

Ethnocentrism and Trait Communication Apprehension as Predictors of Interethnic Communication Apprehension and Use of Relational Maintenance Strategies in Interethnic Communication

Mary C. Toale and James C. McCroskey

The first of two studies investigated the differences between reported relational maintenance strategy usage by high and low interethnic communication apprehensives (IECAs). An instrument based on Canary and Stafford's (1992) relational maintenance strategies taxonomy and Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997a) Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) was employed. The results indicated that individuals who were low IECAs reported utilizing significantly more of the task, network, and positivity strategies. Differences in openness and assurance strategies followed the same pattern but were not significant. The participant's reported usage and IECA score were inversely related. The second study replicated the first and explored two theoretical explanations for the results. This study revealed significant differences on all of the dimensions and significant negative correlations. This study also examined whether trait communication apprehension (disregarding ethnicity) and/or ethnocentrism (the presumed foundational components of IECA) could account for the differences in reports of relational communication behavior. The results of the second study indicated that both trait CA and ethnocentrism contributed to the prediction of IECA and to overall reported strategy usage, and that ethnocentrism was the better predictor.

KEY CONCEPTS ethnocentrism, relational maintenance, interethnic communication, communication apprehension

Mary C. Toale (Ed.D., West Virginia University, 2001) is an Assistant Professor, Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, OH. **James C. McCroskey** (Ed.D., Pennsylvania State University, 1966) is a Professor, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. The results of this study were presented at the 2000 annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Seattle, WA (Top paper in Communication Apprehension and Avoidance Commission).

Within the general U.S. society there are more opportunities than ever before to communicate with persons from different ethnic backgrounds. These opportunities exist for a number of reasons. People across the U.S. are more mobile than ever before. This mobility allows individuals to interact with and develop relationships with persons of different ethnicities. Geographical relocation places individuals in areas that may increase the proximity between the individual and those of different backgrounds. Also, persons around the world are utilizing the Internet to communicate globally. With the rise in mobility and Internet usage, there is a need to study interethnic (IE) communication (Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Dodd, 1998).

DEFINITIONS AND RATIONALE

Culture

Ting-Toomey and Chung (1996) defined culture as "a meaning system that is shared by a majority of individuals in a particular community" (p. 237). Cross-cultural comparisons are investigations of communication variables within a specific culture that are compared to those in other cultures. Cross-cultural refers to theoretical/research work that is comparative in nature (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996), whereas the limited number of interethnic investigations focuses on the communication behaviors of persons interacting from different ethnic backgrounds within the same general culture.

Ethnicity

The lack of research involving communication between people of different ethnic backgrounds calls for further exploration of these variables. Dodd (1998) defines interethnic communication as "communication between two or more persons from different ethnic backgrounds" (p. 12). Interethnic relationships are relationships that involve persons who identify themselves as coming from different ethnic backgrounds. Martin and Nakayama (1997) defined ethnic identity as "a set of ideas about one's own ethnic group membership. Ethnic identity is having a sense of belonging to a particular group and knowing something about the shared experience of the group. For some U.S. residents, ethnicity is a specific and relevant construct and for others it is a vague concept" (p. 74).

Ethnicity may be considered as self-perceived. If individuals report being from a particular ethnic background, then for all intents and purposes they are. People differ in their definitions of ethnicity because "identities are dynamic and are created by the self and others in relation to group membership" (Martin & Nakayama, 1997, p. 88). In other words, a person can be from the general American culture, but may identify him or herself as a specific ethnicity (e.g. Irish American, Italian American, African American, etc).

Cross-Ethnic Comparisons

Extant research indicates that different communication behaviors are utilized by different ethnic backgrounds. For example, Martin, Hecht, and Larkey (1994) found differences between conversational improvement strategy usage and communication issues for African and European Americans. There were also differences found in the report of information requesting strategies (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990 & 1992; Kim & Wilson, 1994). Hecht, Larkey, and Johnson (1992) found that African American and

European Americans interpreted their satisfaction with interethnic interactions at differing levels.

Communication Apprehension Across Cultures

There have also been distinctions found among cultures on communication apprehension (CA) in a number of studies (e.g., Fayer, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1984; McCroskey, Fayer, & Richmond, 1985; McCroskey, Gudykunst, & Nishida, 1985). McCroskey (1977) defined communication apprehension as an individual's fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others. Since the conceptualization of CA, there has been an abundance of research conducted on CA and related communication avoidance behaviors (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997a). (For more information see Daly, McCroskey, Ayres, Hopf, & Ayres, 1997).

Klopf (1997) noted that comparisons of CA across cultures have been made from Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Micronesia, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United States in the past 10-15 years. A few key points from Klopf's summary are relevant to the current investigation. Klopf pointed out that there were differences in how CA levels were viewed in different cultures. In some cultures, silence is more acceptable than talking. This could be one reason why cross-cultural CA research is comparatively rare (Klopf, 1997). He also noted that there has not been a test of interethnic relationships and an individual's level of CA. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) noted that cross-cultural studies have "focused on the problem of CA within individual, but different, cultures" (p. 147). As noted, research has been conducted making cross-cultural comparisons, but there has been a lack of investigation into interethnic communication apprehension (IECA).

Interethnic Communication Apprehension

Interethnic communication apprehension was defined by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people from different groups, especially different . . . ethnic groups" (p. 147). Recently, Neuliep and McCroskey developed a scale, the Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA), to specifically test an individual's interethnic communication apprehension. This scale was developed as a way to investigate interethnic contacts as a context for CA similar to the four contexts in the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) (i.e., dyadic, group, meeting, and public). This context is somewhat different from the ones represented in the PRCA-24 in that it was thought probable that ethnocentrism as well as trait communication apprehension would contribute to apprehension.

Not everyone in any one culture or from any one ethnic background behaves the same way. Differences exist within cultures on a variety of communication variables stemming from both individual differences and, presumably, because of ethnic differences. The probability of communication variations created by divergent ethnic backgrounds warrants the investigation of IECA. The ways in which a person communicates with or maintains a relationship with a person from a different ethnic background may vary according to the person's background. According to Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Chua (1988), "Communication and culture reciprocally influence each other. The culture from which individuals come affects the way they communicate, and the way individuals communicate can change the culture they share" (p. 17).

Researchers share the idea that culture, and therefore ethnicity, influences communication (Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Dodd, 1998; Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988). According to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1996), articulation and development of comprehensive theories of interpersonal communication that cut across ethnic and cultural boundaries are necessary. The scale that Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) developed can aid researchers to investigate IECA. Martin and Nakayama (1997) asserted that interethnic relationships may take more nurturing and thus, more studies are needed to investigate these relationships. The present research was conducted to study the relationship between interethnic communication apprehension and relational maintenance of interethnic relationships. In the following sections, relational maintenance research is reviewed, research questions are posed, and the results of the first study are reported.

Relational Maintenance Theories

There is limited research on how people maintain relationships, yet much time is spent engaging in this necessary task. The maintenance of on-going relationships takes effort (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Dindia & Baxter, 1987). More research is needed to examine these behaviors (Dindia & Baxter, 1987). The behaviors people use have been defined by Dindia and Baxter as the "communication approaches people use to sustain desired relational definitions" (p. 244). Although Dindia and Canary (1993) described four definitions of relational maintenance, the definition central to this investigation refers to maintenance of a relationship as an act to ensure continuation of the relationship. The authors also provided descriptions of the central theoretical perspectives of relational maintenance, specifically interdependence theory and relational dialectic theory.

Interdependence theory states that the essential quality of all close relationships is the interaction between partners (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Interdependence theory focuses on an individual remaining in the relationship as long as rewards exceed the possible rewards of an alternative relationship (Dindia & Canary, 1993; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Another area of focus of interdependence theory is each relational partner's ability to influence the other's rewards (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), thus the interdependence of the partners. This basically says that one partner's outcomes are the other partner's inputs.

The relational dialectic theory of relational maintenance puts forth the assumption that opposite and interrelated forces characterize relationships (Dindia & Canary, 1993). This theory is best summarized by Montgomery (1993): "partners are constantly adjusting to the presence of oppositional, relational forces" (p. 205). This approach takes the perspective that people maintain relationships by adapting to constantly occurring changes. Interethnic relationships have steadily occurring changes as much as any other type of relationship.

Taxonomy of Strategies

The literature on relational maintenance reflects a focus on general strategies that are utilized to maintain relationships (Baxter & Simon, 1993). Dindia and Baxter (1987), Stafford and Canary (1991), Canary and Stafford (1992), and Canary, Stafford, Hause, and Wallace (1993) have identified a number of relational maintenance strategies. This study concentrates on Canary and Stafford's (1992) operationalization of relational maintenance. In an effort to explain how individuals maintain

relationships, Canary and Stafford developed a typology of maintenance strategies. This study seeks to determine the relationship between the usage of these strategies and interethnic communication apprehension.

Canary and Stafford's (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Canary & Stafford, 1992) taxonomy includes 29 items indicative of five maintenance strategies. The five dimensions are positivity, assurances, openness, the use of social networks, and sharing tasks. Results of this work indicate that positivity, assurances, and sharing tasks are consistent predictors of relational characteristics such as commitment, liking, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993).

The Five Dimensions. The first dimension, positivity, has to do with interacting in an optimistic, cheerful, and uncritical manner with a partner. Some examples of the items used to measure this element include, "Am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk," and "Am cooperative in the ways I handle disagreements between us" (Canary & Stafford, 1992, p. 262). Openness pertains to the direct discussion of the nature and disclosure of the relationship. Some of the items representing this include, "Simply tell him/her how I feel about our relationship," and "Disclose what I need or want from our relationship" (p. 263).

Assurances include items such as, "Stress my commitment to him/her," and "Show my love for him/her" (p. 263). These items refer to messages that stress one's desire to continue in the relationship. As for social networks, Canary and Stafford describe this strategy as the "interactions with or the reliance on relatives and common affiliations" (p. 244). This dimension is represented on their scale by items such as, "Like to spend time with our same friends," and "Include our friends and family in our activities" (p. 263). The fifth dimension, sharing tasks, are the attempts made to maintain the relationship by performing one's duties. This is represented by items like, "Share in the joint responsibilities that face us," and "Do my fair share of the work we have to do" (p. 263).

In an extension of this work, Canary et al. (1993) conducted an inductive analysis to obtain maintenance strategies of differing levels of relationships; however, the comparisons made from the inductive categories should be taken with caution (Canary et al., 1993). The Canary and Stafford (1992) taxonomy had only been used to investigate romantic relationships (Canary et al., 1993). Toale (2000) investigated the deductively derived strategies to detect if they were salient in platonic as well as romantic interethnic relationships. The mean usage of the strategies indicated that the strategies were utilized in both types of interethnic relationships approximately equally.

According to Canary et al. (1993), there needs to be more research conducted to better explain the strategies in which people engage to maintain relationships. The literature that exists is mostly based on dating and marital relationships (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992; Ragsdale, 1996; Shea & Pearson, 1986; Stafford & Canary, 1991). There is a paucity of research investigating interethnic communication apprehension and interethnic relational maintenance.

As Collier (1996) asserted, investigations of ethnic group friendships are relatively uncommon. The research that has been done has focused on cross-cultural comparisons rather than interethnic investigations. Due to the limited research on interethnic communication apprehension and relational maintenance strategies, the following research questions were posed:

- RQ1: Do individuals who score high and low on the Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) differ in the amount they use relational maintenance strategies in interethnic interpersonal relationships?
- RQ2: To what extent are interethnic communication apprehension and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies related?

STUDY ONE--METHODS

Participants and Procedures

The sample consisted of 157 college-aged persons from a medium sized Mid-Atlantic university who were involved in interethnic relationships. The data were collected in introductory communication classes and the participants were offered extra credit for their participation. The reported age ranged from 18-53 with a mean age of 21.27 years old. There were 76 (48.4%) females and 80 (51%) males ($N = 156$).

Individuals in a relationship with a person of an ethnic background other than his or her own were asked to complete the survey. Instructions were given to the participants that ethnicity is a perception, and that if s/he perceived the person to be ethnically divergent then s/he was ethnically divergent. The respondents were asked to pick one relationship and respond to the items on Canary and Stafford's (1992) relational maintenance strategy typology based on the relationship with that one person. They were to decide if they agreed or disagreed with the relational maintenance behavior statements.

The participants also responded to Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997a) Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) scale. The directions indicated that people might have concerns when communicating with a person from a different ethnic/racial group. The participants indicated the extent to which they perceived each of the items described their feelings toward this kind of communication.

Measurement

Relational Maintenance. Canary and Stafford's (1992) relational maintenance taxonomy consists of 29 items with five theoretical dimensions that reflect various maintenance strategies. These dimensions are positivity, openness, assurances, reliance upon social networks, and sharing tasks (Canary & Stafford, 1992). The maintenance strategies were rated on seven point (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) Likert-type scales. Obtained alpha reliabilities for the dimension scores were .89, .84, .85, .77, and .84, respectively. These reliabilities are similar to those reported by Canary and Stafford (1992). The dimensions had differing numbers of items; consequently, the scores on each dimension were divided by the number of items on the dimension in order to place all of the scores on the same 1.0-7.0 continuum. Because factor analysis¹ suggested the presence of a single factor rather than five separate dimensions a total score was computed. The alpha reliability of the total score on the scale (summing across all theoretical dimensions) was .95.

IECA. The PRECA is a 14-item scale used to measure an individual's apprehension when interacting with a person of a different ethnic background. Scores on half of the items were reflected so that higher scores on all items would reflect high IECA. The high ($n = 31$) and low ($n = 27$) PRECA participants were determined by using cut-offs of one standard deviation ($SD = 14.6$) above and below the sample mean ($M = 38.8$).

Obtained alpha reliability for the PRECA in this study was .94. Demographic variables such as age, sex, ethnicity of the respondent and relational partner, length of maintaining the relationship and relational status (platonic or romantic) were not analyzed in this study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first research question was answered using independent t-tests to compare the mean usage of the individual strategies between participants who had high and low PRECA scores. The second research question was answered by use of a Pearson correlation. All statistical analyses used the .05 probability level and were two-tailed tests.

RESULTS

The first research question sought to discover if there were differences between individuals who scored high and low on the Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) and their usage of relational maintenance strategies in interethnic interpersonal relationships. The results of the data analyses revealed that low IECAs utilized three relational maintenance strategies significantly more than the high IECAs: task, $t(54) = 4.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$, network, $t(57) = 4.06, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$, and positivity, $t(56) = 3.39, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$. Differences on the openness strategies approached significance, $t(56) = 1.98, p < .053, \eta^2 = .07$, while assurance strategies were not used significantly more by the low IECAs, $t(54) = 1.89, ns$. See Table 1 for the mean scores of the low and high IECAs on each strategy.

TABLE 1
Mean Strategy Usage by Low and High Interethnic Communication Apprehensives in Study 1

Strategy	Low IECA <i>M</i>	High IECA <i>M</i>
Assurances	5.61	4.99
Networks	5.69	4.74
Openness	4.97	4.37
Positivity	5.75	5.07
Task	5.81	4.88

The second research question sought to reveal the extent that interethnic communication apprehension and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies were related. Interethnic communication apprehension was negatively correlated ($p < .01$) with three of the relational maintenance dimensions, network, positivity, and tasks, $r = -.32, r = -.31, r = -.26$, respectively. Interethnic communication apprehension was not significantly correlated ($p > .05$) with openness ($r = -.13$) or assurances ($r = -.11$). The obtained correlation between IECA scores and the total relational maintenance strategy usage scores was $r = -.27, p < .01$. See Table 2 for the intercorrelations between IECA and the five dimensions of relational maintenance.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the first study was to explore the relationship between interethnic communication apprehension and the use of relational maintenance strategies. There were two research questions posed. The first research question sought

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations Between Interethnic Communication Apprehension and the Five Dimensions of Relational Maintenance Strategies in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. IECA	--	-.32*	-.31*	-.26*	-.13	-.11	-.27*
2. Network	--	--	.71*	.64*	.59*	.52*	.81*
3. Positivity	--	--	--	.71*	.61*	.71*	.87*
4. Tasks	--	--	--	--	.56*	.58*	.82*
5. Openness	--	--	--	--	--	.75*	.85*
6. Assurances	--	--	--	--	--	--	.87*
7. Total Rel. Maint.	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

* $p < .01$

to make comparisons between high and low IECAs in interethnic relationships. Low IECAs utilized task, network, and positivity strategies significantly more than high IECAs, but did not differ significantly on their reported use of openness or assurance strategies. This indicates that the higher an individual scores on the PRECA the less likely s/he is reportedly utilizing the task, network, and positivity relational maintenance strategies to maintain interethnic relationships. Low IECAs had less apprehension about interacting with persons from different ethnic backgrounds.

Due to less fear or anxiety when communicating with a person from a different ethnic background, low IECAs might be willing to utilize the relational maintenance strategies more than the high IECAs to ensure the continuation of the relationship. This being the definition asserted by Dindia and Canary (1993) for relational maintenance suggests there might be something else that could explain the decision to use or not use the strategies. One possible reason for the discrepancy of relational maintenance strategy usage between the high and low IECAs could be that perhaps the high IECAs were less interested in continuing the relationship because of their trait communication apprehension orientation or ethnocentrism. The small sample size and lack of power to detect differences might also explain why there were not significant differences on all five dimensions.

The second research question sought to reveal the extent that interethnic communication apprehension and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies were related. Network, positivity, and task strategies were inversely related to interethnic communication apprehension, but openness and assurances were not related to IECA. However, the second research question also revealed that IECA and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies were significantly negatively related. Again, the small sample size may explain why there were not significant correlations on all five dimensions.

Because the PRECA scale is relatively new and there are two possible explanations for the variability in those scores, what produced the observed results was ambiguous. Either general trait communication apprehension or ethnocentrism, or a combination of these factors could be responsible. Because neither trait communication apprehension nor ethnocentrism was measured in the first study, the data from that study did not permit resolution of the issue.

Naturally, low trait CAs would use more communication strategies than high trait CAs, regardless with whom they are interacting. The question that remains is whether individuals who are high IECA's use fewer relational maintenance strategies as a

result of being generally high in communication apprehension. If this is the case, then it is general communication apprehension that is predictive of high IECA rather than the interethnic relationship itself. However, if an individual is not generally communicatively apprehensive, but reports being so when talking with an individual of divergent ethnicity, then it could possibly be ethnocentrism that predicts high IECA rather than general communication apprehension.

The second study was designed to overcome the limitations in the first: (1) The small sample size and (2) not being able to explain why there are differences in high IECAs and low IECAs in their use of relational maintenance strategies. Along with replicating the two research questions from the first study, two new research questions were posed:

- RQ3: To what extent are trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism predictive of interethnic communication apprehension?
- RQ4: To what extent are trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism predictive of overall use of relational maintenance strategies?

STUDY TWO—METHODS

Participants and Procedures

The sample consisted of 313 college students from a medium sized Mid-Atlantic university who were involved in interethnic relationships. Demographic data were not requested in order to assure participants of their anonymity. Because the ethnocentrism measure was employed in this study, anonymity was critical to getting honest responses. Observation indicated that there were approximately the same number of males and females, the overwhelming majority were Caucasian, and their ages ranged predominantly from 19-22, with a small number being somewhat older.

Measurement

The second study utilized the same measuring instruments as the first, Canary and Stafford's (1992) relational maintenance scale; and Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997a) Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) scale. The high ($n = 55$) and low ($n = 58$) PRECA participants were again determined by using cut-offs of one standard deviation ($SD = 9.1$) above and below the sample mean ($M = 28.78$). In addition, McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) was employed as the measure of trait communication apprehension and the latest version of Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997b) General Ethnocentrism scale was administered. This is a 22-item version of the instrument, however, only 15 items are scored. The remaining (dummy) items are included to avoid generating response bias (McCroskey, 2001). The Alpha reliabilities obtained for the instruments in this study were as follows: relational maintenance¹, .93; IECA, .93; PRCA-24, .95; and ethnocentrism, .92.

DATA ANALYSIS

To replicate the first study, the same analyses were conducted to answer the first and second research questions with the sample in the second study. Pearson correlations and regression equations were utilized to answer the new research questions. All statistical analyses used the .05 probability level and were two-tailed tests.

RESULTS

The first research question sought to discover if there were differences between individuals who scored high and low on the Personal Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA) and their usage of relational maintenance strategies in interethnic interpersonal relationships. The results of the data analyses revealed that low IECAs utilized all five relational maintenance strategies significantly more than the high IECAs: task, $t(108) = 5.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$, positivity, $t(109) = 5.0, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$, network, $t(110) = 4.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$, assurances, $t(110) = 3.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$, and openness, $t(108) = 2.72, p < .008, \eta^2 = .06$. See Table 3 contains the mean scores of the low and high IECAs on each strategy in study two.

TABLE 3
Mean Strategy Usage by Low and High Interethnic Communication Apprehensives in Study 2

Strategy	Low IECA <i>M</i>	High IECA <i>M</i>
Assurances	4.15	3.60
Networks	4.17	3.64
Openness	3.90	3.50
Positivity	4.24	3.62
Task	4.40	3.73

The second research question sought to reveal the extent that interethnic communication apprehension and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies were related. Interethnic communication apprehension was negatively correlated ($p < .01$) with all five dimensions of relational maintenance, network ($r = -.25$), positivity ($r = -.31$), tasks ($r = -.30$), openness ($r = -.17$), and assurances ($r = -.22$). The obtained correlation between IECA scores and the total relational maintenance strategy usage scores was $r = -.29, p < .01$. See Table 4 for the intercorrelations between IECA and the five dimensions of relational maintenance.

TABLE 4
Intercorrelations Between Interethnic Communication Apprehension and the Five Dimensions of Relational Maintenance Strategies in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. IECA	--	-.25*	-.31*	-.30*	-.17*	-.22*	-.29*
2. Network	--	--	.70*	.60*	.49*	.57*	.80*
3. Positivity	--	--	--	.72*	.51*	.70*	.87*
4. Tasks	--	--	--	--	.47*	.56*	.80*
5. Openness	--	--	--	--	--	.62*	.77*
6. Assurances	--	--	--	--	--	--	.86*
7. Total Rel. Maint. ¹	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

* $p < .01$

The third research question was posed to reveal the extent to which trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism were predictive of interethnic communication apprehension. The simple correlations among the four study variables are reported in Table 5. As indicated in Table 5, both ethnocentrism ($r = .49$) and trait communication apprehension ($r = .44$) were found to be substantially associated with interethnic communication apprehension. The multiple-correlation of the two predictors with interethnic communication apprehension was $R = .59$. This

indicates that approximately 35 percent of the variance in IECA is explained from these two variables. Decomposition of the multiple-correlation indicated that PRCA-24 scores explained 11.6 percent of the IECA variance while ethnocentrism scores explained 15.8 percent of the IECA variance. An additional 7.6 percent of the variance was redundantly explained by the two instruments.

TABLE 5
Intercorrelations Between Variables in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Ethnocentrism		.22*	.49*	-.27*
2. PRCA			.44*	-.21*
3. IECA				-.29*
4. Relational Maintenance				

* $p < .01$

The fourth research question was posed to reveal the extent to which trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism were predictive of overall use of relational maintenance strategies. The simple correlations of both ethnocentrism ($r = -.27$) and trait communication apprehension ($r = -.21$) with the total scores for use of relational maintenance strategies were relatively modest. However, the multiple correlation of the two predictors with the criterion variable was $R = .32$. This indicates that trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism can account for approximately 10 percent of the variance in relational maintenance strategy usage. This is similar to that predictable by the IECA. Decomposition of the multiple correlation indicated that PRCA-24 scores could explain 2 percent of the relational maintenance variance, while ethnocentrism could account for 5 percent of the variance. An additional 3 percent of the variance was redundantly explained by the two instruments.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the second study was to overcome the limitations of and extend the first study. The first and second research questions were replicated and two additional research questions were posited. In the following paragraphs, the results of the research questions and implications for future research are discussed.

The first research question sought to explore differences between individuals who scored high and low on the PRECA in terms of their usage of relational maintenance strategies. The results in the second study replicated the first study on task, network, and positivity strategies, but also revealed significant differences between high and low IECAs on openness and assurance relational maintenance strategies. Low IECAs reported utilizing significantly more relational maintenance strategies than high IECAs. This further substantiates that low IECAs had less apprehension about interacting with persons from different ethnic backgrounds. This suggests that the only reason for the nonsignificant differences in the first study was insufficient power, a problem overcome in the second study.

The second research question investigated the relationships between interethnic communication apprehension and overall usage of relational maintenance strategies. Again, the second study replicated the first study on the relationships between IECA and the overall usage of relational maintenance strategies as well as between IECA and

the network, positivity, and task strategies. The second study also found significant relationships between IECA and the openness and assurances relational maintenance strategies. Again, this suggests that the only reason for the nonsignificant differences in the first study was insufficient sample size.

The third research question investigated the predictive nature of trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism in predicting interethnic communication apprehension. These two variables explained approximately 35 percent of the variance in IECA. Further analysis revealed that ethnocentrism accounted for slightly more variance in IECA than did trait CA. The analysis also revealed that ethnocentrism and trait CA shared variance in predicting IECA.

The fourth research question investigated the predictive nature of trait communication apprehension and ethnocentrism in predicting overall use of relational maintenance strategies. These two variables predicted approximately 10 percent of the variance in relational maintenance strategy usage. Further analysis again revealed that ethnocentrism accounted for slightly more variance in relational maintenance strategy usage than did trait CA. The analysis also revealed that ethnocentrism and trait CA shared variance in predicting relational maintenance strategy usage.

The results of these two studies indicate that people who are more apprehensive about interacting with people from ethnic groups other than their own are less likely to employ relational maintenance strategies in their interethnic communication efforts. This finding could be predicted from previous basic research on communication apprehension, drawing on the theory that communication apprehension leads to communication avoidance and withdrawal (McCroskey, 1977).

However, this investigation's exploration of ethnocentrism as a potential factor in such behavior leads to a different causal explanation. The results obtained indicated that ethnocentrism was both a better predictor than communication apprehension of both interethnic communication apprehension and use of relational maintenance strategies within interethnic relationships. The minimal amount of variance that was accounted for could be a conservative representation due to the variety of ethnicities. Future research should consider focusing on specific ethnicities (e.g. African American and Italian American) and how individuals from each ethnic group maintain relationships with individuals from a different ethnic background.

These results are a clear indication that interethnic communication is a different kind of context than those generally studied in communication apprehension and avoidance research. In this particular context, a person's level of ethnocentrism was found to be substantially more predictive of an individual's contextual communication apprehension and self-reported communication avoidance behavior than the individual's general trait-like communication apprehension. Accordingly, helping people reduce their ethnocentrism should be a major concern of people concerned with improving interethnic communication.

Whether this finding can be generalized beyond interethnic communication to intercultural communication remains to be seen. However, many people report being highly apprehensive in intercultural communication settings. If this apprehension is primarily a result of high ethnocentrism, rather than just high trait-like communication apprehension, helping people deal with it to become more effective communicators may need to follow different approaches than those found to help high communication apprehensives generally. The relationship between ethnocentrism

and apprehension about intercultural communication should receive priority attention by intercultural communication researchers.

NOTE

¹A principal components analysis was conducted to determine the underlying factor structure of the relational maintenance strategies. The results indicated that the scale was unidimensional, thus allowing summarization across all five dimensions for a total score.

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