

# Applying Organizational Orientations Theory to Employees of Profit and Non-Profit Organizations

Linda L. McCroskey, James C. McCroskey, &  
Virginia P. Richmond

*Organizational orientations theory posits three traits (upward mobile, ambivalent, and indifferent) of employees in organizations that are associated with communication traits, temperament, and perceptions of supervisor source credibility. All of these are hypothesized to be associated with organizational communication behavior and organizational outcomes such as employee job satisfaction and motivation. Previous research employing undergraduate student participants has provided support for this theory. Results of the present research indicate that this theory can be applied to typical full-time employees in profit and nonprofit organizations. All studied relationships were found to generate statistically significant results, accounting for substantial variance in each relationship. These results indicate this theory can be applied to employees in a wide variety of organizations. Suggestions for broadening this theory and its application are provided.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Orientations; Job Satisfaction; Supervisor Credibility; Communication Traits; Temperament

Presthus (1958) advanced organizational orientation theory as an explanation of substantial differences in the way employees in organizations approach their jobs. Presthus believed that these orientations result in employees having different orientations toward work itself, motivation toward work, job satisfaction, and ways

---

Linda L. McCroskey (Ph.D., University of Oklahoma, 1998) is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840. James C. McCroskey (D.Ed., Pennsylvania State University, 1966) and Virginia P. Richmond (Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1977) are Professors of Communication Studies at West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26505-6293.

Correspondence: Linda L. McCroskey, Department of Communication Studies, California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840-0008, USA. Tel: +1-714-897-5262; Email: Lmccrosk@csuLB.edu.

of dealing with coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates. While he did not discuss organizational communication specifically (Presthus was a management scholar), his views with regard to the impact of these different orientations, particularly ways of dealing with others, strongly suggest that they would be related to organizational communication as well.

Presthus (1958) viewed his theory as being a theory of organizational behavior. He viewed the behavior of people in organizations as being driven by their traits, which he believed were learned through their experiences while working in organizations. His theory posited three trait orientations that employees are likely to have: upward mobile, indifferent, and ambivalent.

#### *Upward mobile*

Highly upward mobile workers are seen as rule- and procedure-oriented and having a strong affinity for organizations. They are believed to have goals of advancement in the organization and willingness to work hard and strategically to achieve their goals. These workers are also believed to identify with whatever organization that employs them and be willing to defend their organization against others who might attack it. If things go wrong at work these employees feel personally responsible, and are less likely to blame the organization or the people running it. They are seen as having strong decision-making skills and being willing to take risks to insure the success of the organization and their own advancement in it. They are more concerned with their own success than gaining approbation from their peers. Employees with low upward mobile orientations are seen as having orientations contrary to the more upwardly mobile.

#### *Indifferent*

Highly indifferent employees are seen as people who do not care one way or another about organizations. It is believed that most wage and salaried employees in most organizations are likely to be highly indifferent toward them. People with this orientation are described as individuals who work to live (not live to work), and see their working for an organization as a necessary evil. They do not expect much from their organization, except a paycheck and in some cases, benefits. Highly indifferent employees are concerned about being accepted by their peers at work. However, they see "their life" as existing separate from work. Work is work, life begins when work is over. Those employees who are low in indifference are generally believed to have orientations contrary to the highly indifferent workers.

#### *Ambivalent*

Employees who are highly ambivalent do not adapt well to organizations. While some ambivalent employees are creative, others are moody and anxious. They tend to be introverts who do not like rules or authority (low in authoritarianism). Ambivalent employees tend to be frustrated by organizations, their expectations about organizations tend to be unreasonable, and thus unattainable. They do not fit into

typical roles that organizations have for them and are likely to express strong differences with the organization and its leadership. Even though they are employed by an organization, ambivalent employees do not see themselves as a part of that organization. People lower in ambivalence are believed to exhibit organizational behaviors that are contrary to those higher in ambivalence.

While both indifference and ambivalence appear to be contrary to upward mobility, neither is highly related with it. While previous research, to be discussed below, indicates a positive relationship between indifference and ambivalence, all three of these orientations are seen as distinct from each other and believed to be associated in different ways with organizational behavior, including communication behavior.

Pruden (1973) was the first researcher to attempt to validate organizational orientations theory. He conducted a qualitative study of 150 US businessmen. He confirmed hypothesized expectations for variations on each of the three organizational orientations related to five outcome variables. These were job satisfaction, career mobility, alienation/attachment with work, cosmopolitanism, and organizational rank. The results of his research supported the view that the three orientations were distinct from one another and confirmed that they were associated with Presthus' theoretical organizational outcomes.

Until more recently, little research has been published that has followed up on Presthus' theory or Pruden's research findings. For the most part, organizational communication scholars have not drawn on this theory in their research. While some authors of books in organizational communication have noted Presthus' theory (Koehler, Anatol, & Applbaum, 1981; Richmond & McCroskey, 2001), research relating the theory to organizational communication has been slow to develop.

Pruden's research employed qualitative observations of worker's behaviors. It did not involve quantitative measures of trait orientations. There were no quantitative measures of these orientations available. This made it difficult for quantitative researchers to become involved in research on organizational orientations. Only recently have such measures been developed (McCroskey, Richmond, Johnson, & Smith, 2003). This series of studies involved the development of measures as well as providing preliminary tests of whether these measures of organizational orientations were associated with communication traits and organizational outcomes as well as workers' temperament.

#### *Previous Research Findings*

The previous research reported by McCroskey et al. (2003) provided the foundation for the current research. The revised organizational orientation measures developed and validated in that series of studies served as the operational definitions of these three constructs in the present effort.

In the previous research, associations of organizational orientations with workers' communication trait orientations (assertiveness, responsiveness, immediacy, and communication apprehension), workers' perceptions of the source credibility of their supervisors (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill/caring), workers' temperament (BIG THREE: extroversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), and workers' job satisfaction were obtained. Substantial (and statistically significant) associations were observed for all of these analyses.

The results of the previous research provide substantial support for organizational orientations theory—these orientations clearly are related to job satisfaction. In addition, they are related to workers' temperament, workers' communication traits, and workers' perceptions of the credibility of their supervisors.

However, this series of four studies included aspects that raise questions about their applicability to workers in typical organizations. Although each of these studies included large samples of participants, all of the participants were college students. The mean age of each sample was between 20 and 21 years. This age group certainly cannot be presumed to be representative of workers in most organizations. For the most part, college student employment is limited to lower level positions in service organizations, entry-level blue-collar positions, and temporary employment such as work-study jobs. Few 20-year old college students have ever held a supervisory position, much less one in middle management. Hence, research employing college students as participants restricts the range of workers being studied. This is particularly problematic in research relating to organizational orientations theory because this theory suggests that these orientations are learned as a function of experience in the workplace. The fact that these orientations were found to be highly associated with the participants' temperament, of course, raises a serious question about the validity of this aspect of the theory.

Another problem in interpreting the results of the previous research is that no data were collected concerning the position the students held in their jobs nor the type of organization in which they worked. Given that they most likely worked at a very low level in the organization, the results of the research may not be applicable to typical employees in organizations. The type of organization may also be of considerable importance. It is quite possible that people with one kind of organizational orientations will choose employment in for-profit organizations while another with different orientations will choose employment in nonprofit organizations.

While the previous research shows considerable promise for the generalizability of organizational orientations theory, it is important that the concerns about applicability of that research to employees in typical organizations be resolved. The purpose of the current research was to test that applicability directly.

### Research Questions

Since substantial relationships of organizational orientations with both employee temperament and employee perceptions had been observed in the previous research involving undergraduate students, we anticipated similar results with older employees. We posed the first two research questions:

*RQ1: To what extent are organizational orientations associated with employee temperament?*

*RQ2: To what extent are organizational orientations associated with employees' perceptions of the source credibility of their supervisors?*

Since significant simple and multiple correlations were observed in the previous research between temperament and job satisfaction as well as between organizational orientations and job satisfaction, we anticipated similar results with older employees. We also suspected that organizational orientations would be associated with employee motivation (not studied previously). Hence we posed the next two research questions:

*RQ3: To what extent are temperament variables associated with organizational outcomes (employee job satisfaction and motivation)?*

*RQ4: To what extent are organizational orientations associated with organizational outcomes (employee job satisfaction and motivation)?*

Since it is likely that perception of one's supervisor can impact, and/or be impacted by, one's affect toward the job, we proposed our fifth research question:

*RQ5: To what extent are employees' perceptions of the source credibility of their supervisors associated with employee job satisfaction and employee motivation?*

The previous research with college students indicated that organizational orientations were associated with communication traits. Hence, we posed the sixth research question:

*RQ6: To what extent are organizational orientations associated with communication traits?*

Because in the previous research with college students their communication traits and temperament variables were found to be related, we posed the following research question.

*RQ7: To what extent are communication traits associated with temperament variables?*

The present research employed an enhanced design, compared to the previous research. Two specific changes were included to explore whether the level of the employee or the type of organization in which an employee works might be related to organizational orientations or other variables being studied. Hence, we posed research questions eight and nine:

*RQ8: To what extent is the level of an employee's position in an organization associated with any of the variables under study?*

*RQ9: To what extent is the type of the organization (profit, nonprofit) associated with any of the variables under study?*

Previous organizational communication research, drawing on reciprocity and accommodation theories, has indicated that perception of supervisors' communication traits (assertiveness, responsiveness, and nonverbal immediacy) are associated with organizational outcomes (McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). In one study it was determined that there was a substantial relationship between employees' perceptions of their own nonverbal immediacy trait and their perceptions of their supervisor's nonverbal immediacy. Other communication traits have not yet been studied in this context. Since we were already measuring nonverbal immediacy, and the two socio-communicative orientation traits (assertiveness, responsiveness), we added measures directed toward employees' perceptions of the trait socio-communicative style of their supervisor. This permitted us to obtain an answer for our tenth research question:

*RQ10: To what extent is there an association between supervisor socio-communicative style and subordinate socio-communicative orientations?*

We also had a general research question, which was the reason that this research was conducted. This was our eleventh research question:

*RQ11: To what extent can the research on organizational orientations conducted with under-graduate student participants be applied to employees in profit and/or nonprofit organizations?*

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The 264 participants in this study were all full-time employees in a wide variety of organizations in the eastern USA. Potential participants were contacted by 71 individuals who were recruited as assistants for this project. The assistants were full-time employees in organizations who also were or had been adult learners

enrolled in graduate classes. Each assistant was asked to contact four individuals in their organization. Assistants were instructed to select two females and two males for participation. They were directed to select two people who held positions at a level above their own and two people who held positions at a level below their own. In addition, they were told to select people at their own level if they could not obtain cooperation of people above or below them, or if there were no people meeting that criterion. Eleven assistants indicated they had to do this because they were at the lowest level in the organization. One additional assistant was a high-level executive who had no one above his level at the location where he worked, and obtained cooperation of four individuals who were below him but not directly answering to him.

Organizations sampled included ones located in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, D. C., and West Virginia. A total of 130 participants reported working for a nonprofit organization and 134 reported working for a for-profit organization. While we presume we had an equal number of females and males, in order to avoid any possibility of identifying any individual participant, no information regarding sex, ethnicity, or any other similar type data were collected. While 56 of the assistants were Caucasian and 15 were not, we do not know whether ethnicity of the assistants had any influence on ethnicity of the participants sampled. Data from 20 participants (not included in the sample size noted above) were discarded because of substantially incomplete responses. Respondents who had some missing data, but returned substantially complete questionnaires were retained in the data set. The statistical analysis system employed (SAS) automatically excluded them from analyses for which they provided incomplete data, but retained them for analyses where their data were complete. Assistants were given only general information about the nature of the study prior to data collection. After the data were collected they were fully debriefed and asked to debrief the participants in a similar manner.

### *Measures*

Measures employed in this research included scales designed to measure communication traits (perceived supervisor assertiveness and responsiveness, self-reports of assertiveness, responsiveness, and nonverbal immediacy), organizational orientations (upward mobile, indifferent, ambivalent), perceived supervisor source credibility (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill/caring), temperament (self-reports of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), and organizational outcomes (self-reports of job satisfaction and motivation to go to work). In addition single-item questions were provided to determine in what type of organization they were employed and at what level of the organization they were employed.

*Communication traits*

Both assertiveness and responsiveness were measured by the Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (ARM; Richmond & McCroskey, 1990). This scale is designed to be used as either a report on another person's behavior or to report a person's perception of their own behavior. The ARM was employed to measure participants' perceptions of their supervisors' communication behavior and to self-report their own communication orientation. This scale includes 20 bi-polar items, 10 for assertiveness and 10 for responsiveness. (Alpha reliabilities are reported for all measures in Table 1.) Nonverbal immediacy was measured by the self-report version of the Nonverbal Immediacy Scale (Richmond, McCroskey, & Johnson, 2003). This is a 26-item, Likert-type scale with five response options. It includes items for nine types of nonverbal behaviors.

*Organizational orientations*

Upward mobile, indifferent, and ambivalent orientations were measured with the scales designed for this purpose by McCroskey et al. (2003). All three scales are composed of Likert-type items with five response options. The upward mobile scale

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Measures Employed

Measure	Mean	SD	Alpha	Obtained Potential	
				Range	Range
Organizational orientations					
Upward mobile	68.7	7.9	0.79	48–90	18–90
Indifferent	24.5	8.4	0.91	12–51	12–60
Ambivalent	36.5	10.3	0.91	20–80	20–100
Temperament					
Extraversion	23.7	4.1	0.75	12–30	10–30
Neuroticism	15.6	4.8	0.84	10–30	10–30
Psychoticism	23.9	3.1	0.64	12–32	12–36
Communication trait orientations					
Assertiveness	35.7	6.5	0.84	10–49	10–50
Responsiveness	41.8	5.7	0.89	15–50	10–50
Immediacy	99.1	10.7	0.87	66–127	26–130
Supervisor source credibility					
Competence	35.0	6.7	0.93	9–42	6–42
Trustworthiness	34.4	8.1	0.95	6–42	6–42
Goodwill/Caring	30.9	8.6	0.94	6–42	6–42
Organizational outcomes					
Job satisfaction	28.0	6.9	0.95	5–35	5–35
Motivation	27.5	6.1	0.92	6–35	5–35
Other					
Supervisor assertiveness	38.7	7.9	0.90	14–50	10–50
Supervisor responsiveness	35.5	8.9	0.94	10–50	10–50
Level	4.0	1.5	NA	1–7	1–7

includes 18 items, the indifferent scale includes 20 items, and the ambivalent scale includes 12 items. The items on the scales were randomly mixed for presentation to participants as a 50-item questionnaire.

#### *Source credibility*

The Measure of Ethos/Credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999) was employed to measure participants' perceptions of their supervisors' source credibility. This instrument includes 18 seven-step, bipolar items, six each for competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill/caring. The items were randomly mixed for presentation to participants as an 18-item questionnaire.

#### *Temperament*

The BIG THREE temperament variables were measured in this study. Extroversion and neuroticism were measured by 10-item, Likert-type scales developed by Eysenck and Eysenck (1985). Psychoticism was measured by a 12-item Likert-type scale developed and revised by Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985). All three scales provided 3-point response options (agree, undecided, disagree). These scales were chosen over other available temperament measures because they have been validated as measuring three genetically based constructs (Eysenck, 1990). As a result, they may be used as "genetic markers." It is reasonable to infer that other constructs that are correlated with the BIG THREE are likely to be genetically influenced as well.

#### *Organizational outcomes*

The two organizational outcomes measured were job satisfaction and motivation to go to work. The measure of job satisfaction employed in this research was the one developed by Richmond & McCroskey (2000) that was based on the Generalized Belief Scale developed earlier by McCroskey (McCroskey & Richmond, 1989). It is a 5-item, 7-point, bipolar scale, which asks respondents to indicate the veracity of the statement "I am very satisfied with my current job."

The measure of "motivation to go to work" was one first used by Richmond and McCroskey (2000) in organizational communication research. It is a 5-item, 7-point, bipolar scale, which asks respondents to indicate "how you normally feel about going to work." The bipolar options provided were motivated-unmotivated, excited-bored, uninterested-interested, involved-uninvolved, and dreading it-looking forward to it.

#### *Classification variables*

Two single-item measures were employed to permit classification of participants as to the type of organization in which they were employed and the level of position that they held in the organization. To determine the type of organization, participants were asked to check one of three options: "My organization is a for-profit

organization," "I work for a nonprofit or tax-supported organization," or "I work for another type of organization (please describe the organization in general terms)." The overwhelming majority of participants checked option 1 or 2. All but two of the participants who checked the third option provided information that permitted classifying them into one of these two categories.

To determine the level of position in the organization, participants were asked to circle where their position was on a 1-7 continuum. The form of this request was: "Organizations have varying numbers of levels of authority. Presuming your organization has 7 levels, please circle below the level you perceive your position to be (1 = lowest level, 7 = highest level)." This was followed by the continuum: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7.

### *Data Analyses*

The initial analyses of the data provided the descriptive statistics (mean, S.D., alpha, and range) reported in Table 1. The second set of analyses was a series of 2-way analyses of variance (type-by-level) for all of the 16 measured constructs. None of these analyses indicated a statistically significant interaction between the two classification variables, even with a very liberal alpha criterion ( $p < 0.10$ ). Hence, these analyses are not reported here. Since there were no type-by-level interactions, we did separate analyses of variance for type and level for each of the 16 measured constructs. We set the alpha for statistical significance at the liberal level of  $p < 0.05$ . To determine the answer to our third research question, we employed simple correlations between supervisor socio-communicative style variables and employee socio-communicative orientation variables.

The remaining analyses were focused on our research questions. Each of our first nine research questions involved relationships between two groups of variables. This mandated (Hatcher & Stepanski, 1994, p. 523) the use of canonical correlation analyses to answer our research questions, since this method was the only appropriate one for our kind of data. Because of the high power generated by our sample size, we set our alpha for significance at  $p < 0.001$  in these analyses to avoid the need to deal with trivial but statistically significant relationships.

### **Results**

Informal comparisons of the descriptive statistics obtained for the measures employed in this study and those reported in previous research indicated that most of them were very similar. The only exceptions were the means on the measures of indifferent and ambivalent orientations. Although the means for the upward mobile orientation were virtually identical (68.7, 68.6), the mean indifferent and ambivalent scores were both over ten points lower in the current study (indifferent  $M = 24.5$ , ambivalent  $M = 36.5$ ) than in the previous research (indifferent  $M = 34.6$ , ambivalent  $M = 48.3$ ). These differences were both statistically significant (indifferent

$t = 16.5, p < 0.0001$ ; ambivalent  $t = 13.3, p < 0.0001$ ). Clearly, even though the ranges of scores in this and the previous research were very similar, participants in this study perceived themselves as substantially less ambivalent and indifferent than the undergraduate student participants in previous research.

#### Results for Research Questions

*RQ1.* The first research question asked to what extent are employees' organizational orientations associated with their temperament. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. Two canonical correlations were statistically significant. The first canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.50$  [ $F(9, 608.58) = 13.21, p < 0.0001$ ]. The second canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.36$  [ $F(4, 502) = 9.30, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.65 ( $1 - \text{Lambda} = \text{variance accounted for}$ ). An examination of the results (see Table 2) indicates that on the first canonical variable neuroticism and psychoticism were highly and positively associated with ambivalence and indifference orientations. On the second canonical variable extraversion was highly and positively associated with upward mobile orientation. Extraversion and the upward mobile orientation had no meaningful relationship to the first canonical variable, while neuroticism and psychoticism, as well as ambivalent and indifferent orientations had no meaningful relationship with the second canonical variable.

*RQ2.* The second research question asked to what extent employees' organizational orientations are associated with their perceptions of their supervisor's source credibility. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. One canonical correlation ( $r_c = 0.45$ ) was statistically significant [ $F(9, 593.98) = 7.23, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.78. An examination of the results (see Table 3) indicates that low ambivalent and indifferent scores were highly and negatively associated with source credibility scores on all three dimensions. However, the upward mobile orientation was not meaningfully associated with perceptions of source credibility of supervisors.

**Table 2** Correlations of Organization Orientation and Temperament Measures with their Canonical Variables

Measure	Canonical 1	Canonical 2
Organizational orientation		
Upward mobile	-0.08	0.99
Ambivalent	0.98	-0.13
Indifferent	0.83	-0.09
Temperament		
Extroversion	-0.06	0.99
Neuroticism	0.84	-0.05
Psychoticism	0.67	0.10

**Table 3** Correlations of Organizational Orientation and Source Credibility Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Organizational orientations	
Upward mobile	0.10
Ambivalent	-0.97
Indifferent	-0.86
Source credibility	
Competence	0.94
Goodwill/Caring	0.84
Trustworthiness	0.92

RQ3. The third research question inquired as to the extent to which employees' temperament variables would be associated with organizational outcomes. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. One canonical correlation ( $r_c = 0.39$ ) was statistically significant [ $F(6, 498) = 7.91, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.83. An examination of the results (see Table 4) indicates that low scores on neuroticism and psychoticism, and to a much lesser degree ( $r = 0.28$ ) positive scores on extraversion, were associated with positive scores on both outcome variables (job satisfaction and motivation).

RQ4. The fourth research question asked to what extent organizational orientations were associated with employee job satisfaction and motivation. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. One canonical correlation ( $r_c = 0.62$ ) was statistically significant [ $F(6, 492) = 23.81, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.60. An examination of correlations reported in Table 5 indicates that negative ambivalence and indifference, and to a moderate extent higher upward mobility, were associated strongly with both job satisfaction and motivation.

RQ5. The fifth research question probed the relationship of employees' perceptions of the source credibility of their supervisors with their own job satisfaction and motivation. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. One canonical correlation ( $r_c = 0.43$ ) was statistically significant [ $F(6, 488) = 9.00, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.81. An examination of the correlations reported in Table 6 indicates that high scores on

**Table 4** Correlations of Temperament and Organizational Outcome Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Temperament	
Extroversion	0.28
Neuroticism	-0.85
Psychoticism	-0.63
Organizational outcome	
Job satisfaction	0.77
Motivation	0.99

**Table 5** Correlations of Organizational Orientation and Organizational Outcome Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Organizational orientations	
Upward mobile	0.53
Ambivalent	-0.85
Indifferent	-0.90
Organizational outcome	
Job satisfaction	0.74
Motivation	0.99

**Table 6** Correlations of Source Credibility and Organization Outcome Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Source credibility	
Competence	0.90
Goodwill/Caring	0.92
Trustworthiness	0.86
Organizational outcome	
Job satisfaction	0.99
Motivation	0.75

all of the source credibility dimensions were associated with high scores on both of the organizational outcome variables.

RQ6. The sixth focused on the relationship between employees' organizational orientations and their communication traits. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. Two canonical correlations were statistically significant. The first canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.47$  [ $F(9, 606.15) = 10.25, p < 0.0001$ ]. The second canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.30$  [ $F(4, 500) = 6.21, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.71. An examination of the results (see Table 7) indicates that on the first canonical variable a high score on the upward mobile orientation was associated positively with high assertiveness and nonverbal immediacy. On the second canonical

**Table 7** Correlations of Organizational Orientation and Communication Trait Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Measure	Canonical 1	Canonical 2
Organizational orientation		
Upward mobile	0.99	0.14
Ambivalent	-0.30	0.91
Indifferent	-0.34	0.84
Communication trait		
Assertiveness	0.87	0.40
Responsiveness	0.10	-0.67
Immediacy	0.64	-0.69

variable high ambivalent and indifferent scores were associated with reduced responsiveness and nonverbal immediacy, and to a lesser extent, increased assertiveness. Negative ambivalent and indifferent orientations were modestly associated with the first canonical variable. Responsiveness had no meaningful relationship with the first canonical variable, and upward mobile orientation had no meaningful relationship with the second canonical variable.

RQ7. The seventh research question inquired about the relationship between temperament traits and communication traits. The canonical correlation analysis of these two sets of measures produced statistically significant results. Two canonical correlations were statistically significant. The first canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.52$  [ $F(9, 613.45) = 12.93, p < 0.0001$ ]. The second canonical correlation generated an  $r_c = 0.32$  [ $F(4, 506) = 7.15, p < 0.0001$ ]. Wilks' Lambda for this analysis was 0.66. An examination of the results (see Table 8) indicates that on the first canonical variable higher extraversion was associated with higher nonverbal immediacy and assertiveness. Neuroticism made a small negative contribution and psychoticism made a small positive contribution to the first canonical variable, while responsiveness was not meaningfully associated with this variable. On the second canonical variable higher psychoticism, and to a lesser degree lower neuroticism, were associated with lower responsiveness and nonverbal immediacy, and to a lesser degree, higher assertiveness. Extraversion produced no meaningful relationship with this canonical variable.

RQ8. Our eighth research question asked whether the level of an employee's position in an organization was associated with any of the variables measured in this study. The analyses of variance indicated that only five of the 16 variables in this study were significantly associated with employees' position level. The assertiveness of the employee was associated with their position level [ $F(6, 231) = 2.69, p < 0.02$ , variance accounted for (VAF) = 0.07]. Employees holding higher-level positions were more assertive than those in lower level positions. The motivation of the employee was associated with their position level [ $F(6, 228) = 3.60, p < 0.002$ , VAF = 0.09]. Employees holding higher-level positions were more motivated than those in lower level positions. All of the organizational orientations were associated with their

**Table 8** Correlations of Temperament and Communication Trait Measures with Their Canonical Variables

Measure	Canonical 1	Canonical 2
Temperament		
Extraversion	0.98	-0.05
Neuroticism	-0.29	0.36
Psychoticism	0.21	0.97
Communication trait		
Assertiveness	0.60	0.36
Responsiveness	-0.09	-0.86
Nonverbal Immediacy	0.83	-0.52

position level—upward mobile [ $F(6, 231) = 4.05, p < 0.001, VAF = 0.10$ ], ambivalent [ $F(6, 230) = 3.30, p < 0.005, VAF = 0.08$ ], and indifferent [ $F(6, 233) = 2.55, p < 0.02, VAF = 0.06$ ]. Employees in higher position levels scored higher on upward mobile and lower on both ambivalent and indifferent orientations than employees in lower level positions.

**RQ9.** Our ninth research question asked whether the type of organization (profit or nonprofit) in which a person was employed was associated with any of the variables under study in this research. The analyses of variance indicated that only three of the 16 variables in this study were significantly associated with the type of organization in which employees were working. All of the communication traits were slightly associated with type of organization—assertiveness [ $F(1, 257) = 10.79, p < 0.001, VAF = 0.04$ ], responsiveness [ $F(1, 258) = 6.62, p < 0.01, VAF = 0.03$ ], and nonverbal immediacy [ $F(1, 257) = 4.84, p < 0.03, VAF = 0.02$ ]. Employees working in for profit organizations were a little more assertive, while employees working in nonprofit organizations were a little more responsive and nonverbally immediate. However, the amount of variance attributable to type of organization was low in all of these analyses.

**RQ10.** Our tenth research question asked whether scores on employee assertiveness and responsiveness were associated with their perception of their supervisor's assertiveness and responsiveness. The simple correlation of the assertiveness scores was  $r = 0.19$  ( $p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.03$ ). The simple correlation of the responsiveness scores was  $r = 0.35$  ( $p < 0.0001, R^2 = 0.12$ ). As noted in Table 1, employees perceived their supervisor to be more assertive than themselves ( $M = 38.7$  to  $M = 35.7$ ). This difference is statistically significant ( $t = 5.09, p < 0.0001$ ). However, they perceived themselves to be more responsive than their supervisor ( $M = 41.8$  to  $M = 35.5$ ). This difference also is statistically significant ( $t = 11.67, p < 0.0001$ ).

**RQ11.** Our final research question asked whether research on organizational orientations employing undergraduate students can be applied to more typical employees in profit and nonprofit organizations. While there was no single test in this research that would provide an absolute answer to this question, all of our relevant correlational results were consistent with those reported in previous research. This is strong support for the applicability of research in this area to employees in normal organizational environments, whether they be profit or nonprofit organizations.

## Discussion

The present research was designed to replicate and extend previous research involving organizational orientations. Our primary concern was the application of earlier findings to full-time employees in a wide variety of profit and nonprofit organizations. In the process we also extended the previous work to include variables not previously included in research in this area.

The correlations related to our first seven research questions were very strong. That is, the relationships observed were not trivial, they accounted for substantial variance.

The range of variance accounted for in these seven relationship tests was from 17 to 40%, with a mean of 28%. Given the high power provided by a large sample, generally highly reliable measures, and high variance accounted for, it is likely that the results observed are socially significant.

The results of this research permit us to draw several conclusions about organizational orientations. Based on both the previous research and the current investigation, the reliability of the measures of organizational orientations are satisfactory. Given that a number of observed relationships between organizational orientations and other sets of variables were found to be substantial, the predictive validity of the measures also has been strongly supported. With regard to temperament, we can conclude that ambivalent and indifferent orientations are substantially positively associated with neuroticism and psychoticism and upward mobile orientations are substantially associated with extraversion. With regard to supervisor source credibility, we can conclude that ambivalent and indifferent orientations are substantially negatively associated with employees' perceptions of their supervisor's credibility on all dimensions. With regard to communication traits, we can conclude that upward mobile orientations are positively associated with nonverbal immediacy and that ambivalent and indifferent orientations are associated negatively with both responsiveness and immediacy, but somewhat positively associated with assertiveness. Finally, in terms of organizational outcomes, we can conclude that upward mobile orientations are positively associated with the organizational outcomes of job satisfaction and motivation, but ambivalent and indifferent orientations are negatively associated with both of these organizational outcomes.

The results of this research also permit us to draw several conclusions about temperament. As we noted above, temperament is substantially associated with organizational orientations. With regard to communication traits, we can conclude that extraversion is positively associated with both assertiveness and nonverbal immediacy, and psychoticism is associated negatively with both responsiveness and nonverbal immediacy. With regard to organizational outcomes we can conclude that both neuroticism and psychoticism are negatively associated with job satisfaction and motivation.

Source credibility was viewed in this study as an intermediary variable. That is, it was believed that source credibility would be impacted by organizational orientations and, in turn, impact organizational outcomes. Although there was no direct test of this speculation in this study, the results of this research are consistent with that view. Ambivalent and indifferent orientations were found to be strongly negatively associated with employees' perceptions of their supervisor's credibility on all dimensions, and their perceptions of their supervisor's credibility on all dimensions were highly related to both job satisfaction and motivation.

The results of this research show strong relationships among organizational orientations, temperament, and communication traits. Since the measures of these scales were all completed by the same participants, it is possible that some "halo

effects" may be present, which inflate these results. However, an alternative explanation appears more justified. That is, these traits may all be influenced by the same genetically based brain systems. Temperament (particularly as measured by the instruments used for the BIG THREE temperament variables) has been validated as having a genetic base (Eysenck, 1990). Research on communication traits has accumulated to the point where there is little doubt that many communication traits (such as nonverbal immediacy, assertiveness, responsiveness, and communication apprehension), at least, have genetic bases (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001; McCroskey, Heisel, & Richmond, 2001). It is possible that organizational orientations are influenced by these same genetic factors.

At first look this may seem directly contrary to Presthus' (1958) view that organization orientations are learned. We must remember that in the 1950s it was not "politically correct" to even consider genetic factors related to human behavior, hence his learning view was consistent with the times. Some of the results in this study, specifically the fact that the employee sample that participated in this research reported significantly lower ambivalent and indifferent orientations than the younger college students who participated in previous research, strongly suggest that these orientations may be influenced over time (learning through training and/or experience). Hence, it seems possible that both learning and genetic factors are involved, and the genetic elements produce the kinds of relationships among these groups of traits that have been observed in the present study. At this point, there is insufficient information from which to draw a firm conclusion.

The results of this study relating to research question eight also permit several conclusions. First, level of employee position is associated with employee assertiveness and motivation. "What causes what" is difficult to say, for we have no causal data available. It may be that assertive and motivated employees are more likely to be promoted. Or, it may be that as one moves up the ranks one must become more assertive (to handle subordinates) and that increases in status lead to increased motivation. Second, organizational orientations are moderately associated with position level. Highly upward mobile employees report being in higher positions, more ambivalent and indifferent employees report being in lower positions. Again, causality is not clear. It could be that the orientation leads to promotion or no promotion, or being at a certain level may influence the orientation.

The results related to our ninth research question account for very little variance, so any conclusions based on those results need to be qualified. For the most part, we found few differences relating to employees in profit or nonprofit organizations. It appears that employees in profit organizations may be a bit more assertive—maybe because it is more necessary to be so in a "bottom-line" organization, or maybe more assertive people think profit organizations have more to offer them. Similarly, employees of nonprofit organizations appear to be a bit more immediate and responsive—maybe because many nonprofit organizations are in the service sector and such behavior is more consistent with their position, or maybe immediate, responsive people want to work in "helping" or "service" organizations.

The results of the research related to our tenth research question indicated a very modest correlation between subordinate and supervisor assertiveness, and a comparatively strong correlation between subordinate and supervisor responsiveness. Both of the findings are consistent with the reciprocity and accommodation theories. Since these kinds of correlations do not seem to exist in self-reports involving transitory relationships, but do exist in more long-term relationships, these theories provide the best explanation for the observed results. Subordinates and supervisors both may be trying to adjust to the behavior of the other. Adapting to supervisors' nonverbal immediacy and/or responsiveness may be much easier than to their assertiveness behavior. The former is most likely to be seen as pro-social behavior, where the latter, particularly if it involves increasing assertiveness, may be seen as anti-social behavior.

Our final research question focused on the central purpose of this research—trying to apply organizational orientations theory and research to regular employees in profit and nonprofit organizations. We conclude that the answer to this question is that, yes, this theory and research has been successfully applied, and can be so in other “real-world” contexts. That does not mean, however, there is no more that needs to be learned in this area. There are several things not considered in the present research that need to be considered in future research.

First, are there only three organizational orientations? The previous and current research has focused attention exclusively on the three dimensions of organizational orientations that were advanced by Presthus (1958). We believe there are at least three other orientations that have been addressed by personality psychologists, which may have important contributions to organizational orientation theory. They are achievement orientation, Machiavellianism, and authoritarianism. High achievers, for example, may be highly committed employees, but not be interested in moving up the organizational ladder. High Machiavellians may be interested in influencing the organization to fulfill their own needs and desires, even at the expense of the organization. High authoritarians may rise in organizations by being devoted to the service of the authority figures above them. While these orientations have been studied largely as general personality traits, it may well be that there are sub-traits in each of these areas, which are strictly organizationally oriented. There is a need for the development of measures of these sub-traits and subsequent investigations of their role in organizational communication behavior and outcomes.

Second, the communication traits examined in the current research are not the only important communication traits that may be related to organizational orientations. The most obvious example is willingness to communicate—in this instance, within the organizational context. It is likely that organizational orientations are related to such willingness. In previous research communication apprehension was found to be modestly related to the upward mobile orientation (negatively) and the ambivalent orientation (positively). Behavioral shyness also may be an important communication trait related to organizational orientations.

Finally, beyond the organizational outcomes examined in the current research, and source credibility, there are many other organizational outcomes that need to be considered. Retention is an obvious concern, given the cost to train employees in many organizations. Working in groups, given the dependence on teams in many organizations, is another. Productivity and supervisor evaluation are two more. The impact of organizational orientations on organizational outcomes has barely begun.

While it is important to examine organizational orientations in case studies in individual organizations, it is important to remember that each case study represents a sample size of one. Generalizability of such research is not necessary when it is conducted for the benefit of the individual organization. However, generalizability to other organizations and to general organizational communication theory is minimal. Future research should focus, as the current study did, on participants from many organizations in order to advance generalized knowledge in the area of organizational communication.

## References

- Beatty, M. J., McCroskey, J. C., & Valencic, K. M. (2001). *The biology of communication: A communibiological perspective*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1990). Biological dimensions of personality. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 244-276). New York: Guilford.
- Eysenck, H. J., & Eysenck, M. W. (1985). *Personality and individual differences: A natural science approach*. New York: Plenum.
- Eysenck, S. B. G., Eysenck, H. J., & Barrett, P. (1985). A revised version of the psychoticism scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 6, 21-29.
- Hatcher, L., & Stepanski, E. J. (1994). *A step-by-step approach to using the SAS system for univariate and multivariate statistics*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute.
- Koehler, J. W., Anatol, K. W. E., & Applbaum, R. L. (1981). *Organizational communication: Behavioral perspectives*, (2nd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- McCroskey, J. C., Heisel, A. D., & Richmond, V. P. (2001). Eysenck's BIG THREE and communication traits: Three correlational studies. *Communication Monographs*, 68, 360-366.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1989). Bipolar scales. In P. Emmert & L. L. Barker (Eds.), *Measurement of communication behavior* (pp. 154-167). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (2000). Applying reciprocity and accommodation theories to supervisor/subordinate communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28, 278-289.
- McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., Johnson, A. D., & Smith, H. T. (2003, May). *Organizational orientations theory and measurement: Development of measure and preliminary investigations*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the International Communication Association, San Diego, CA.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 90-102.
- Presthus, R. V. (1958). Toward a theory of organizational behavior. *Administration Science Quarterly*, 3, 48-72.
- Pruden, H. O. (1973). The upward mobile, indifferent, and ambivalent typology of managers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 16, 455-464.

- Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1990). Reliability and separation of factors on the assertiveness-responsiveness measure. *Psychological Reports*, 67, 449-450.
- Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (2000). The impact of supervisor and subordinate immediacy on relational and organizational outcomes. *Communication Monographs*, 67, 85-95.
- Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (2001). *Organizational communication for survival: Making work, work*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., & Johnson, A. D. (2003). Development of the nonverbal immediacy scale (NIS): Measures of self- and other-perceived nonverbal immediacy. *Communication Quarterly*, 51, 504-517.