

Goodwill: A Reexamination of the Construct and its Measurement

James C. McCroskey and Jason J. Teven

As a result of the controversy over the dimensionality of the ethos/source credibility construct and the associated plethora of empirical studies in the 1960s and 1970s, Aristotle's dimension of "goodwill" has been dismissed by many contemporary theorists and researchers. It is argued that this occurred as a result of errors made in the earlier empirical research and that "goodwill" can be measured, contrary to earlier claims, and should be restored to its former status in rhetorical communication theory. Empirical research is reported indicating the existence of the goodwill dimension as part of the structure of the ethos/source credibility construct and a measure of that dimension is provided with evidence for its reliability and validity. **Key words:** Ethos, Source Credibility, Caring, Goodwill

A central aspect of the study of persuasion and social influence from classical times to the present has been the image of the source in the minds of receivers. Aristotle referred to this image as the source's *ethos* and suggested that it was the source's most potent means of persuasion (Cooper, 1932). The Yale Group (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) echoed Aristotle's view in arguing that *source credibility*, their term for the source's image, was a central aspect in the persuasive effectiveness of any communicator.

Rationale

Early (Andersen & Clevenger, 1963; Haiman, 1948; Walter, 1948) and more recent (McCroskey, 1997; Self, 1996) summaries of empirical research consistently have found the research to be supportive of the theoretical central role played by ethos/credibility in persuasive discourse. Messages are interpreted and evaluated through the filter of the receiver's perceptions of the message's source. No message is received independently from its source or presumed source (McCroskey, 1997).

While the importance of ethos or source credibility is not controversial, the nature of this perception has become so. Aristotle envisioned ethos as composed of three elements: intelligence, character, and goodwill. Similarly, Hovland et. al. (1953) saw source credibility as composed of three elements: expertness, trustworthiness, and intention toward the receiver. Various other writers have used different terms, but generally theorists have agreed that there is a dimension which can be referenced as "competence" (qualification, expertness, intelligence, authoritativeness) and one which can be referenced as "trustworthiness" (character, sagacity, safety, honesty). The third dimension, "goodwill" or "intent toward receiver," has become the "lost dimension" of ethos/credibility. As a result, it is being ignored by many contemporary researchers and some theorists, a circumstance which we consider unfortunate. We believe this theoretical shift has come as a function of misanalysis and/or misinterpretation of data in a wide variety of empirical studies.

James C. McCroskey is a Professor of Communication Studies at West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506-6293. Jason J. Teven is an Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, Northwest Missouri State University. An earlier version of this paper was presented on a program of the Rhetorical & Communication Theory Division at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, Chicago, November, 1997.

The Factor Analytic Revolution

From the mid-1960s to the early 1980s considerable research effort went into development of instruments to measure ethos/credibility (Appelbaum & Anatol, 1973; Bandhuim & Davis, 1972; Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1971; Falcione, 1974; McCroskey, 1966; McCroskey & Jenson, 1975; McCroskey & Young, 1981; Tuppen, 1974; Whitehead, 1968). These generally either presumed there were the three traditional theoretical dimensions or were purely exploratory studies which determined the number of dimensions in their data through characteristic interpretations of factor analytic results. In most of these studies dimensions which could be labeled "competence" and "trustworthiness" (or similar titles) were observed, but in none was there a dimension observed which could be labeled appropriately as "goodwill" or "intent toward receiver."

There were also two studies (Markham, 1968; Norman, 1963) which explored the dimensionality of general person perception based on the "meaning measurement" approach of Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957). These studies ignored traditional theory related to ethos and source credibility and included large numbers of items which were not even remotely related to this theoretical construct.

While these studies were valuable for the purpose of measuring person perception, they were drawn upon by several of the researchers studying ethos/credibility and resulted in numerous "new dimensions" of credibility being "discovered." As noted by McCroskey and Young (1981) these were not dimensions of credibility at all, but rather dimensions of person perception. This led McCroskey and Young to conclude that while there are three theoretical dimensions of credibility, when subjected to factor analytic techniques only two survive, with the third (goodwill) being subsumed under the other two (for a complete analysis of this body of research, see McCroskey & Young, 1981).

In our view, McCroskey and Young's analysis of the factor analytic research was correct as far as it went. That is, additional factor analyses alone are not likely to resolve the question of the dimensionality of the ethos/credibility construct. The ethos/credibility construct has three dimensions and for two of those satisfactory measures have been developed. Additional factor analyses of person-perception measures will not add useful information for the ethos/credibility arena.

Clearly, the traditional ethos/credibility theories have not been replaced by better theories. There is no valid reason to discard the theory that there are three salient dimensions of ethos/credibility. Our only problem is that contemporary researchers have not yet been able to develop a measure of the goodwill dimension which is distinct from the other dimensions of ethos/credibility. As McCroskey and Young (1981) noted, careful reconceptualization was needed prior to additional efforts to develop a new credibility measure which would have a distinct goodwill dimension. In this paper we will argue that this reconceptualization has now been completed and acceptable measures have been developed which tap the goodwill dimension.

The Perceived Caring Construct

The "perceived caring" construct was advanced by McCroskey in 1992. It was advanced as a component of his theoretical work related to the role and impact of students' perceptions of their teachers in communication in the instructional environment. He acknowledges that this conceptualization is based on both his own

research in this communication context and the traditional "goodwill" and "intent-toward-receiver" conceptualizations. He summarizes the construct as follows:

Both the goodwill and intention-toward-receiver conceptualizations are represented in the current "caring" construct. We certainly are going to listen more attentively to a person who we believe has our best interests at heart than to one who we think might be wanting to put one over on us. But the caring construct does not suggest the opposite of caring is malicious intent. It is just indifference. Thus it is not likely the student will automatically reject what the teacher says if he or she is being treated like a number. Rather, such treatment is just as likely to make the student more suspicious of the teacher's motives. Teachers do not have to be devoted to their students in order for the students to learn. But if the teacher engages in behaviors that communicate such positive intent to the student, it is likely the student will engage in more effort to learn what that teacher is trying to teach. (pp. 110-111)

Goodwill, or perceived caring, is seen then as a means of opening communication channels more widely. McCroskey (1992) suggests that three elements may result in a person being seen as more caring: understanding, empathy, and responsiveness.

Understanding. Understanding is knowing another person's ideas, feelings, and needs. Some people seem to "get the point" when we communicate with them. They seem to know what we are talking about, what we are thinking. Others seem to be less sensitive to our communication. They do not recognize it when our feelings are hurt, when we have a problem, or when we need their help. When we see someone exhibiting behaviors which tell us they understand our concerns, we feel closer to them because we think they care about us.

Empathy. Empathy has been defined in many ways. In McCroskey's (1992) view empathy is one person's identification with another person's feelings. This involves behaviors indicating that one person not only understands the other's views but accepts them as valid views, even if he or she does not agree with those views. When we see someone exhibiting such goodwill toward us we feel closer to them because we perceive them as caring about us.

Responsiveness. Responsiveness involves one person acknowledging another person's communicative attempts. Responsiveness is judged by how quickly one person reacts to the communication of another, how attentive they are to the other, and the degree to which they appear to listen to the other. We tend to see people who behave responsively toward us as caring about us.

In our view the perceived caring construct represents a contemporary (contextualized) reconceptualization of the classic "goodwill" and "intent-toward-receiver" conceptualizations. It does not represent the advancement of a new construct, but rather it serves the function of enabling us to see the older conceptualizations in a new light. It answers McCroskey and Young's (1981) call for additional conceptualization prior to returning to the question of measurement.

Measurement of Perceived Caring

The perceived-caring construct has led to two successful measurement efforts. Koehn and Crowell (1996) have reported development of a Likert-type scale to measure perceived caring with an Alpha reliability estimate above .90. Teven and McCroskey (1997), similarly, have reported development of a ten-item bipolar scaling instrument to measure perceived caring. It also had an Alpha reliability

estimate above .90. The concurrent validity of the two instruments was reported by Teven and McCroskey (1997) to be .86.

In the Teven and McCroskey (1997) study measures of students' perceptions of their teachers "competence" and "trustworthiness" were also obtained. The items in these two measures, along with the items of the perceived caring measure, were subjected to oblique factor analysis. The results indicated the presence of the three presumed factors with all of the items on each factor loading on the correct factor (.50 or above) with high (.60 to .63) intercorrelations among the factors. These results suggest the presence of one larger construct (ethos/credibility) with three subconstructs or dimensions (competence, trustworthiness, goodwill/caring). These results are consistent with the traditional view of ethos/credibility and, if found to generalize across communication contexts (beyond just the instructional context examined by Teven & McCroskey, 1997) would provide confirmation for the traditional theory and the presence of measures which could be employed in future research involving the theory.

Prior to launching a research effort to test the generalizability of the Teven & McCroskey results, we carefully examined some available data sets which included measurement of competence and trustworthiness. In several cases, other measures were also available (such as composure and extroversion or dynamism) which had been generated in earlier factor-analytic studies of ethos/credibility. These examinations provided two clear patterns. First, when competence and trustworthiness were measured, they regularly loaded together on the first factor of an unrotated factor analysis, but could be forced into two factors by rotation. Second, when other measures (composure, dynamism) were measured, they *did not* load on the first factor of an unrotated factor analysis with competence and trustworthiness. When rotated they maintained their independence from competence and trustworthiness.

These examinations of available data present results consistent with the arguments advanced by McCroskey and Young (1981)—although the data they reported were no longer available for reanalysis. That is, the items measuring credibility (competence and trustworthiness) regularly group together in factor analyses prior to rotation, but the items measuring other person perceptions do not group together on the same unrotated factor. This would suggest, then, that ethos/credibility is a single construct with an unknown number of subconstructs. Items measuring that construct should group together prior to rotation in a factor analysis, but separate into multiple factors when a rotation is forced. If, then, items measuring goodwill/caring are tapping into the larger ethos/credibility construct they should load with competence and trustworthiness items in an unrotated factor analysis but form a factor of their own when a three-factor rotation is forced. This was the pattern found in the Teven and McCroskey (1997) study, which may be taken as a post hoc pilot study for the current research.

The Current Study. The current study sought to determine whether the results obtained in the Teven and McCroskey (1997) "pilot" study could be replicated beyond the context of communication in instruction. We chose to examine several contexts in which ethos/credibility have been studied previously: political sources, public sources, and interpersonal sources. Our first two research questions dealt with the potential replication of results of the pilot study:

RQ₁. Do items measuring perceived caring/goodwill load on the first unrotated factor along with items measuring competence and character?

RQ₂. Do items measuring competence, character, and caring/goodwill form three distinct factors when a three-factor rotation is forced?

The present study also sought to examine the comparative importance of the ethos/credibility dimensions. This effort presumed the first two research questions would be answered in the affirmative, either in part or wholly, and attempted to answer the "So what?" question. Does isolating and measuring the "lost dimension" of ethos/credibility have any practical payoff? To do this we chose to measure what we saw to be two important outcomes of being perceived as having high ethos/credibility—that one would be seen as more believable and/or more likeable. The former of these is presumably very important for political figures and others whom we are not likely to know on the personal level, and the latter is presumably very important in our every day personal and organizational lives (the two were found to be highly correlated in the present study, $r = .76$). The following research questions were posed:

RQ₃. To what extent does perceived caring/goodwill contribute to the predictability of a source's believability?

RQ₄. To what extent does perceived caring/goodwill contribute to the predictability of a source's likeableness?

Procedures

Participants in this study were 783 undergraduate students enrolled in three sections of a lower-division, mass-lecture course in Communication Studies at a large Eastern university. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Each participant responded to a questionnaire concerning one (see below) identified or described communication source.¹ There were 390 participants who indicated they were males, 388 females, and nine who did not respond to this question. The average age of the participants was 19.4 years, with a range of 17–40. The modal age was 19.

Sources

A total of ten sources were selected as stimulus objects. Approximately half of these were individuals with whom the participants would not likely have interacted, but would have served as a receiver to their communication—in short, these were "public communication" sources. The remainder of the sources were people with whom the participant definitely would have interacted. Both types were chosen with an eye toward the perceived probability that the participants would be able to identify and respond to the person named or described and that there would be wide variability in how the participants were likely to respond to the source to which they were assigned. Three types of sources were selected.

Political Figures. The three political figures selected were Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Newt Gingrich. In previous classes with undergraduates from this same population, virtually every student indicated their familiarity with these three individuals. A total of 225 participants responded to one of these sources.

Public Figures. These sources were intended to be well-known people that the students would not be likely to know personally but probably had heard a lot about or seen them in public or media settings. The sources selected were Rush Limbaugh, Madonna, and the lecturer in the course they were taking. Because of the structure of

Measure of Ethos/Credibility

Instructions: Please indicate your impression of the person noted below by circling the appropriate number between the pairs of adjectives below. The closer the number is to an adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <u>Competence</u> | Intelligent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Unintelligent |
| | Untrained | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Trained |
| | Inexpert | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Expert |
| | Informed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Uninformed |
| | Incompetent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Competent |
| | Bright | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Stupid |
| <u>Goodwill</u> | Cares about me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Doesn't care about me |
| | Has my interests at heart | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Doesn't have my interests at heart |
| | Self-centered | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Not self-centered |
| | Concerned with me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Unconcerned with me |
| | Insensitive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Sensitive |
| | Not understanding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Understanding |
| <u>Trustworthiness</u> | Honest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Dishonest |
| | Untrustworthy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Trustworthy |
| | Honorable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Dishonorable |
| | Moral | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Immoral |
| | Unethical | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Ethical |
| | Phoney | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Genuine |

FIGURE 1

the course, it was estimated that not more than 5 percent of the students had ever talked to the lecturer personally, but they were very familiar with him via his presentational style in the class. Hence, we believed he fit, for these students, the model of a "public figure" more than any teacher would with whom the student had an interpersonal relationship. A total of 234 participants responded to one of these sources.

Interpersonal Contacts. The four interpersonal contact sources employed were not identified by name. Rather, they were described in terms of their relationship to the participant in the study. Hence, each participant was presumed to be responding to a different source, although there could have been some replications. The interpersonal contacts employed were (1) your roommate, (2) the person you dated just before the person you are dating now, (3) the supervisor you had on your last job, and (4) the person you work for now. A total of 324 participants responded to one of these sources.

For the primary data analyses, the data from all of the 10 sources were combined. However, some sub-analyses examined the data from the three categories separately.

Generalized Belief Measure

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which the statement below represents what you believe by the appropriate number between the pairs of adjectives which follow the statement. The closer the number is to an adjective, the more certain you are of your belief.

Statement: _____

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree
 False 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 True
 Incorrect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Correct
 Wrong 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Right
 Yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No

FIGURE 2

Measurement

Ethos/Credibility. The presumed three dimensions of ethos/credibility were each measured with six bipolar adjective items (See Figure 1). The six items chosen for the competence measure were selected from the earlier factor-analytic studies on the basis of their consistently high loadings on this factor. The six items chosen for the trustworthiness measure were also selected from the earlier factor-analytic studies, with an eye particularly toward the face validity of the items a being highly related to honesty. Because in several of the studies there were dimensions referred to as "character" and "sociability" which sometimes collapsed into one, items which seemed to measure "niceness" rather than trustworthiness were not selected. The six items chosen for the goodwill dimension were the best items from the perceived caring measure developed by Teven and McCroskey (1997). The Alpha reliabilities for these measures employing the complete sample were: Competence, .85; Trustworthiness, .92; and Goodwill, .92. When all three were scored as a single measure of ethos/credibility, the Alpha reliability was .94. The correlations of the dimension scores with the overall credibility score were: Competence, .78; Trustworthiness, .92; and Goodwill, .89.

Believability and likeableness. The Generalized Belief Measure (GBM; McCroskey & Richmond, 1996) was used to measure perceptions of both believability and likeableness. This scale employs five bipolar adjective scales which focus on the degree to which someone accepts a statement as representing an acceptable belief (see Figure 2). For the measure of believability, the participants were instructed as follows:

"On the scales below, please indicate the degree to which you believe the person named previously is *believable*."

For the measure of likeableness, the term *likeable* was substituted for *believable*. The Alpha reliability for the GBM in each application was .95. This is consistent with the reliabilities observed in previous research employing the instrument.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND RANGES OF MEASURES

| Measure | Mean | S.D. | Score Range |
|-------------------|------|------|-------------|
| Believability | 24.2 | 8.0 | 5-35 |
| Likeableness | 25.0 | 8.1 | 5-35 |
| Goodwill | 24.7 | 9.6 | 6-42 |
| Trustworthiness | 28.5 | 9.1 | 6-42 |
| Competence | 30.6 | 7.3 | 6-42 |
| Ethos/Credibility | 83.8 | 22.6 | 18-126 |

Data Analyses

The first two research questions inquire about the structure of the measure of ethos/credibility. Since it was anticipated that the three dimensions of the measure would be substantially inter-correlated (and this was confirmed in preliminary analyses), it was appropriate that these data be factor analyzed and subjected to oblique factor rotation. Analyses employing the entire data set were conducted first, followed by analyses of the data sets associated with the different categories of sources. The unrotated factor analyses were examined to answer the first research question, and the oblique rotations were examined to answer the second research question.

To answer the third and fourth research questions, simple correlations were first computed to determine the general association between goodwill (and the other ethos/credibility dimension scores) and the criterion variables. Subsequently, multiple correlation analyses involving all three ethos/credibility measures predicting believability and likeableness, respectively, were computed and supplemented by decomposition analyses to identify sources and degrees of colinearity in the prediction of these variables.

Results

Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine whether the amount of variability in source inductions actually produced the variability in responses intended. Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and score ranges for the combined data set. In all cases the means were in the moderate to high moderate range and all of the standard deviations represented at least one scale unit on the measure. Every observed score range was consistent with the maximum range possible. Table 2 reports the means on the three ethos/credibility sub-scores and the criterion measures for each source. As was expected the mean scores for the various sources varied widely. The lowest means were recorded for Gingrich on believability and likeableness, while the lowest means on goodwill and trustworthiness were recorded for Madonna. The lowest mean recorded for competence was associated with the participant's last dating partner. The highest means on all variables were recorded for Neupauer, the course lecturer. It is apparent that the desired variability was introduced in this study.

The results of the unrotated factor analyses (first factor only) are reported in Table 3. Separate analyses were done for the three source categories (political figures, public figures, and interpersonal contacts) as well as a combined analysis which included data from all three categories. The results of the analyses were remarkably

TABLE 2
MEAN SCORES FOR SOURCE INDUCTIONS

| Source | Believability | Likeableness | Goodwill | Trustworthiness | Competence |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| Carter | 24.0 | 24.4 | 24.6 | 29.4 | 30.6 |
| Clinton | 22.3 | 22.4 | 24.2 | 26.5 | 30.4 |
| Gingrich | 18.9 | 17.8 | 18.7 | 23.1 | 27.9 |
| Limbaugh | 21.0 | 19.7 | 18.6 | 24.9 | 29.3 |
| Madonna | 20.9 | 23.9 | 15.7 | 22.0 | 31.4 |
| Course Instructor | 30.8 | 31.7 | 31.5 | 34.9 | 36.8 |
| Roommate | 25.6 | 26.9 | 28.2 | 30.4 | 28.4 |
| Last Date | 23.5 | 27.4 | 28.3 | 28.5 | 26.9 |
| Supervisor--Past | 27.5 | 27.6 | 29.2 | 32.9 | 33.0 |
| Supervisor--Now | 26.2 | 26.3 | 26.8 | 30.6 | 31.3 |

TABLE 3
FACTOR ANALYSES: UNROTATED FIRST FACTORS*

| Item | Data Set | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| | Total Set | Political Figures | Public Figures | Interpersonal Contacts |
| C1 | .61 | .54 | .70 | .65 |
| C2 | .41 | .42 | .53 | .38 |
| C3 | .52 | .55 | .56 | .54 |
| C4 | .46 | .51 | .52 | .46 |
| C5 | .65 | .63 | .71 | .66 |
| C6 | .67 | .64 | .80 | .63 |
| G7 | .72 | .66 | .77 | .70 |
| G8 | .73 | .70 | .76 | .70 |
| G9 | .67 | .69 | .70 | .64 |
| G10 | .74 | .74 | .77 | .70 |
| G11 | .78 | .79 | .77 | .78 |
| G12 | .80 | .81 | .81 | .79 |
| T13 | .69 | .74 | .62 | .71 |
| T14 | .82 | .83 | .82 | .79 |
| T15 | .82 | .83 | .77 | .83 |
| T16 | .77 | .78 | .77 | .78 |
| T17 | .74 | .76 | .70 | .77 |
| T18 | .79 | .82 | .77 | .77 |
| Eigenvalue 1 st Factor | 9.2 | 9.3 | 9.7 | 9.0 |
| Eigenvalue 2 nd Factor | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 1.5 |
| Kaiser MSA | .94 | .92 | .94 | .93 |

*All items have their highest loading on first factor in all data sets.

similar. In all three analyses, all 18 items had their highest loading on the first unrotated factor (hence secondary loadings are not reported). In all cases the Kaiser (1970) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) was above .90 for the data set, indicating a very sufficient sample. In addition, within all data sets, the MSA was above .90 for each individual item on the measure. The Eigenvalues in the three analyses were very similar, indicating that from 50 to 54 percent of the total variability in participant responses across the various sources was accounted for just by the first factor. The Eigenvalues for the second factor were comparatively low, between 1.2 and 1.8. The Eigenvalues for the remaining factors were all below 1.0.

These results suggest the presence of a very powerful first factor, which we could label the "ethos" or "source credibility" factor. Given the fact that all items in all analyses had their highest loading on the first factor, we would not normally see a

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TABLE 4

OBLIQUE (PROMAX) ROTATED FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR TOTAL DATA SET**

| Item | Factor | | |
|------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | 1 (Goodwill) | 2 (Trustworthiness) | 3 (Competence) |
| C1 | .40 | .55 | .77* |
| C2 | .22 | .28 | .55* |
| C3 | .32 | .46 | .71* |
| C4 | .24 | .36 | .67* |
| C5 | .46 | .57 | .70* |
| C6 | .43 | .51 | .74* |
| G7 | .83* | .52 | .37 |
| G8 | .80* | .54 | .39 |
| G9 | .62* | .61 | .31 |
| G10 | .82* | .52 | .40 |
| G11 | .87* | .64 | .39 |
| G12 | .80* | .67 | .49 |
| T13 | .50 | .78* | .47 |
| T14 | .61 | .82* | .52 |
| T15 | .60 | .90* | .55 |
| T16 | .52 | .85* | .56 |
| T17 | .58 | .77* | .56 |
| T18 | .64 | .77* | .50 |
| Eigenvalue | 4.0 | 3.8 | 3.2 |

*Primary loading.

**Interfactor Correlations: $r_{12} = .64$; $r_{13} = .45$; $r_{23} = .60$.

need for performing a rotation analysis. However, since the second research question inquired whether we could generate a viable three-factor solution with the goodwill items forming their own factor, we forced a three-factor oblique (Promax) rotation on the combined data set. These results are reported in Table 4. Analyses for the subsamples were also computed, but since they produced results so similar to those of the combined data set they will not be reported here.

As noted in Table 4, the three factors which were generated were the anticipated dimensions of goodwill, trustworthiness, and competence. All of the items had their highest loading on the expected factor, and all of the loadings were substantial. In oblique analyses secondary loadings are often much higher than in orthogonal analyses, since the factors are permitted to be correlated. The present factors were substantially correlated, and this is reflected in secondary loadings. It is clear that most of the items, although measuring what they are intended to measure best, also measure to varying extents the other dimensions as well. The amount of variance attributed to the goodwill and trustworthiness factors was about the same, and both were a bit more predictive than competence. Together, they accounted for approximately 61 percent of the variance in participants' responses. This compares favorably with the 51 percent accounted for by the first unrotated factor in the analysis of the total set data. These results provide substantial justification for those who would prefer to treat ethos/credibility as three-dimensional rather than unidimensional.

The third and fourth research questions were addressed by correlational analyses. The simple and multiple correlations between the predictor and criterion variables are reported in Table 5. The correlations of the total score (sum of the three dimension scores) with the criterion variables were very similar to the multiple correlations based on the three dimension scores. In terms of ability of the dimension scores individually to predict believability, the trustworthiness scores were the

TABLE 5

SIMPLE AND MULTIPLE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ETHOS/CREDIBILITY SCORES AND CRITERION VARIABLES

| Criterion Variable | Multiple Correlations | Simple Correlations | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| | | Total Score | Goodwill | Trustworthiness | Competence |
| Believability | .86 | .84 | .71 | .84 | .61 |
| Likeableness | .77 | .77 | .70 | .73 | .55 |

TABLE 6

COMMONALITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY TABLE FOR BELIEVABILITY

| Unique and Common Effects | Goodwill | Trustworthiness | Competence |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| (G) Unique to Goodwill | .01 | — | — |
| (T) Unique to Trustworthiness | — | .15 | — |
| (C) Unique to Competence | — | — | .01 |
| G & T | .21 | .21 | — |
| G & C | — | — | — |
| T & C | — | .08 | .08 |
| G & T & C | .28 | .28 | .28 |
| Total Variance Accounted For | .50 | .72 | .37 |

TABLE 7

COMMONALITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY TABLE FOR LIKEABLENESS

| Unique and Common Effects | Goodwill | Trustworthiness | Competence |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| (G) Unique to Goodwill | .05 | — | — |
| (T) Unique to Trustworthiness | — | .05 | — |
| (C) Unique to Competence | — | — | .01 |
| G & T | .20 | .20 | — |
| G & C | — | — | — |
| T & C | — | .04 | .04 |
| G & T & C | .25 | .25 | .25 |
| Total Variance Accounted For | .50 | .54 | .30 |

most useful. Goodwill was less predictive and competence much less predictive. In terms of ability to predict likeableness, trustworthiness and goodwill were about equally predictive, with competence much less predictive.

The comparative power of these three predictors is clarified even more by the commonality analyses of the multiple correlations. Commonality analysis is employed in order to decompose the multiple correlations in regression analysis into their unique and colinear components (Seibold & McPhee, 1979). As noted in Tables 6 and 7, while all three of the dimensions provided some unique predictive power for both believability and likeableness, the largest portion of the variance in both believability and likeableness was a colinear function of all three predictors—28 percent for believability and 25 percent for likeableness. The next largest predictable portion of the variance (21 percent for believability and 20 percent for likeableness) was a colinear function of goodwill and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness could uniquely predict 15 percent of the variance in believability and both goodwill and trustworthiness could uniquely predict 5 percent of the variance in likeableness. Trustworthiness and competence joined together to predict 8 percent of the colinear variance in believability and 4 percent in likeableness. While alone

only trustworthiness could predict a meaningful amount of unique variance in believability, and only goodwill and trustworthiness could account for a meaningful amount of unique variance in likeableness, far and away the most predictable variance was colinear variance involving all three ethos/credibility dimensions.

Conclusions

This research was designed to investigate four research questions. The first two were concerned with the place of perceived caring/goodwill within the context of traditional theory of ethos/source credibility. We argued that the perceived-caring, goodwill, and intent-toward-receiver constructs were, for all intents and purposes, isomorphic constructs. Hence, we believed that goodwill, as measured by the instrument previously developed to measure perceived caring, would be highly associated with other measures of the ethos/source credibility construct, namely competence and trustworthiness.

A previous study (Teven & McCroskey, 1997) served as a pilot for this research. The results of that study indicated that, within the context of communication in instruction, the items on their perceived caring scale joined the items which have been found to measure competence and trustworthiness to form a strong first factor on an unrotated factor analysis, yet formed a separate factor when the factor analysis was rotated to produce three factors. These results were replicated here with data from a much larger sample of communication source types and participant respondents. In this research, the Teven and McCroskey (1997) results were replicated for three different types of communication sources, and well as for the combined data set. We believe the best interpretation of these results is that goodwill is indeed a component of the ethos/source credibility construct, as argued by both Aristotle and the Yale Group, and that the measure employed in this study is a satisfactory measure of that component of the construct.

Our third and fourth research questions inquired as to whether goodwill, if isolated by our measure, would make any difference in the prediction of believability and/or likeableness. Since most of the predictable variance in both criterion variables came as colinearity among the three ethos/source credibility predictors, one might argue that no one dimension is particularly important. However, all make some unique contribution, and the least of contributions appears to be from competence, not goodwill. Hence, we conclude that goodwill is indeed a meaningful predictor of believability and likeableness and should take its place in the conceptual and operational future of communication research dealing with ethos and source credibility.

Since most of the predictable variance in the criterion variables studied here came as a function of the colinear relationship among the three credibility dimensions, and the case for a single factor structure was found to be strong, it would be tempting to simply sum all of the items in the instrument and use that as the measure of credibility. However, since it was found that each of the sub-dimensions accounted for significant variance as unique predictors, as well as colinear predictors when paired, we believe the argument calling for working with the three dimension scores as the operationalization of credibility would be the most positive alternative.

While examination of the goodwill conceptualization and operationalization was the primary purpose of this research, the results of this work also speak to the

operationalization of believability and likeableness. Often research on ethos/source credibility defines that construct in essence as "believability." Based on the results of this work, particularly given the extremely high reliability of the operationalizations of both believability and likeableness, we suggest that if economy of measurement is an issue (such as in many field studies), the operationalizations employed here for these variables should be considered by future researchers.

Note

¹Each participant was asked to respond to only a single source so that respondent-based correlations among responses were not introduced into the data set. Such correlated responses could artificially produce factor structures which would be consistent across source-types. The dimensionality of constructs such as credibility is presumed to apply across sources and types of sources. However, any single source (such as Richard Nixon, a source used in much previous research) will produce unique response patterns which may be uncharacteristic of the larger construct. For the purpose of this study, since it was concerned with the larger construct, it was desirable to introduce wide variance in sources to test whether the measure of the construct produced similar factor structures for different types of sources. While it would be appropriate to analyze these data with confirmatory procedures, the unrotated analyses (see Table 3) produced such extremely similar results that use of those procedures clearly was unnecessary in this instance.

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