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Willingness to Communicate: A Cognitive View

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Willingness to communicate (WTC) is discussed as a personality-based predisposition with a major impact on human communication behavior. The associations of WTC with introversion, self-esteem, communication competence, communication apprehenion, and cultural diversity are examined. These predispositional factors are seen as dominating cognitive decision-making processes of communicators.

Talk holds a central place in interpersonal communication. While a very large portion of all the meaning people generate in others' minds through interpersonal communication stems from nonverbal messages, the fact remains that without talk most interpersonal communication would have little reason to exist.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) point to the importance of the amount of talk in the initial stage of an interpersonal relationship. All interpersonal relationships must pass through this stage before reaching more intimate stages, but most never go beyond this stage. At the outset of interaction between strangers, considerable uncertainty exists in the minds of both. Since such uncertainty generally is non-reinforcing to interactants, they would desire to reduce uncertainty. Berger and Calabrese (1975) note that, as both amount of verbal communication and non-verbal affiliative expressiveness increase, the levels of uncertainty of both interactants decreases. Reduced levels of uncertainty lead to higher levels of intimacy and liking. The development of strong interpersonal relationships, then, is heavily dependent on the amount of communication in which interactants are willing to engage. The more a person is willing to talk and to be nonverbally expressive, the more likely that person is to develop positive interpersonal relationships.

In the general North American culture, interpersonal communication is highly valued. People are evaluated in large part on the basis of their communication behavior. While there are exceptions, people who communicate well typically are evaluated more positively than people

who do not. In fact, in most instances the more a person communicates, up to a very high extreme, the more positively the person is evaluated (Daly, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1977; Daly & Stafford, 1984; Hayes & Meltzer, 1972; McCroskey, 1977; Richmond, 1984).

Although talk is a vital component in interpersonal communication and the development of interpersonal relationships, people differ dramatically from one another in the degree to which they actually do talk. Some people talk very little, they tend to speak only when spoken to—and sometimes not even then. Others tend to verbalize almost constantly. Many people talk more in some contexts than in others. Most people talk more to some receivers than they do to others. This variability in talking behavior is rooted in a personality-based predisposition which we call "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC: McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987; Richmond & McCroskey, 1989).

THE COGNITIVE NATURE OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

To a major extent, verbal communication is a volitional act. People have the ability to choose to communicate or to choose not to communicate. This does not deny the existence of ritualized communication which exists with little or no cognitive awareness—the "Hi, how are you?" greeting followed by the ritual "Fine." Although this type of communication exists and virtually everyone participates in it every day, even this ritualized behavior is subject to volitional control and modification. As an example, consider how ritualized behavior might be changed when two individuals have sustained conflict.

Nonverbal communication is subject to far less volitional control in human interactions. One of the cardinal tenets of contemporary communication theory is that "one cannot not communicate" in the presence of another. This view holds that nonverbal aspects of individuals constantly communicate to others who are present, even if all verbal communication ceases. In fact, the cessation of verbal communication itself is seen as a powerful nonverbally communicative message. Hence, viewed from a nonverbal perspective, individuals cannot truly avoid communication when others are present, they only may choose what messages they will send.

The above facts point to the essentially cognitive nature of human communication. Messages are subject to choice. People do make such choices, although some choices are made so consistently that the communication behaviors become habituated and little cognitive involvement is required in a given instance unless diversion from habit is contemplated. Since cognition is critical to volitional choice, all that is

known about human cognition may be brought to bear to improve understanding of how these choices are made. We take the view that cognition itself and, hence, cognition about human communication is heavily influenced by the personality of the individual. Whether a person is willing or not willing to communicate, either in a given instance or more generally, is a volitional choice which is cognitively processed. The personality of the individual may be the determining factor in the manner in which that choice is made and what that choice will be.

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AS A PERSONALITY CONSTRUCT

Whether a person is willing to communicate with another person in a given interpersonal encounter certainly is affected by the situational constraints of that encounter. Many situational variables can have an impact: how the person feels that day, what communication the person has had with others recently, who the other person is, what that person looks like, what might be gained or lost through communicating, and other demands on the person's time.

WTC, then, is to a major degree situationally dependent. Nevertheless, individuals exhibit regular WTC tendencies across situations. Consistent behavioral tendencies with regard to frequency and amount of talking have been noted in the research literature for decades (Chapple & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman- Eisler, 1951; Borgatta & Bales, 1953). Such regularity in communication behaviors across interpersonal communication contexts suggests the existence of a predisposition. It is this orientation which explains why one person will communicate and another will not under identical or virtually identical situational constraints.

The present WTC construct has evolved from the earlier work of Burgoon (1976) on unwillingness to communicate, Mortensen, Arntson, and Lustig (1977) on predispositions toward verbal behavior, and Leary (1983) and McCroskey and Richmond (1982) with a behavioral approach toward shyness. All of these writings center on a presumed trait-like predisposition toward communication.

MEASURING THE WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCT

Abundant evidence exists to support the argument that people exhibit differential behavioral tendencies to communicate more or less across communication situations. A recently developed self-report instrument, known as the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale (see Figure 1), appears to be a valid operationalization of the construct (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; 1989).

FIGURE 1   Willingness to Communicate Scale

Williness to Communicate Scale

Directions: Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have *completely free choice.* Indicate the percentage of time you would choose *to communicate* in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. 0=never, 100=always.

- ___ 1.   *Talk with a service station attendant.
- ___ 2.   *Talk with a physician.
- ___ 3.   Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- ___ 4.   Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- ___ 5.   *Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- ___ 6.   Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- ___ 7.   *Talk with a policeman/policewoman.
- ___ 8.   Talk in a small group of strangers.
- ___ 9.   Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- ___ 10.   *Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- ___ 11.   Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- ___ 12.   Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- ___ 13.   *Talk with a secretary.
- ___ 14.   Present a talk to a group of friends.
- ___ 15.   Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- ___ 16.   *Talk with a garbage collector.
- ___ 17.   Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- ___ 18.   *Talk with a spouse (or girl/boy friend).
- ___ 19.   Talk in a small group of friends.
- ___ 20.   Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

* Filler item

Scoring: To compute the subscores add the percentages for the items indicated and divide the total by the number indicated below.

Public: 3 + 14 + 20; divide by 3.
Meeting: 6 + 11 + 17; divide by 3.
Group: 8 + 15 + 19; divide by 3.
Dyad: 4 + 9 + 12; divide by 3.
Stranger: 3 + 8 + 12 + 17; divide by 4.
Acquaintance: 4 + 11 + 15 + 20; divide by 4.
Friend: 6 + 9 + 14 + 19; divide by 4.

To compute the total WTC score, add the subscores for Stranger, Acquaintance, and Friend. Then divide that total by 3.

Normative means, standard deviations, and internal reliability estimates for the scores, based on a sample of 428 college students, are as follows:

Score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability
Total WTC	67.3	15.2	.92
Public	56.1	22.2	.76
Meeting	60.0	20.9	.70
Group	73.4	15.8	.65
Dyad	79.5	15.0	.69
Stranger	41.3	22.5	.82
Acquaintance	75.0	17.9	.74
Friend	85.5	13.8	.74

It has strong content validity and there is some support for its construct (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986 a,b) and predictive validity (Chan, 1988; Chan & McCroskey, 1987; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1986).

Underlying the WTC construct is the general assumption it is a personality- based, trait-like predisposition which is relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers. For us to argue that the predisposition is trait-like, it is necessary to assume the level of a person's WTC in one communication context (like small group interaction) is correlated with the person's WTC in other communication contexts (such as public speaking, talking in meetings, and talking in dyads). Further, it is necessary to assume that the level of a person's WTC with one type of receiver (like acquaintances) is correlated with the person's WTC with other types of receivers (such as friends and strangers).

These assumptions do not mandate that a person be equally willing to communicate in all contexts or with all receivers, only that the level of willingness in various contexts and with various receivers be correlated. Thus, if Person A is much more willing to communicate in small groups than in a public speaking context, the underlying assumption is not necessarily violated. However, if Person A is more willing to communicate than Person B in one context, it is assumed that Person A will be more willing to communicate than Person B in other contexts as well. If no such regularity exists when data are aggregated for a large number of people, WTC in one context will not be predictive of WTC in another context and WTC with one type of receiver will not be predictive of WTC with another type of receiver. In this event, the data would invalidate the assumption of a trait-like predisposition and necessitate we redirect attention to predispositions that are context-based and/or receiver-based, or forgo the predispositional approach in favor of a purely situational explanation of WTC.

The WTC scale includes items related to four communication contexts—public speaking, talking in meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads—and three types of receivers—strangers, acquaintances, and friends. The scale includes twelve scored items and eight filler items (those marked with an asterisk in Figure 1 are filler items). In addition to an overall WTC score, presumably representing the general personality orientation of WTC, seven subscores may be generated. These represent the four types of communication contexts and three types of receivers.

Available data on the instrument are very promising (McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986a,b; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1987). The internal reliability of the total

WTC score is .92. Internal reliabilities for the subscores for communication context range from .65 to .76. Internal reliabilites for the subscores for types of receivers range from .74 to .82. The mean correlation among context subscores is .58. The mean correlation among receiver-type subscores also is .58. After correction for attentuation, the mean correlation among context subscores is .88 and among receiver-type subscores it is .82. Factor analysis indicates that all twelve scored items load most highly on the first unrotated factor, indicating the scale is unidimensional. No interpretable multidimensional structure could be obtained through forced rotations in the McCroskey and Baer (1985) study.

The above correlations and reliabilites suggest that an individual's WTC in one context or with one receiver type is highly related to her/his WTC in other contexts and with other receiver types. This does not mean, however, that individuals are equally willing to communicate in all contexts and with all types of receivers. In fact, major mean differences were observed across the sample of subjects studied on the basis of receiver type. The observed mean percentage of time people would be willing to communicate with friends was 85.5. For acquaintances and strangers the percentages were 75.0 and 41.3, respectively. Contexts produced less dramatic differences in willingness. The percentages for the contexts were as follows: dyad, 79.5; group, 73.4; meeting, 60.0; and public, 56.1. In general, the larger the number of receivers and the more distant the relationship of the individual with the receiver(s) the less willing the individual is to communicate.

The data generated by the WTC scale suggest the validity of our construct of a general predisposition toward being willing or unwilling to communicate. The scale also appears to be valid. The items clearly represent the construct as we have outlined it and the subscore correlations suggest the instrument is measuring a broadly based predisposition rather than a series of independent predispositions. Whether the WTC can be used as a valid predictor of actual communiction behavior is another question. Early results have been extremely encouraging (Chan, 1988; Chan & McCroskey, 1987; Zakahi and McCroskey, 1986). When subjects' communication behavior was observed in these studies under circumstances where they truly had free choice of whether to communicate or not, their scores on the WTC scale were highly predictive of their actual behavior. Students who had higher WTC scores talked more in class than those with lower scores and students with higher scores were more likely than students with lower scores to arrive for scheduled out-of-class appointments for research projects in which some minimal interpersonal interaction could be expected.

ANTECEDENTS OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

That there is regularity in the amount of communication behavior of an individual across situations has been clearly established in many research studies. We have posited a personality-based, cognitively mediated variable as the immediate cause of that regularity—Willingness To Communicate. The question which we will now address is why people vary in this predispositional orientation. We will refer to the variables which we believe lead to differences in WTC as "antecedents." It is likely that many of these "antecedents" develop concurrently with the WTC predisposition. Hence, it cannot be clearly established that the "antecedents" are the causes of variablity in WTC. It is more likely that these variables may be involved in mutual causality and even more likely both the "antecedents" and WTC are produced in common by other causal elements.

The antecedents which we will consider below are variables which have received considerable attention from scholars in communication and/or psychology. Each of them is of interest to scholars for a variety of reasons, only one of which is a possible relationship with WTC. The variables we will consider are introversion, self-esteem, communication competence, communication apprehension, and cultural diversity.

Introversion. The construct of extraversion-introversion has received considerable attention from scholars in psychology for several decades (eg. Eysenck, 1970; 1971). The construct postulates a continuum between extreme extraversion and extreme introversion. The nearer the individual is to the extraversion extreme, the more "people oriented" the person is likely to be. The more introverted the individual, the less need the individual feels for communication and the less value the person places on communicating. Introverts tend to be inner-directed and introspective. They tend to be less sociable and less dependent on others' evaluations than more extraverted people.

Introverts often are characterized as quiet, timid, and shy. Other things being equal, they prefer to withdraw from communication. This may stem in part from anxiety about communication. However, the relationship between introversion and communication apprehension is modest ($r = .33$, Huntley, 1969). Numerous studies have indicated a relationship between introversion and communication behaviors characteristic of people presumed to have a low WTC. For example, Carment, Miles, and Cervin (1965) found introverts participated in a small group discussion singnificantly less than extroverts and tended to speak only when spoken to rather than initiating interaction. Similarly, Borg and Tupes (1958) found introverts were significantly less likely to engage in the communication behaviors necessary to exercise leadership in small

groups than were extraverts. McCroskey & McCroskey (1986 a) found extraversion and WTC to be significantly correlated (r = .29).

Self-Esteem. A person's self-esteem is that person's evaluation of her/his own worth. If a person has low self-esteem it might be expected the person would be less willing to communicate because he/she feels he/she has little of value to offer. Similarly, the person with low self-esteem may be less willing to communicate because he/she believes others would respond negatively to what would be said. Although we believe there is good reason to consider self-esteem to be an antecedent of WTC, little research support is available which directly bears on this issue.

The only research reported to this point which provides data directly bearing on the relationship between self-esteem and WTC was provided by McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a,b). They observed a modest correlation between the two, r = .22. In an unpublished study we found self-esteem to be significantly related to amount of times people talk in a small group setting—the higher the self-esteem the more times talked. However, we also found that if the variance attributable to communication apprehension were removed first, self-esteem accounted for no significant variance in times talked. Thus, it may be that self-esteem is related to WTC but only as a function of the relationship between self-esteem and anxiety about communication, a relationship which has been found to be quite strong (McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, & Falcione, 1977).

Communication Competence. Work in the area of reticence (Phillips, 1968; 1977; 1984) leads us to believe that a major reason why some people are less willing to communicate than others is because of deficient communication skills. To be reticent is to avoid social interaction; to be reserved, to say little. It is to behave in the way exactly opposite to how one would expect a person who is willing to communicate to behave.

Early work in the area of reticence focused on the behavior as a function of anxiety about communication and was essentially similar to the work to be discussed below related to communication apprehension. The original definition of a reticent individual advanced by Phillips (1968, p. 40) was "a person for whom anxiety about participation in oral communication outweighs his projection of gain from the situation."

More recent work in this area has moved away from anxiety and chosen to focus on communication skills. Although Phillips and others working with the reticence construct do not deny that many people engage in reduced communication because they are apprehensive about communicating, they choose to focus their attention on people who may or may not be anxious but who definately are deficient in their communication skills.

Examples drawn from Phillips' (1968; 1977) work on communication skills training with reticent individuals indicate that when skills are increased WTC in contexts related to the training also increases. This reinforces our belief that for some people WTC in some contexts and/or with some receivers is reduced as a function of not knowing how to communicate. The relationship between communication skills and a general predisposition to be willing to communicate is unknown at this time. Most likely, small skill deficits would have little relationship. However, the perception of one's own skill level may be more important than the actual skill level. Hence, people with low self-esteem may see their skills as deficient and be reticent, even if their skills in reality are quite satisfactory.

Of primary concern here, then, is the way an individual perceives her/his own communication competence. As most people learn from experience, there are many incompetent communicators in the world who think they are competent and proceed to communicate much more willingly than those around them would prefer! Although probably less obvious to most people, there are also those who have quite adequate communication skills who see themselves as incompetent. Hence, they tend to be quite unwilling to communicate. Self-perceptions of competence, then, may have a strong influence on individuals' WTC.

Research to date has shown a substantial association between self-perceived communication competence and WTC. The McCroskey and McCroskey (1986 a,b) research with U.S. college students has observed a correlation between the two of .59. In their report of these results they advanced the argument that self-perceived communication competence may be more associated with both WTC and volitional communication behavior than is actual communication skill. Since the choice of whether to communicate is a cognitive one, it is likely to be more influenced by one's perceptions of competence (of which one usually is aware) than one's actual competence (of which one may be totally unaware).

Communication Apprehension. Communication apprehension (CA) is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey,1970; 1977; 1984). An individual's level of CA probably is the single best predictor of the person's WTC. The higher the CA level, the lower the level of WTC. To understand the relationship between CA and WTC, and the important distinctions between them, we need to distinguish between the internal and the external effects of CA.

Internal Effects of CA. The effects of traitlike CA have been the focus of extensive research. Much of that work has been summarized elsewhere (Daly & Stafford. 1984; McCroskey, 1977). Unfortunately,

much of the research has centered on the impact of CA on communication behaviors. This research is not completely compatible with the conceptualization of CA as a cognitively based variable. Although CA indeed may be linked with communication behavior, it can be so only through its impact on the mediating variable of WTC.

As has been noted elsewhere (McCroskey, 1984), *the only effect of CA that is predicted to be universal across both individuals and types of CA is an internally experienced feeling of discomfort.* As CA is heightened, feelings of discomfort increase and WTC is predicted to decline.

The importance of this conceptualization of CA must be emphasized. Since CA is experienced internally, the only potentially valid indicant of CA is the individual's report of that experience. Thus self-reports of individuals, whether obtained by paper-and-pencil measures or careful interviews, obtained under circumstances where the individual has nothing to gain or avoid losing by lying, provide the only potentially valid measures of CA.

CA is *not* a behavioral construct. It is a cognitive one. "Fear" and "anxiety" are labels for physiological activation applied by some people while others apply labels such as "excitement" and "anticipation" to essentially similar activation. Once the label is applied it has been found that cognitive disruption can occur in an individual without engaging in a single bit of communication behavior. Simply being alerted to future communication with another person can institute the cognitive disruption (Booth-Butterfield, 1988a,b). CA can be reduced by methods which either reduce the physiological activation (eg. systematic desensitization, McCroskey, 1972) or change the labeling (eg. cognitive restructuring, Fremouw, 1984).

CA is experienced cognitively, and the experience may or may not be manifested by changes in physiological activiation or externally observable symptoms. Hence, measures of physiological activation and observations of communication behavior can provide, at best, only indirect evidence of trait-like CA and thus are inherently inferior approaches to measuring CA. Physiological and behavioral instruments intended to measure CA must be validated with self-report measures, not the other way around. To the extent that such measures are not related to self-report measures, they must be judged invalid. Currently available data indicate that such physiological measures and behavioral observation procedures generally have low validity as measures of trait-like CA but may be somewhat more valid for measuring state CA (Clevenger, 1959; Behnke & Beatty, 1981).

External Effects of CA

As noted above, there is no single behavior that is predicted to be a universal product of varying levels of traitlike CA. Any impact of CA on behavior must be mediated by WTC in interaction with situational constraints. Nevertheless, there are some externally observable behaviors that are more likely to occur or less likely to occur as a function of varying levels of CA. Behavioral prediction from traitlike CA should only be assumed to be correct when considering aggregate behavioral indicants of the individual across time, contexts, and receivers.

Three patterns of behavioral response to high traitlike CA may be predicted to be generally applicable: communication avoidance, communication withdrawal, and communication disruption. A fourth pattern is atypical but sometimes does occur—excessive communication. Let us consider each.

When people are confronted with a circumstance they anticipate will make them uncomfortable, and they have a choice of whether or not to confront it, they may decide either to confront it and make the best of it or avoid it and thus avoid the discomfort. Some refer to this as the choice between "fight" and "flight." Research in the area of CA indicates that the latter choice should be expected in most cases. In order to avoid having to experience high CA, people may become less willing to communicate and therefore select occupations that involve low communication responsibilities, may pick housing units that reduce incidental contact with other people, may choose seats in classrooms or in meetings that are less conspicuous, and may avoid social settings. Avoidance, then, is a common behavioral response to high CA.

Avoidance of communication is not always possible no matter how high a person's level of traitlike CA or low a person's level of WTC. A person can find her/himself in a situation that demands communication with no advance warning. Under such circumstances, withdrawal from communication is the behavioral pattern to be expected. This withdrawal may be complete (absolute silence) or partial (talking only as much as absolutely required). In a public speaking setting, this response may be represented by the very short speech. In a meeting, class, or small group discussion, it may be represented by talking only when called upon. In a dyadic interaction, it may be represented by only briefly answering questions or supplying agreeing responses with no initiation of discussion.

Generally, then, verbal communication is substantially reduced when a person wishes to withdraw from communication. Nonverbal communication, on the other hand, may not be reduced but the nonverbal messages which are sent may be primarily of one type. That type is

referred to as "nonimmediate." Nonimmediate messages include such things as frowns, standing or sitting away from other people, avoiding eye contact, and standing with arms folded. These messages signal others that a person is not interested in communicating and tend to reduce communication initiation attempts from others.

Communication disruption is the third typical behavioral pattern associated with high CA. The person may have disfluencies in verbal presentation or unnatural nonverbal behaviors. Equally as likely are poor choices of communicative strategies. It is important to note, however, that such behaviors may also be produced by introversion, low self-esteem, inadequate communication skills, low self-perceived communication competence and/or cultural divergence. Thus inferring the existence of high CA from observations of such behavior often is inappropriate.

Overcommunication as a response to high traitlike CA is uncommon but does exist as a pattern exhibited by a small minority. This behavior may involve overcompensation for a person's high level of apprehension and low level of WTC. It also might represent a circumstance where a person has a high need and WTC but also has high apprehension. Willingness and apprehension are presumed to be substantially, but not perfectly, negatively correlated. Thus, this may represent the "fight" response, an attempt to communicate in spite of the presence of high apprehension. The person who elects to take a public speaking course in spite of her/his extreme stage fright is a classic example. Less easily recognizable is the individual with high CA who attempts to dominate social situations. Most of the time people who employ this behavioral option are seen as poor communicators but are not recognized as having high CA. In fact, they may be seen as people with very low CA.

Although most of the research related to CA has been done under the CA label (McCroskey, 1970; 1977; Daly & McCroskey, 1984), very similar work has been done under other labels. Some of these include "stage fright" (Clevenger, 1959), the early work on "reticence" (Phillips, 1968), "unwillingness to communicate" (Burgoon, 1976), "social anxiety" (Leary, 1983), "audience anxiety" (Buss, 1980), and "shyness" (Buss, 1980; Zimbardo, 1977).

Although there are very meaningful differences in the conceptualizations advanced under these various labels, the main differences involve the operational measures employed under each. Both subjective examination of the measures and correlational analyses (Daly, 1978), however, indicate that the measures are highly related and probably are all tapping into the same global construct.

Regardless of the operationalization of the construct, research over-

whelmingly indicates people who experience high levels of fear or anxiety about communication tend to avoid and withdraw from communication. Although not measured directly, these research results strongly suggest CA directly impacts an individual's WTC. The reported research which directly bears on this question supports the hypothesis that CA and WTC are substantially related. In the McCroskey and McCroskey (1986 a,b) research with college students the observed correlation was -.50. Similar correlations have been found for college students in Australia (r = -.49; Barraclough, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988) and Sweden (r = -.44; Daun, Burroughs, & McCroskey, 1988).

Cultural Diversity. Although communication exists in all human cultures and subcultures, communication norms are highly variable as a function of culture. Thus, one's communication norms and competencies are culture-bound. Recent studies have indicated United States college students are significantly more willing to communicate than are similar students in Australia (Barraclough, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988) and Sweden (Daun, Burroughs, & McCroskey, 1988). Such norms are reflected in what often is called the "personality" of a culture. Some cultures are seen as quiet while others are characteristically loquacious. Although mean willingness may differ substantially from culture to culture, we would still anticipate major variations among people in any given culture, no matter how homogeneous that culture might be.

In a few countries, like Japan, a single culture is almost universally dominant. In other countries, like the United States, there is a majority culture and many subcultures. These subcultures exist both as a function of geographic region and ethnicity. People from Texas and people from Maine have differing communication norms. So too do Mexican Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, Irish Americans, and so forth.

Whenever a person finds her/himself in an environment in which her/his own subculture is in a minority position compared to other people with whom he/she must communicate, that person may be described as culturally divergent. It is incumbent on the individual to adapt to the larger group's communication norms to be effective in communication in that environment. As anyone who has traveled extensively can testify, such adaptation can be very difficult or impossible to achieve.

Culturally divergent people are very similar to people who have deficient communication skills. They do not know how to communicate effectively so they tend to be much less willing to communicate at all to avoid failure and possible negative consequences. The difference between the culturally divergent and the skill deficient is that the culturally divergent individual may have excellent communication skills for one

culture but not for the other. Cultural divergence, then, is seen as being highly related to WTC if a person regularly resides in a culture different from her/his own. On the other hand, if the person communicates primarily in her/his own culture and only occasionally must do so in another culture, the impact would only be transitory and situational. Culture, of course, may have an impact on WTC beyond its direct impact and the impact resulting from an individual going from one culture to another. The relationship between WTC and its various antecedants may be substantially different in one culture than in another. This was evidenced in the previously noted studies comparing students in the U.S. with those in Australia and Sweden. The association between WTC and self-perceived communication competence was found to be .59 (R^2 = .35) in the U.S. and .57 (R^2 = .32) in Australia, but only .44 (R^2 = .19) in Sweden (Barraclaugh, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988; Daun, et al. 1988).

EFFECTS OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN COMMUNICATION

Research relating to the impact of WTC in communication has been conducted under a variety of constructs—CA, shyness, unwillingness to communicate, predisposition toward verbal behavior, talkativeness, reticence, quietness, and social anxiety, to name a few. Such research has been reported in the literature of psychology and communication for over four decades. The three basic research models that have been employed have been 1) direct observation of amount of communication with assessment of outcomes, 2) measurement of a predisposition (such as CA) which is presumed to be related to WTC, allowing communication to occur, and assessing outcomes, and 3) simulation of talkativeness variation with assessment of outcomes.

Regardless of the research model employed, the results of this research have been remarkably consistent. The general conclusion that can be drawn from this immense body of research is that reduced WTC results in an individual being less effective in communication and generating negative perceptions of him or her self in the minds of others involved in the communication.

Since this research has been thoroughly summarized (Daly & Stafford, 1984) and interpreted (Richmond, 1984) previously, we will not take the space here to repeat those efforts. Instead, we will simply draw from that work some of the conclusions that appear most obvious from the research results.

Interpersonal communication occurs primarily within three general environments—school environments, organizational environments, and

social environments. While these three environments are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive of all environments in which interpersonal communication can occur, they will suffice for our illustrative purposes here.

In the school environment students with high WTC characteristically have all the advantages, even though they may be reprimanded occasionally for communicating when they are not supposed to. Teachers have positive expectations for students who are highly willing to communicate and negative ones for those less willing. Student achievement, as measured by teacher made tests, teacher assigned grades, and standardized tests, is consistent with these expectations— in spite of the fact that intellectual ability has not been found to be associated with communication orientations.

Students who are less willing to communicate are also seen in negative ways by their peers. Such negative perceptions have been observed all the way from the lower elementary level through graduate school. Students who are willing to communicate have more friends and report being more satisfied with their school experience. With both academic achievement and social support on the side of the student who is willing to communicate, it should not be surprising that such students are more likely to remain in school and graduate than those who are less willing.

The impact of WTC in the organizational environment is no less than that in the school. People who are highly willing to communicate receive preference in the hiring process and are more likely to be promoted to positions of importance in the organization. People who are less willing to communicate tend to self-select themselves into occupational roles that insure themselves lower social status and lower economic standing. People who report higher WTC also report being more satisfied with their employment and are much more likely to remain with an organization. People with lower WTC tend to generate negative perceptions in the minds of their co-workers. They are seen as neither task attractive nor credible and are rejected for leadership positions.

On the social level, the picture is very similar. People with high WTC have more friends and are less likely to be lonely. They are likely to have more dates and to date more people than people less willing to communicate. The latter are more likely to engage in exclusive dating and to marry immediately after completing their schooling. People who are highly willing to communicate are seen as more socially and physically attractive by others, which may explain some of the other effects noted above.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The general conclusion we draw from the research and theory summarized above is that a global, personality-type orientation (WTC) exists which has a major impact on cognitive choices regarding interpersonal communication in a wide variety of environments. While WTC in a given situation can be impacted by situational constraints, trait-like WTC has potential impact in all communication settings. High willingness is associated with increased frequency and amount of communication which are associated with a wide variety of positive communication outcomes. Low willingness is associated with decreased frequency and amount of communication which are associated with a wide variety of negative outcomes.

The above conclusion appears to be true for individuals in the general American culture and highly similar cultures. It very likely is *not* true in many other cultures. Cultures vary in the degree to which they value oral communication. Authors of works on both intercultural communication (eg. Samovar & Porter, 1982; Klopf & Park, 1982; Klopf & Ishii, 1984) and nonverbal communication (eg. Burgoon & Saine, 1978; Hinde, 1972; Knapp, 1978; Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne, 1987) have tended to focus their attention on the nonverbal aspects of communication in intercultural contexts. For the most part differences in verbal communication between cultures have been left to the concern of linguists. Differences in the *amount* of verbal communication have received comparatively little attention from either group.

The view taken here is that the most basic difference in communication patterns between cultures may indeed be the amount of verbal communication which is preferred and the circumstances calling for talk as opposed to those which call for silence. A primary direction for future research in the WTC area is in the intercultural arena. With the global expansion of business, government, and other intercultural contacts, the need for people able to communicate effectively in multicultural settings has far outstriped academia's output of knowledge needed in this area, to say nothing of its output of people with command of that knowledge. The impact of willingness to communicate within the general American culture is now fairly well understood, although additional research in this area certainly is needed. Comparable knowledge concerning other cultures, for the most part, is virtually nonexistent. Filling this void should be the primary concern for scholars interested in conducting research in this area.

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