, Burleson & Goldsmith, 1994; O'Connor & Rosenblood, 1996; Cohen & Metzger, 1998). Since membership in TI wholly revolves around a stressful and fearful activity—public speaking—these proposed reasons for social affiliation may accurately represent why people join the organization. Overcoming public speaking apprehension could, indeed, lead to increased self-esteem and greater self-fulfillment. However, based on the communication education literature, the practical need for public speaking skills may also pose a greater motivation for membership in TI.

With respect to people's membership habits once they join clubs, Cress, McPherson, and Rotolo's (1997) hypothesis that the more a member participates, the less the duration of membership might contradict the dynamics of TI membership. The nature of membership in TI presupposes that in order to achieve the maximum benefit of the organization, a member will, at the very least, actively perform public speaking activities on a regular basis. Higher-level commitment to the organization includes leadership roles—another encouraged function of TI. Exploring members' duration of membership and achievement levels in the organization, which also represent their level of leadership within the program, may explain members' commitment to this organization.

Albrecht, Burleson, and Goldsmith's (1994) explanation that the social support derived within communities of participants often results in supportive communication networks may also explain why members remain in TI. TI offers a comfortable environment where people partake in public speaking practice in a non-threatening, supportive situation. Similarly, the formal evaluation system, as well as the informal support, evidenced in the written notes passed by members, invokes a level of supportive communication and camaraderie. The combination of these supportive elements also may explain why people remain in the organization.

#### **Academic Research on Toastmasters International**

Five dissertations serve as the closest academic literature to report about TI. The authors' examination of Toastmasters International encompasses three main topics: (1) Toastmasters International as an educational program, (2) social comfort among the membership, or (3) public speaking anxiety.

Leone-Rundell's (1993) study compared the educational programs of the Dale Carnegie Course and Toastmasters International to see if participants learned what the programs intended to teach, and if participants considered teachings within both programs effective or important components for their lives. The author surveyed a total of 195 individuals: 47 Dale Carnegie graduates, 60 Toastmasters International members, 52 students in undergraduate communication courses, and 36 students in undergraduate psychology courses at a New York university.

The author found that all participants did learn what their respective programs attempted to teach. The Dale Carnegie sample group ranked highest on accuracy and

personal value, as opposed to the other sample groups. The author also reported that the participants garnered a “positive sense of self out of the participation in the programs,” and “100% of the members of both groups would recommend the programs to other people” (p. 117). The speech communication course participants also positively responded to the Carnegie course’s effect on their lives and confidence in speaking. The author concluded that Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters International members “perceive that these programs changed their lives and made them better, and more confident persons” and “the positive feeling of self experienced as a result of participation cannot be overlooked” (p. 118).

Frischknecht (1977) also examined how participation in Toastmasters International improves the speech communication competency and performance of its members. The author reviewed the educational method, the history, growth, and organizational structure of TI. She also mailed a membership survey to Toastmasters in the “conterminous states” (p. 2) (the author did not explain which states this encompassed), conducted interviews with TI members in California and Colorado, and observed 20 Toastmasters clubs in the same states.

Based on 519 responses, the author found that the “learning by doing method” and the peer evaluation process account for the program’s success. Respondents also reported that they appreciate TI’s autonomous nature and relevance, the learning climate of the clubs, and opportunities for individual involvement in club activities. However, participants perceived some weaknesses in the program, specifically, lack of membership, leadership training, and training in parliamentary procedure. With respect to



the educational manuals, participants also reported a desire for advanced Toastmasters projects and a need for the rewriting of the basic educational manuals.

Frischknecht found that 56% of the members slightly agreed that their membership in TI helped their job. More than half of the participants (55%) strongly agreed that people made them feel welcome in the organization. With respect to the part of the TI program they found most helpful, respondents gave these top three responses: Giving prepared speeches (67%); impromptu speaking (46%); and receiving evaluations (27%). Members also compared TI's educational program to a formal school course. Almost half of the participants (47%) reported that TI's educational program was "much more beneficial" than a formal school course, while others reported it was "better" (27%) (p. 362).

The top three reasons participants joined Toastmasters included: (1) to overcome fear (28%), (2) to develop general public speaking skills (20%), and (3) to develop impromptu speaking ability (19%). The author also cited a "Dropped Member Survey" included in The Toastmaster magazine in 1973, which reported that 58% dropped their membership within 17 months of joining their club and 42% within eleven months of joining the club.

Frischknecht's participants included an overwhelming number of males (93%), and half of the participants ranged in age from 35 to 54 years. Fifty-one percent of the respondents reported they had completed college, and 39% had taken at least one academic speech course. Occupations of respondents included professional (20%), upper middle management (30%), people service (17%), sales/advertising (11%), production (9%), retired (6%), and self-employed (5%). Frischknecht concluded that the membership considers the TI program successful, and that all the important factors in the TI program

could be incorporated into curricula at all academic levels, particularly in a “learn by doing” laboratory setting.

Kime (1998) surveyed 131 adult Toastmasters in 20 Southern California clubs to examine the social comfort of members—how comfortable or secure members feel in various types of social situations—since they joined the organization. Based on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventories survey, the author examined comfort in public speaking, comfort in speaking in social or occupational situations, comfort in hearing positive or negative feedback, and satisfaction with one’s social life.

Based on a minimum comfort level of “1” and a maximum comfort level of “5,” the author found that Toastmasters members reported that their comfort level in public speaking settings increased more than 34% since joining the organization, and their comfort in speaking in social and occupational situations increased more than 18%. Based on a minimum satisfaction level of “1” and a maximum comfort level of “5,” the author also reported that respondents’ satisfaction with their social life increased more than 12% since joining the organization. Kime concluded that male participants’ mean self-esteem scores were five points higher than those of females, and that the more frequently an individual attended the meetings, the more socially skilled and comfortable the individual became.

Baucom’s (1994) study addresses another aspect of social comfort: public speaking anxiety in relationship to audience familiarity. The author utilized the Public Speaking Inventory, which included two standardized instruments, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension and the Family Environment Scale-Form R, and three instruments designed by the investigator: the Background Information Sheet, the

Audience Familiarity Scale, and the Audience Exploration Scale. The Inventory assessed participants' backgrounds, as well as their anxiety levels when speaking before audiences of differing degrees of familiarity. The Inventory also measured participants' thoughts and feelings when they imagined speaking before audiences of differing levels of familiarity, their public speaking anxiety, and their perceptions of whether their family members experienced high or low public speaking anxiety.

Based on responses from 107 TI members, Baucom cited that a significant subgroup of people experience more anxiety delivering a speech before a familiar audience than before an audience of strangers. The results also indicated that members who felt negatively toward their audience experienced higher degrees of public speaking anxiety than those who felt neutral or positive about their audience. The author did not find a correlation between participants whose family background either consisted of high or low public speaking anxiety.

Boland (1981) did not include any review of Toastmasters International. Rather, the author produced an alternative doctoral project in lieu of dissertation; he designed media programs for professional listening and speaking workshops. He cited "24 years of communication and leadership training as a member of Toastmasters International" (p. iii) as credentials to develop the programs. Although Boland did not review any Toastmasters International literature, his videotape programs, "Techniques of Public Speaking" and "The Use of Humor in Public Speaking," as well as his audiovisual program, "Listening With a Purpose" may provide updated, alternative mediums for communication education, similar to Toastmasters International's "Be Prepared" videotape series.

Although most of the dissertations reviewed here offer some information regarding Toastmasters International, the effort appears disjointed. For example, Frischknecht's 1977 dissertation offers the most recent account of Toastmasters International membership. While Leone-Rundell's 1993 study may offer a more updated perspective of the educational aspects of TI, she cited much of Frischknecht's dissertation for a historical perspective.

The other dissertations regarding social comfort and public speaking anxiety failed to give much insight into the organization itself. It appears that the authors utilized Toastmasters International members for a sample population, rather than as a mechanism for which to impart greater awareness regarding TI.

### Research Questions

Little academic research regarding Toastmasters International exists; thus, parallel research regarding the state of communication education in post-secondary institutions may offer one reason for the organization's growth. Further research regarding social affiliation and leisure motivation may explain the benefits people derive from TI as a spare time activity. Finally, the dissertations containing limited or outdated information regarding Toastmasters International may serve as the closest academic literature regarding the subject. Hence, the topic appears ripe for updated research in terms of TI's history, educational structure, and membership.

In order to fill a void in the current research, as well as provide an updated profile of TI members and their reasons for joining, the author conducted an explanatory survey which answered the following research questions:

- (1) Who is the typical TI member, based on educational level, profession, and age?**
- (2) Why do people join and remain members in TI? This includes average length of membership and the main benefits members experience due to membership.**
- (3) What type of communication education/experience do members have prior to membership in TI, if any? Included here are how TI members evaluate their speaking skill prior to and since joining TI, and what recommendations they have to enhance the organization.**

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHOD**

#### **Sample**

Between June 10 through August 31, 1999, 400 to 500 active Toastmasters International members who had registered e-mail addresses with the Toastmasters International Online Coordinator were sent a cover letter and questionnaire via e-mail. The Toastmasters Online Coordinator estimates that Toastmasters with registered e-mail addresses range between approximately 400 to 500 listings at any given time (N. Sweet, personal correspondence, 1999). Thus, a convenience sample was used. A total of 343 usable surveys were returned via e-mail, with a 69% return rate (over the 50% as recommended by Babbie, 1995).

#### **Procedure**

The survey originated as a project in a summer 1999 research methods course. In order to learn about quantitative research in this course, the author was to conduct a survey of any convenience sample population, receive no more than 50 responses, and tabulate the results using Statistical Product Service Solutions (SPSS).

On June 9, 1999, the author sent an e-mail via America Online to the Toastmasters Online Coordinator, located in Florida. The author asked the coordinator if she would

forward a cover letter and questionnaire to all active Toastmasters International members with an e-mail address. The author informed the coordinator that she was conducting a survey of Toastmasters International members as part of her course work at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The coordinator stated that she had approximately 500 TI members' e-mail addresses, and agreed to forward the materials the next day, June 10, 1999.

The coordinator then forwarded the cover letter and survey to approximately 500 active TI members with a registered Toastmasters Online e-mail address. The cover letter conveyed to the participants that the purpose of the study was for a quantitative research course. The cover letter also stated that the reason for the study was to (1) determine the "typical" Toastmaster member, based on demographic information, and (2) find out why people join Toastmasters International and remain members in the organization. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and were given the phone numbers of the course instructor and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas's Office of Sponsored Programs. Members who wished to participate were asked to complete the survey electronically and attach the instrument to an e-mail document addressed to the author by July 1, 1999.

On June 11, 1999, the author began receiving responses which were then printed out as hard copies. Several participants sent an e-mail to the author asking if they could forward the survey to other active Toastmasters International members who did not have e-mail addresses registered with the online coordinator. The author also received responses from members who stated that the survey was sent to all members of their club, and that they hoped it was all right that they responded anyway. For example, the author

received a copy of an e-mail which stated, "To all Japan Toastmasters, please help this student in Las Vegas, Nevada." Thus, according to Babbie (1995), the participants e-mailing the survey to other active members of TI resulted in a snowball sampling.

By the deadline, July 1, 1999, the author received approximately 140 surveys. At this point, since the snowball method produced such an overwhelming response, the author extended the deadline to August 31, 1999 for heuristic purposes. The Toastmasters Online Coordinator also sent a follow-up e-mail to the registered online members telling them that there was still opportunity to participate in the study. Collection of questionnaires ceased on August 31, 1999, when a total of 343 usable surveys was received.

### Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions and contained four scaled attitudinal questions. These questions measured why people join and remain in Toastmasters, as well as their perceived speaking skill level prior to joining TI and perceived speaking improvement since joining the organization. For example, participants were asked to rank a list of seven items which indicated reasons why people typically join Toastmasters International. These included: (1) to improve public speaking for professional purposes; (2) to improve public speaking for self-esteem and personal reasons; (3) to gain information about oral communication; (4) to overcome fear of public speaking; (5) networking opportunities; and (6) social purposes. Respondents could also mark "Other," and were given a blank space to specify what other reason they had for joining the club. Participants ranked the seven items in order of importance with "1" being most important



and “7” being the least important. These items were based on the author’s own perceptions as a seven-year member of Toastmasters International.

Participants similarly were asked to rank a list of ten items which provided reasons why they remain in TI, such as friendship, networking opportunities, increased speaking opportunities, leadership, personal fulfillment, and one selection marked “Other” for participants to add their own ideas. Participants ranked the ten items in order of importance with “1” being most important and “10” being the least important. These items were also based on this author’s own perceptions.

Perceived speaking skill level prior to joining TI and perceived speaking improvement since joining TI served as other scaled attitudinal items. Perceived speaking skill included five items, such as “novice,” “some speaking experience,” “regular speaking experience,” “seasoned speaker,” and a selection marked “Other” so participants could add their own ideas. Participants ranked the five items in order of importance with “1” being most important and “5” being least important.

Perceived speaking improvement consisted of six items, which included reduced fear, stronger delivery, expanded vocabulary, increased speech content repertoire, and more appropriate use of notes. An area marked “Other” also was provided in this section. Participants ranked the six items in order of importance with “1” being most important and “6” being least important. Again, these items were based on this author’s own experience as a former Toastmasters member.

Next, participants answered four multiple choice questions. Participants were asked if they knew TI was a public speaking organization before they joined, and about any formal communication training they experienced prior to joining TI. If participants

indicated that they had prior formal communication training, another multiple-choice question described four possible training venues, such as college course work, on-the-job training, continuing education course work, and one blank space marked "Other."

Participants were told to check all that applied.

The final multiple-choice question asked participants how often they publicly speak within their professions. The four choices ranged from "Often" to "My profession does not require me to publicly speak." Participants were told to select the most applicable response.

Four open-ended questions asked about participants' perceptions of TI if they were not aware that it was a public speaking organization. Participants were also asked to list other settings outside of their profession where they are required to publicly speak. Other questions included one suggestion for improvement of TI, and for respondents to describe their main significant personal or professional benefit gained from membership in the organization.

Finally, seven demographic questions measured participants' length of membership, profession, completed educational level, gender, and age. Other demographic information included the members' completed number of speeches and Toastmasters designation level. The basis for the designation level stems from achievement levels that the member has earned, such as "Competent Toastmaster."

The author piloted the survey instrument to one non-TI member in person and one TI member via the Internet. The author implemented one of their recommendations, adding the new TI achievement designations under the established section asking members to indicate current Toastmaster achievement level. As previously mentioned, in July 1997,

Toastmasters International implemented two tracks, which resulted in new achievement levels. The previous achievement designations included Competent Toastmaster (CTM), Able Toastmaster (ATM), Able Toastmaster-Bronze and Silver (ATM-B, ATM-S), and Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM). The TI member to whom the survey was piloted recommended adding the new achievement levels to reflect the current award structure: Advanced Toastmaster-Bronze (ATM-B), Advanced Toastmaster-Silver (ATM-S), Advanced Toastmaster-Gold (ATM-G), Competent Leader (CL), and Advanced Leader (AL). The data were then input into Statistical Product Service Solutions (SPSS) software and submitted to frequency analyses.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Demographic Profile of the Toastmasters International Members**

An equal number of males (49%, 168) and females (49%, 167) responded to the survey. Two percent (8) did not respond to this item. Respondents' mean age was 44 years old, with ages ranging from 21 years old to 74 years old. Four percent (12) did not report age. There was not an overwhelming representation of one particular age group; however, respondents in the 41-50 age group had the most representation (35%, 119), followed by the 31-40 age group (27%, 92) and the 51-60 age group (24%, 83). The remainder of the participants comprised the 20-30 age group (5%, 18), the 61-70 age group (4%, 14), and the over-70 age group (1%, 5).

Most participants reported holding a bachelor's degree (36.5%, 125) or a master's degree (31.5%, 108). Twenty-one percent (75) reported they had "some college education," while 5% (17) hold a doctorate. Four percent (13) completed high school only, and 2% (5) did not respond to this question.

The participants reported various professions, including computer/technology (23%, 80), management (10%, 33), professional public speaker (7%, 23), engineer (6%, 22), financial/banking (6%, 20), and education (6%, 19). Four percent of respondents were either retired (15), in sales (15), or in a secretarial/administrative field (14), respectively.

Three percent of respondents hold careers in government (11), health care (10), writing (10), marketing (9), law (9), and consulting (9), respectively. Two percent reported careers in science (7), accounting (6), and insurance (5), respectively. One percent held careers as security/police force (3), corporate president (3), homemaker (3), firefighter (3), student (3), and librarian (2), respectively. Fewer than one percent of respondents work as counselors (1), food service personnel (1), recruiter (1), and realtors (1). Two percent (6) of participants did not respond to this question.

### TI Membership Characteristics

#### Length of Membership

The average length of membership was seven years. Forty-four percent (149) of participants reported membership from 1 to 5 years, and 31% were members for 6 to 10 years (105). Other members reported club affiliation for 11 to 15 years (10%, 33), less than one year (7%, 24), 16-20 years (4%, 15), and more than 20 years (3%, 10). One percent (3) did not respond to this question.

#### Achievement Designations within TI

The majority of respondents said they hold the Competent Toastmaster designation (31%, 105). Many participants reported that they are completing their first 10 speeches (21%, 71), while others hold the Advanced Toastmaster-Bronze designation (19%, 64). The highest achievement level, Distinguished Toastmaster, was held by 15% (50) of the participants. Other designations included Advanced Toastmaster-Silver (9%, 30), Advanced Toastmaster-Gold (2%, 7), Communication and Leadership (2%, 8), and Able Toastmaster (2%, 6). One percent (2) of respondents did not answer this question.

### **Number of Completed Speeches**

The respondents have completed a mean of 38 speeches. Members reported a range of completing as few as one speech and as many as 350 speeches. Six percent (19) of respondents did not respond to this question.

### **Awareness of TI as a Public Speaking Club Before Joining**

The majority of respondents (90%, 309) knew that Toastmasters was a public speaking organization prior to attending their first meeting. Of the 10% (34) who did not know the nature of Toastmasters International, four percent (13) provided their own responses regarding their perception of the club. One percent (5) had either never heard of the organization previously or believed it was an organization designed to teach people how to make toasts (2). Less than one percent believed that Toastmasters International was either a self-help organization (1), a corporate meeting for managers (1), an extension of Speechcraft (1), a place for leadership development (1), or a fraternal club, similar to the Elks Club or Lions Club (1).

## **Communication Education and Public Speaking**

### **Experience Prior to Joining TI**

Over half of the respondents (60%, 204) reported having formal communication education or training prior to joining Toastmasters. Less than half (43%, 149) had received college course work in oral communication, while 21% (72) experienced on-the-job training in public speaking. Ten percent (33) reported taking continuing education courses in oral communication. Thirteen percent (43) of respondents also experienced other types of communication education training, which included Dale Carnegie course

work (14), high school/elementary school speech training (9), or outside theatre affiliations (5). One percent of participants received speech training in the military (4), within the teaching profession (4), through facilitation of workshops, such as Weight Watchers meetings (3), or within the media profession (2), respectively. Less than one percent reported that they had embarked upon speech training therapy (1), or participated in church-related public speaking functions (1).

A relatively equal number of respondents publicly speak within their profession: 32% (109) reported “sometimes,” while others reported speaking either “often” (25%, 85) or “rarely” (25%, 85). Eighteen percent (60) of participants said they are not required to speak in their professions, and one percent (4) of participants did not respond to this question.

When asked to mention other settings which require participants to do public speaking, four percent (15) of the respondents indicated: “community or civic meetings” (2%, 7), “church” (1%, 3) “in politics/government meetings” (1%, 2), or “at funerals” (1%, 1). Nine percent (32) of respondents reported that their only public speaking practice occurs at Toastmasters International meetings and functions.

### **Reasons for Joining and Remaining in TI**

Fifty percent (171) of the participants ranked “To improve public speaking skills for professional purposes” as the most important reason for joining TI. Respondents also indicated they wanted to improve their public speaking skills for self-esteem (23%, 79) and to overcome fear of public speaking (17%, 60). Other members joined for social

purposes (6%, 19), to gain information about oral communication (5%, 17), and for networking opportunities (5%, 16) (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Top Reasons Why Members Joined Toastmasters International**

<b>Reasons for Membership</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To improve public speaking skills for professional purposes	50%
To improve public speaking skills for self-esteem and personal reasons	23%
To overcome fear of public speaking	17%
Other	11%
Social purposes	6%
Networking opportunities	5%
To gain information about oral communication	5%

Eleven percent of respondents (39) gave their own reasons for joining Toastmasters International. Respondents indicated similar themes to those listed as responses on the survey, such as for professional purposes: “My employer insisted that I join,” “I needed a resume-builder,” and “I needed to change my boring presentations at work.” Personal reasons also included: “Because I enjoyed debate in high school,” “I wanted to improve my leadership/listening/language/impromptu speaking skills,” and “I wanted to become a motivational speaker.”

Twenty-eight percent (96) of respondents indicated that “Personal fulfillment and self-esteem” is the main reason why they remain in Toastmasters. Friendship of other Toastmasters (24%, 82) and professional purposes (23%, 79) served as other reasons. Other members reported that they stay in TI to alleviate speech anxiety (12%, 41) or to achieve a certain TI designation (8%, 27). Fewer members remain due to the leadership



opportunities (7%, 23), or a career in public speaking (7%, 24). A small number of respondents are driven by networking opportunities (4%, 13) or the TI speech competitions (2%, 8) (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Reasons Why Members Remain in Toastmasters International**

Reasons Why Members Remain	Percentage
Personal fulfillment and enhanced self-esteem.	28%
Friendship of other Toastmasters.	24%
Continued speech practice for professional purposes.	23%
Continued alleviation of speech anxiety.	12%
Other	12%
The goal of a specific level of TM achievement.	8%
Pursuit of a career in public speaking.	7%
Leadership opportunities.	7%
Networking opportunities.	4%
Toastmaster speech competitions.	2%

Twelve percent (40) of respondents wrote additional reasons why they remain members of Toastmasters International. The two main themes of these responses included (1) because they enjoy helping others, or (2) because they appreciate Toastmasters as an educational venue for themselves. For example, participants wrote "I enjoy mentoring other speakers," and "I like helping others improve and meet their goals." In the area of mentoring, some Toastmasters also mentioned the Youth Leadership programs: "I like helping to develop future leaders." The other theme, learning, included responses such as, "I like the continuous learning," "I stay because this is a job requirement," and "Toastmasters is entertaining and fun."

### **Benefits of Membership in Toastmasters International**

Prior to joining TI, nearly half (47%, 162) of the respondents “had some speaking experience, but desired to improve speech delivery/content/style.” Thirty-eight percent (131) of the respondents considered themselves novice speakers; rarely, if ever, did they speak in front of an audience before joining. Ten percent (34) spoke regularly in a professional setting and desired to expand their speech content, and four percent (15) assessed themselves as already seasoned speakers who wanted to become even more refined. Less than one percent (1) did not respond to this question.

Regarding skill improvement, half of the participants (51%, 176) perceive that they have stronger speech delivery since joining Toastmasters International. This includes nonverbal delivery mechanics, such as eye contact and hand gestures. Respondents also indicated reduced fear as the second most significant improvement since joining the club (40%, 138). Some respondents perceived that their speech content had improved (13%, 43), and very few members indicated that their usage of notes (5%, 16), or expanded vocabulary (4%, 13), served as the most significant improvement (see Table 3).

Table 3

**Members' Improvements Since Joining Toastmasters International**

<b>Improvements Since Joining TI</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Stronger delivery in terms of vocal quality, eye contact, body positioning, and hand gestures.	51%
Fear of public speaking is significantly reduced.	40%
Other	15%
Increased repertoire of speech content i.e., informative, persuasive, entertaining speeches.	13%
More appropriate use of notes.	5%
Expanded vocabulary.	4%

Fifteen percent (52) of members reported other themes of improvement, which mainly encompassed various acquired public speaking strengths. These statements included "I am better at using humorous material," "I am an improved impromptu speaker," "I have become a better and more organized writer," "I have used how to use props," "I have better control of time," and "I use fewer 'ahs and ums'." Other members offered more personal reasons, such as "I have more fun in my life" and "I am considering a public speaking career."

Regarding their overall benefits of membership, respondents were asked to indicate one specific significant personal or professional benefit gained from membership in Toastmasters International. Less than half of respondents (40%, 134) wrote that they are now better speakers. Thirty-three percent (112) stated "increased confidence" and 6% (21) now have "reduced communication anxiety." Five percent (16) "enjoy the new friendships," while 4% (12) were able to "land paid professional speaking opportunities." Two percent (8) of members have increased their leadership abilities; less than one percent, respectively, report better writing (2) or listening skills (2), and increased goal-

setting (2) or time management capabilities (2). Seven percent (25) did not respond to this question.

### **Members' Recommendations for TI**

Fifty-seven percent (195) of the members wrote their own recommendations for improvement of Toastmasters International. Themes included meeting content and membership (26%, 51), Toastmasters International as a governing body (23%, 45), technology (5%, 10), and leadership and club officer training (3%, 6) (see Table 4).

Changes in meeting content and membership mainly encompassed participants' desire for increased membership (6%, 20), and the addition and refinement of manuals (5%, 16). Other members (4%, 13) desired the elimination of weekly voting and contests.

Respondents also offered recommendations for Toastmasters International Headquarters as a governing body. Some responses were directed toward the relationship between TI headquarters and the clubs, such as better customer service at TI headquarters (3%, 9). Other members desired other types of speaking programs, such as a professional track (2%, 5), while some also indicated more emphasis for outside programs, such as mentoring or Youth Leadership (2%, 6). Enhanced inter-club relations served as another suggestion in this area (2%, 8), as well as less emphasis on new clubs and greater strengthening of older clubs (2%, 6). Members also expressed the need for better foreign language materials (2%, 8).

Five percent of members made recommendations regarding technological changes the organization should make. Members mostly desired more practice with PowerPoint or

computer-based training (2%, 7). Other members (2%, 6) believed that videos of speeches should be made available for new members.

Leadership and officer training served as the final category for improvements. Some members perceived the need for board positions to change more frequently (2%, 8), while others desired increased leadership training opportunities (2%, 5).

**Table 4**

**Members Recommendations for TI**

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Meeting content and membership	26%
Suggestions for TI Headquarters	23%
Technology suggestions	5%
Leadership and club officer training	3%

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

**The lack of academic literature regarding Toastmasters International makes this organization an ideal target for study. For this reason, the author examined TI's history from 1905 to the present, as well as reviewed its educational program. In order to provide an updated account of the typical TI member, the author also conducted a survey of 343 active international members. This knowledge regarding Toastmasters International can raise awareness for both communication scholars, as well as the average citizen who seeks extracurricular speaking practice.**

#### **TI Respondent Profile**

**Based on the survey conducted here, a male or female between the ages of 36-50, who holds a college degree, could represent today's typical TI respondent. Respondents may work in various types of professions, yet the typical respondent's affiliation with TI ranges from one to five years, and he/she most likely holds the Competent Toastmaster (CTM) designation.**

**The equal gender representation of this study (49%, respectively) updates Frischknecht's (1977) study which garnered 93% male respondents. At that time, only four years had passed since TI amended its bylaws to admit women. With regard to**

respondents' ages, participants in this study ranged from 21 to 74 years of age.

Frischknecht found that 35 to 54 year old members mainly represented her sample, as well.

Respondents' educational levels showed that more than 70% hold at least an undergraduate degree, and about half of this number possess advanced or terminal degrees. This finding indicates a more educationally diverse TI population from that found by Frischknecht's study, which included over 51% that were college graduates.

The typical TI respondent is anything but typical in terms of profession. Counselors, CEOs, teachers, firefighters, and lawyers outline only a few of the "professional titles" of TI respondents. Frischknecht's (1977) study included very broad career ranges, such as "people service," "professional," and "self-employed." Now, TI boasts members from any career field—and even those not working, such as retirees, students, or homemakers.

The current sample indicates computing and technology as the most represented profession (23%). Since the survey was conducted via e-mail, computer professionals may have found more motivation to respond. However, researchers (Kennedy, 1988, 1989; Olds & Wiley, 1991) posit that technical and engineering students need to enhance their public speaking skills for the workplace. Thus, computing and technology personnel may find that TI provides necessary "continuing education" for their profession.

TI respondents also cite lengthy involvement with the organization, as evidenced by the average seven-year membership duration, and over 70% of respondents with membership between one and 10 years. Frischknecht's (1977) study cited that 58% of TI members dropped their membership within 17 months. Dissatisfaction with the manual

projects and lack of program diversity might account for members' previously shorter affiliations.

TI respondents also provided other demographic information specific to the organization, such as achievement designations. Based on the overwhelming number of participants in this sample who indicated a membership length of one to five years (44%), the fact that most respondents only hold the initial Competent Toastmaster (CTM) designation (31%) was not surprising. Depending on a member's individual club size, he or she might wait longer before giving a project speech based on either the basic Communication and Leadership Manual, which counts toward the CTM award. This reason might also account for the second largest representation in this study: members still completing their first 10 speeches (21%).

The high average number of speeches per respondent (38) reflects TI's purpose: public speaking practice. In fact, once a member reaches the Advanced Toastmaster-Bronze designation—the second achievement tier within the Communication Track—he or she will have delivered 20 speeches in the club setting alone. These performances do not include additional participation in competitions or other outside Toastmasters programs.

## Communication Education and Training

### Previous Public Speaking Experience

The typical TI respondent has experienced some type of formal communication education or training prior to joining TI, consisting of a college course (43%) or on-the-job training (21%). The participants (43%) who experienced previous public speaking



education in the academic setting represents a slightly higher figure than Frischknecht's 1977 finding of 39% of participants who had taken at least one speech course. The small increase of people who experienced a basic college public speaking course after more than 20 years could substantiate communication scholars' perceptions that college graduates receive insufficient communication education at the post-secondary level (Cronin and Glenn, 1991; Cronin and Grice, 1993; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak & Whitney, 1993; Smith, 1997). For participants (21%) who experienced on-the-job training in public speaking (21%), this finding seems to substantiate researchers' beliefs that today's employers expect their employees to possess exceptional communication skills (Kennedy, 1988, 1989, Olds & Wiley, 1991; Jankovich and Powell, 1997; Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier, and Lenk, 1998).

#### Professional or Educational Reasons for Joining the Organization

Half (50%) of the participants indicated that they joined TI for professional purposes, which aligns with research that deems communication education as inadequate, as well as research that specifies the need for polished communication skills in the workplace. Joining TI for professional purposes also served as a main theme of participants' self-authored responses: "My employer insisted that I join," "I needed a resume-builder," and "I needed to change my boring presentations at work." Respondents who joined for professional purposes were more interested in TI as a skill-building tool, rather than for networking since only 5% indicated that they joined the organization for this reason.

#### Public Speaking Activity Outside of TI

Although a significant number of members reported that they joined TI for professional purposes, a low percentage of members reported that they speak publicly

within their profession. Only 32% of members report that they speak “sometimes” in their profession, while even smaller percentages speak either “often” or “rarely.” The large representation of respondents in the computer/technical professions might indicate one reason for the low speaking activity in the workplace. Additionally, participants in other professional categories, such as secretaries, retirees, librarians, firefighters, writers, and food service personnel, probably do not undertake much public speaking activity. Nevertheless, joining TI for mainly professional purposes could include participants using public speaking practice as a tool to enhance everyday fluency of speech or to expand the breadth of their vocabulary, articulation, and nonverbal communication.

### **Skill Achievement**

Since over half of the participants (60%) indicated they had some oral communication training prior to joining TI, and many participants engage in public speaking either at work or in other venues, the 38% of participants who consider themselves novice speakers does not represent an unusual finding. Nearly half of the participants (47%) reported that they “had some speaking experience, but desired to improve speech delivery/content/style.” The phrase “some speaking experience” could vary, based on participant perception. Some participants may believe that “some speaking experience” consists of monthly speeches, while other participants may perceive themselves “experienced” if they’ve performed a few speeches per year. Respondents who aren’t overly experienced or underexperienced in public speaking represent a typical person who has given a few speeches in his/her lifetime, either professionally or in another setting, and simply wishes to become a better speaker.

### **Skill Improvement Since Joining TI**

TI's purpose, public speaking, would anticipate the finding that half of the participants (51%) perceive themselves to have stronger speech delivery since joining the organization. The second most noticeable benefit among respondents (40%) was reduced fear, which also could result from the repetitive speaking opportunities and continual desensitization to public speaking that TI provides.

### **Affiliation Motivation and Serious Leisure**

The other half of TI's population who did not join for professional purposes joined the organization for personal reasons: (1) to improve public speaking skills for self-esteem (23%), and (2) to overcome fear of public speaking (17%). This is not surprising since research documents public speaking as a universally feared activity (Wallechinsky, Wallace and Wallace, 1977; Lucas, 1998), and overcoming the barriers for this skill could significantly nurture one's self-esteem and level of personal fulfillment. Very few members (6%) joined the club for social purposes, a finding which could indicate that people perceive TI more as an educational club, rather than a social organization.

Many respondents indicated that they also remain in Toastmasters for personal reasons, either for the fulfillment and self-esteem that public speaking gives to them (28%) or for the friendship of other members (24%). Some authors (Sze and Ivker, 1990; Haggard and Williams, 1992) contend that membership in a group which enhances an individual's knowledge base or professional status offers people feelings of affirmation and gratification. Additionally, Leone-Rundell's (1993) dissertation indicated that Dale

Carnegie graduates and TI members perceived the programs as confidence-builders—another self-affirming element.

The friendship of other Toastmasters serves as another main reason why respondents remain in the organization (24%). Kime's (1998) dissertation shows that many members found greater satisfaction with their social lives after joining TI. Indeed, the sociable nature of individual TI clubs encourages friendship and support; new members always pair with an established member for coaching through his or her first three speeches. Additionally, the fact that members reveal who they are through their speeches might serve as another reason why members foster extremely close bonds with each other.

Supportive communication, as studied by Albrecht, Burleson, and Goldsmith (1984), could indicate another reason why members relish the "friendship factor." The supportive communication in TI, from the passing of encouraging notes to the individual evaluations and coaching during meetings, provides members with a sense of belonging and inclusion.

"Professional reasons" served as the third most important reason for respondents to remain in TI (23%). One reason that respondents remain in the club for professional reasons could stem from the immediacy of learning in TI. Whether or not they publicly speak at work, members can take their education derived from the organization—leadership or speaking practice—to work the very next day. Each new meeting provides a new set of speakers, a new set of evaluators, and a fresh learning experience for guests and members alike. In fact, some researchers (Roggenbuck, Loomis, and Dagostino, 1990; Arai and Pedlar, 1997) agree that learning motivates people to seek out and continually pursue certain leisure activities. Even Frischknecht's (1977) study found that

37% of participants expected membership in TI to improve their job position. Thus, since TI offers a unique learning experience that benefits people in their careers, remaining in TI for professional reasons could translate into members who appreciate how the learning tools in TI benefit them professionally.

When participants were asked to name one particular benefit gained from TI membership, their responses reiterated their reasons for remaining in the organization. The nature of TI as a public speaking organization would presuppose the high percentage of participants (40%) who reported “better speaking ability” as the most significant benefit gained. Respondents also saw “increased confidence” (33%) and “reduced communication anxiety” (6%) as benefits.

Although friendship served as a significant theme of why respondents remain in the club, when respondents had to delineate one single benefit, this reason did not prevail. Again, TI touts its public speaking activity far more than the organization’s secondary purpose as a social club. The themes of better speaking and friendship also appear not to have changed in over than 20 years. Even Frischknecht’s study found that the two main expectations participants expressed from membership in TI was greater speaking ability (92%) and fellowship (52%).

### Club Suggestions

Shamir (1988) discussed that some leisure activity pursuers may possess internal and external commitment to their spare-time involvements. Respondents evidenced their commitment to TI in that over half of the respondents (57%) offered thoughtful and detailed responses to the “club suggestion” segment of the survey. Four themes emerged: (1) meeting content and membership (26%), (2) suggestions for TI headquarters (23%),

(3) technology suggestions (5%), and leadership and club officer training (3%). Various suggestions comprised each of these areas, such as “increase membership” and “make videotaped speeches available to new members.” However, the low percentage (under 7%) of individual suggestions within each theme indicates that although TI respondents perceive that certain facets of their membership could improve, they do not perceive one blatant problem area.

### Limitations

The distribution of this survey via e-mail did not represent the full TI population because Toastmasters International Headquarters maintains confidentiality of TI members’ names and addresses. Thus, the sample via e-mail served as the most effective means of conducting this study; even those at TI Headquarters suggested it as the best method to use. Notably, TI did write a letter to members expressing support for Frischknecht’s dissertation in 1977; however, the membership base was considerably less at that time.

Additionally, the e-mail method of this study probably represented a more motivated TI respondent or a more technologically savvy TI respondent than the group’s actual population. For example, many respondents in this study say they had not yet completed their first 10 speeches. Newer members might possess a different perspective of the organization than long-term TI members.

This was not a longitudinal study; respondents were surveyed only once. Updating TI members’ perceptions about the organization on a yearly basis may offer greater insight into the reasons why members join and remain.

Regarding the survey instrument, it did not ask if respondents perceived their former communication training as sufficient, nor did it ask about the length of time between their communication training and their joining TI. Participants were also not questioned about specific professional communication needs they were seeking upon joining TI. Finally, demographic information could have included additional variables, such as where participants reside and leadership roles in the organization. Adding these elements to the survey instrument would further indicate the nature and extent of former communication training, as well as professional communication trends. The extended demographic information would offer an even more thorough and accurate picture of the “type” of person who joins TI.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

The dearth of research that exists regarding TI leads to unlimited future research possibilities. One possible research area includes gaining further information regarding communication professors’ perceptions of TI. Identifying how communication scholars regard TI might provide rationale into the reason why they have not studied the organization. Since some communication scholars either identify themselves as current or former members of TI, or already recommend this organization as an extracurricular venue for students to practice public speaking, future researchers should focus on the nature and extent to which professors discuss TI or use its principles in their own courses. Studying TI’s educational benefits serves as another research path. For example, Frischknecht’s (1977) study regarding the effectiveness and success of TI’s educational program deserves updating to determine if the organization is still serving its members’

educational needs. Leone-Rundell (1993) examined the TI program for its effectiveness, but the author focused mainly on participants' perceptions of how the program impacts their lives. Since many people join TI because they need communication education and training, the substance and effectiveness of TI's educational programs needs further attention.

Longitudinal studies or surveys of TI members would measure changing communication workplace trends and how well TI meets these needs. Ongoing focus groups consisting of TI members who perceive that TI has helped them professionally would help researchers determine how this organization benefits members in their professions.

The social benefits of TI serve as another fertile research area. Kime (1998) only studied social comfort among members in terms of public speaking and comfort with members' overall social lives; however, the research into affiliation motivation deserves more concentration. For example, future surveys could examine social affiliation theories more closely by asking TI members how their membership affects their personal fulfillment and social life. Friendship development in TI may serve as another unique research area. Many members find the supportive communication in the organization endearing, and build friendships based on this element. Comparing friendship development in TI, as opposed to other types of organizations, such as hiking clubs or computer users clubs, may offer particular insight into how social clubs foster friendships of varied depths.

Similarly, specific researchers' theories and how they apply to TI members also serves as another research area. For example, Cohen and Metzger (1998) state that some people



join clubs for “ontological security”—the feeling of mastery and control over the chaotic and threatening situations in their lives. Evaluation of this theory, in conjunction with why TI members join a club which promotes a feared activity, would offer a greater view of how overcoming communication apprehension may help people in other areas of their lives.

Respondents’ length of membership in conjunction with their commitment appears to serve as another future research area. Specifically, Cress, McPherson, and Rotolo’s (1997) theory that organizations requiring more from their members may have trouble retaining them may not align with TI members’ levels of commitment. TI requires a considerable amount of commitment and “hands-on” participation from its members—all TI members are expected to give regular speeches, participate in meetings, and hold leadership roles. Also, members rely on each other for camaraderie and often attend the meetings as an audience member to support others. As mentioned, achieving higher TI designations and awards depends upon active participation in the organization. Thus, future research could examine Cress, McPherson, and Rotolo’s (1997) theory in conjunction with TI members’ commitment and their duration of membership.

Finally, TI members appear to embody Stebbins’ (1982) serious leisure theory. The author’s six qualities of serious leisure seem to best describe the reason why people remain in Toastmasters International. With respect to perseverance, the first quality, TI members’ duration of membership exemplifies this element. Next, TI’s achievement designations, speech competitions, and manual projects replicate a “career” of the activity, as well as Stebbins’ third quality, personal effort based on acquired knowledge, training, or skill. Next, the themes members indicated of self-esteem, personal

fulfillment, and confidence illustrate the author's fourth serious leisure quality, durable benefits. Evidence of the fifth element of serious leisure—unique ethos, or a “subculture”—lies in TI members' friendships, the coaching, the rituals, and the organization's constitutional bylaws. Finally, the way that TI members reach out to communities and share their TI achievements with others exhibits the sixth quality of serious leisure—identification. Thus, a survey instrument or personal interviews should delve into how the components of serious leisure match TI's membership profile and its purpose.

### Conclusion

Toastmasters International unites people from all over the world who wish to practice public speaking and meet new friends in a comfortable, educational, and supportive environment. This organization has proven that although times change and people change, the basic human desire to speak and be understood remains the same. Whether members seek out TI for professional purposes, or simply to perform public speaking as a leisure activity, TI continues to attract members in record numbers. Thus, the organization remains a prominent figure in extracurricular public speaking education.

Since people of varied ages, multiple professions, and diverse backgrounds continually affiliate themselves with TI for a purpose of communication, this organization deserves further attention among communication scholars. The communication education research discussed here outlines that most of the current literature tends to focus on programs and problems in the academic setting. However,

communication education research should also include substantial efforts outside of formal education.

Communication scholars and students can only benefit from further awareness of an extracurricular public speaking organization such as TI. Even if all post-secondary institutions implemented an extensive advanced public speaking program, TI offers a post-college supplement—a place where people can practice public speaking among friends in a non-academic, relaxed atmosphere. Additionally, the professional benefits of TI offer an immediate learning tool for people in careers. Thus, if communication scholars research TI and educate their students about the organization, this knowledge may impact students' lives for many years after they graduate.

Whereas the educational benefits of TI appear great, the social aspect of the organization serves as an equally worthy area for future research. In this day and age, many people choose to join clubs simply because affiliation makes them feel fulfilled. The unique nature of TI as a social public speaking club may promote deeper and more satisfying friendships, and thus may perpetuate an entirely new area for social affiliation research.

Even in 1905, Ralph C. Smedley envisioned a place where people could unite for education and socializing. Little did he know that this public speaking club would transcend basic human needs for decades to come. Academic education has considerably expanded since Smedley's day, and the evolution of professional opportunities remains everchanging. These new pursuits also result in people's lives moving in a considerably faster pace year after year. However, today's men and women still apparently use their spare time to voluntarily partake in enriching and educational activities.

Since the number of people seeking out the organization year after year appears unrelenting, TI will most likely remain a substantial force as a non-academic communication education venue. For this reason, expanded and consistent research regarding this organization and its members not only possesses heuristic value, but also serves as a true measure of “continued education” for both communication scholars and people in every facet of life.

## **APPENDIX**

### **LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

June 10, 1999

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

My name is Ellen Bremen, and I am a graduate student in the Greenspun School of Communication at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. More importantly, I was a seven-year member of Toastmasters International before returning to college. I am administering a survey to (1) learn more about why adults join this organization; and (2) to complete one of the requirements for my Research Methods course (COS 712). This survey asks brief questions about why you joined Toastmasters International, how long you have been a member, and if you have had previous oral communication training. Please know that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

The attached survey should take no longer than 5-7 minutes and answers will be seen only by myself. Your voluntary participation will remain anonymous as there are no survey requirements asking you to list your name. My instructor Anthony Ferri, Ph.D. will be given the statistical summary of data in the form of a report. After the report is completed (on or before July 8, 1999), the surveys will be destroyed.

Should you decide to participate in the study, please copy the survey, indicate your answers, and then paste the survey in an e-mail document addressed to Ellen0801@aol.com. Please submit your answers by July 1, 1999.

If you have any questions, please contact the UNLV Office for Sponsored Programs (FDH 304) at (702) 895-1357, Dr. Anthony Ferri at (702) 895-1371, or myself at (702) 895-4643.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and for assisting me with my research goals.

Sincerely,

Ellen Levine Bremen

### **Toastmasters Survey Instrument**

1. What motivated you to join Toastmasters International?  
(Please rank all that apply in order of importance, 1 being most important)  
  
\_\_\_ To improve public speaking skills for professional purposes.  
\_\_\_ To improve public speaking skills for self-esteem and personal reasons.  
\_\_\_ To gain information about oral communication.  
\_\_\_ To overcome fear of public speaking.  
\_\_\_ Networking opportunities.  
\_\_\_ Social purposes.  
\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been a Toastmasters member?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Did you know that Toastmasters was a public speaking organization before you attended your first meeting?  
  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. If you did not know that Toastmasters was a public speaking organization, what type of organization did you perceive it to be? (Please be specific)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you have any formal oral communication training prior to joining Toastmasters International?  
  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. What did this former training consist of? (Check all that apply)  
  
\_\_\_ College coursework in oral communication.  
\_\_\_ On-the-job training in public speaking.  
\_\_\_ Continuing education coursework.  
\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What would you perceive to be your speaking skill level prior to joining Toastmasters International? (check one)  
  
\_\_\_ I was a novice. I rarely, if ever, spoke in front of an audience before joining.  
\_\_\_ I had some speaking experience, but desired to improve my speech delivery/content/style.  
\_\_\_ I spoke regularly in a professional setting, and wanted to expand my speech content.  
\_\_\_ I was already a seasoned speaker and wanted to become even more refined.  
\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Since joining Toastmasters International, how has your speaking improved?  
(Please rank mark that apply in order of importance, 1 being most important).

☐ Fear of public speaking is significantly reduced.  
☐ Stronger delivery in terms of vocal quality, eye contact, body positioning,  
hand gestures.  
☐ Expanded vocabulary.  
☐ Increased repertoire of speech content i.e., informative, persuasive,  
entertaining speeches.  
☐ More appropriate use of notes.  
☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your profession? \_\_\_\_\_

10. If you publicly speak within your profession, how often does this occur?

☐ Often (on a weekly basis).  
☐ Sometimes (on a monthly basis).  
☐ Rarely (a few times per year).  
☐ My profession does not require me to publicly speak.

11. If your profession does not require you to publicly speak, please specify other  
settings where you use this practice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
☐ I only do public speaking at Toastmasters meetings and functions.

12. What keeps you in Toastmasters International? *(Please rank all that apply in  
order of importance, 1 being the most improved)*

☐ Friendship of other Toastmaster members.  
☐ Networking opportunities.  
☐ The goal of a specific level of Toastmaster achievement i.e. CTM, ATM,  
DTM.  
☐ Pursuit of a career in public speaking.  
☐ Toastmaster speech competitions.  
☐ Leadership opportunities.  
☐ Continued alleviation of speech anxiety.  
☐ Personal fulfillment and enhanced self-esteem.  
☐ Continued speech practice for professional purposes.  
☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

13. If you could make one suggestion for improvement of Toastmasters International,  
improvements of meetings or speech requirements, what would it be?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



14. What is the main significant personal or professional benefit have you gained from your membership in Toastmasters International.
- 

**Demographic Information (please complete):**

15. What is your completed educational level:  
\_\_\_ high school  
\_\_\_ some college  
\_\_\_ Bachelor's degree  
\_\_\_ Master's degree  
\_\_\_ Doctorate
16. Gender (*circle one*):                      Male    \_\_\_                      Female    \_\_\_
17. What is your age?    \_\_\_\_\_
18. How many speeches have you completed in Toastmasters International?  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. What is your level of Toastmasters achievement?
- CTM    \_\_\_      ATM-B    \_\_\_                      ATM-S    \_\_\_                      ATM-G    \_\_\_
- CL    \_\_\_                      AL    \_\_\_                      DTM    \_\_\_

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