14 Willingness to Communicate and Dysfunctional Communication Processes

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In the general North American culture, interpersonal communication is highly valued. People are evaluated in large part on the basis of their communication behavior. While there are exceptions, people who communicate well typically are evaluated more positively than people who do not. In fact, in most instances the more a person communicates, up to a very high extreme, the more positively the person is evaluated (Daly & Stafford, 1984; McCroskey, 1977; Richmond, 1984). It can be argued, therefore, that there are few things more dysfunctional for the well-being of an individual in this society than to be a poor communicator or not to be willing to communicate with others.

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCT AND INTRAPERSONAL PERCEPTION

Whether a person is willing to communicate with another person in a given encounter is impacted by the intrapersonal state of the individual and by the situational constraints of the encounter. The intrapersonal state of the person can impact whether he or she wants to communicate. This includes such things as how the person feels on a particular day, what the other person looks like, what might be gained or lost by communicating, other demands on the person, his/her state of mind, and so on. Hence, both intrapersonal and interpersonal demands can impact whether an individual is or is not willing to communicate with another.

Willingness to communicate, then, is to a major degree situationally dependent. Nevertheless, individuals exhibit regular willingness to communicate tendencies across situations. Consistent behavioral tendencies with regard to frequency and amount of talk have been noted in the research for decades (Borgatta & Bales, 1953; Chapple & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman-Eisler, 1951; Hayes & Metzger, 1972). Willingness to communicate is the personality orientation which explains why one person will communicate and another will not under identical or virtually identical situational constraints.

BASIS OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCT

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

Unwillingness to Communicate

Burgoon (1976) originated the first construct in this area. Her concern was primarily directed toward the dysfunctional aspects of non-communication. She labeled her construct "unwillingness to communicate." This predisposition was described as "a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication." Burgoon drew upon writings in the areas of alienation and anomie, introversion, self-esteem, and communication apprehension. All of these areas of research indicate variability in people's willingness to talk in a variety of communication settings.

A self-report measure, the Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale (UCS), was developed as an operational definition of the construct. The measure was found to include two factors. One factor was labeled "approach-avoidance" and was found to be so highly correlated with a measure of communication apprehension as to be virtually interchangeable with the measure. The other factor was labeled "reward." This factor was not correlated with a measure of communication apprehension ($r = .01$).

Data reported by Burgoon (1976), while pointing to the potential usefulness of the UCS, also demonstrated it was not a valid operationalization of the construct which had been advanced. The scores on the approach-avoidance (or communication apprehension) factor were found to be correlated with a measure of communication, total participation in a small group, and amounts of information-giving and information-seeking in a small

group. The reward factor was uncorrelated with any of these criterion measures. In contrast, scores on the reward factor were correlated with satisfaction with a group, attraction to group members, and perceived coordination in a group. Scores on the approach-avoidance factor were uncorrelated with these criterion measures.

These results were discouraging because the behavioral measures of communication, which could be taken as validating a willingness or unwillingness to communicate predisposition, were only correlated with the approach-avoidance, or communication apprehension, factor scores. Thus, the results did not provide support for a general predisposition of unwillingness to communicate. Rather, they only indicated that people who are fearful or anxious about communication are likely to engage in less communication than others--a finding that had been observed many times before and since this investigation.

The results of the validation research for the UCS, then, suggest that the measure is not a valid operationalization of the construct of a global predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate. However, the results do not deny the possible existence of such a predisposition. In fact, they provide additional evidence that some regularity in the amount a person communicates does exist.

Predispositions toward Verbal Behavior

Mortensen et al. (1977) argued that "the more global features of speech tend to be consistent from one class of social situations to another." Although they recognized the importance of variance in situational characteristics in determining how much a person will communicate, they noted findings from over 25 years of research which indicate consistency in the amount of communication of an individual exhibits across communication situations. They suggested there is a characteristic predisposition of an individual to talk a given amount and that predisposition operates within the constraints of individual situations. They labeled this phenomenon "predispositions toward verbal behavior."

Unlike Burgoon (1976), these authors did not explore the possible causes of the global predisposition. Rather, they simply argued that it exists and provided a self-report scale designed to measure it. This measure is known as the Predispositions toward Verbal Behavior (PVB) scale. It is a 25-item, Likert-type scale employing a seven-step response option.

On the basis of the data reported by Mortensen et al. (1977), the PVB appears to be a unidimensional scale, although they indicate an interpretable multiple-factor solution can be forced. Only one of the five factors interpreted centered on a

general disinclination to engage in communication. The remaining factors appeared to measure dominance in communication, initiating and maintaining interpersonal communication, frequency and duration of communication, and anxiety about communication.

Data on validity indicated the ability of the PVB to significantly predict both number of words spoken and duration of talk in interpersonal interactions. However, since only five of the 25 items focus directly on a general willingness or unwillingness to communicate (the communication disinclination factor), the reason for the obtained predictive validity is in considerable doubt.

A reported high correlation of the PVB with a measure of communication apprehension ($r = .67$) increases that doubt. As we noted previously, considerable research prior and subsequent to the development of the PVB has found communication apprehension to be predictive of the amount a person talks in various settings. Communication apprehension measures are not presumed to be direct measures of a global predisposition to approach or avoid communication. Rather, they are presumed to be indications of the amount of fear or anxiety an individual is likely to experience about communication. Such fear or anxiety, however, is likely to be one of the antecedents of a general predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate.

The PVB, therefore, does not appear to be a valid operationalization of a general predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate. As was the case with the UCS, however, the research results based on the PVB provide additional indications that some regularity exists in the amount an individual communicates.

Shyness

Shyness is a term which has been used by many researchers when investigating trait-like predispositions toward communication. Unfortunately, some researchers fail to provide any definition of the term and those who do are far from universal agreement on its definition. Leary (1983), basing his efforts on earlier work on shyness, generated a construct he called "social anxiety." He noted two components in his construct--an internally experienced discomfort and externally observable behavior. Some writers in the area of shyness have focused on the internal experience. Their work has paralleled work in the area of communication apprehension. Others have focused on shyness as reduced communication behaviors. This approach appears to be consistent with a concern for a predisposition toward willingness to communicate.

The work of McCroskey and Richmond (1982) falls in the latter category. They defined shyness as "the tendency to be timid, reserved, and most specifically, talk less." They noted that communication apprehension is one of possibly numerous elements which may impact that tendency but that the two predispositions are conceptually distinct.

In earlier work McCroskey attempted to develop a simplified version of a measure of communication apprehension for use in a study with preliterate children (McCroskey, Andersen, Richmond, & Wheeless, 1981). As a serendipitous artifact of that work, he developed a self-report scale which was factorially distinct from, yet substantially correlated with a measure of communication apprehension. The items on the scale centered on the amount of talking people report they do. He initially labeled the new instrument the "Verbal Activity Scale" (VAS) but changed the name to the "Shyness Scale" (SS) in later reports of its use. we will refer to it here by its original name to avoid confusion of this measure with a large number of other available measures also called shyness scales which focus on anxiety about communication rather than communication behavior.

In the belief that measures of communication apprehension and the VAS were tapping distinctly different, although related constructs, McCroskey and Richmond (1982) attempted to validate both by examining their factorial independence and their relationships with reports of communication behaviors taken from untrained observers who were friends of the subjects completing the measures. Employing both college student and older adult samples, they found that the measures were factorially distinct, as McCroskey had found in previous work, and were significant predictors of observer reports of communication behavior. The validity coefficient for the VAS and observer reports of behavior was .53.

While these results suggest the VAS is a valid measure of something, it is not certain that "something" is a predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate. The VAS is a self-report of the amount of talk in which one typically engages. The data reported by McCroskey and Richmond (1982) suggest the scores generated are valid predictors of the amount of talk in which observers believe the individual engages. Even if we grant the validity of observer reports as quality indicants of actual behavior, this simply means the VAS is a valid report of behavioral tendencies in communication. It does not validate the existence of a personality-based predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate. That a person can with some accuracy self-report whether he or she talks a lot or a little does not necessarily demonstrate the behavior being reported is consistent

with a predispositional desire much less produced by such a predisposition.

As was the case with the research involving the UCS and PVB noted above, the research involving the VAS lends additional support for the argument that some regularity exists in the amount an individual communicates. Unfortunately, it is not clear the VAS is a measure of a personality-based predisposition to be willing or unwilling to communicate, even though it may be a valid measure of a behavioral tendency to communicate more or less.

Willingness to Communicate

Abundant evidence exists to support the argument that people exhibit differential behavioral tendencies to communicate more or less across communication situations. A recently developed self-report instrument, known as the willingness to Communicate (WTC: McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey, 1986) scale appears to be a valid operationalization of the construct. It has strong content validity and there is some support for its construct (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986a; 1986b) and predictive (Chan & McCroskey, 1987; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1986) validity.

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

This assumption does not mandate that a person be equally willing to communicate in all contexts or with all receivers, only that the level of willingness in various contexts and with various receivers be correlated. Thus if Person A is much more willing to communicate in small groups than in a public speaking context, the underlying assumption is not necessarily violated. However, if Person A is more willing to communicate than Person B in one context, it is assumed that Person A will be more willing to communicate than Person B in other contexts as well. If no such regularity exists when data

are aggregated for a large number of people, willingness to communicate in one context will not be predictive of willingness to communicate in another context and willingness to communicate with one type of receiver will not be predictive of willingness to communicate with another type of receiver. In this event, the data would invalidate the assumption of a trait-like predisposition and necessitate we redirect attention to predispositions that are context-based and/or receiver-based, or forego the predispositional approach in favor of a purely situational explanation of willingness to communicate.

The WTC scale includes items related to four communication contexts--public speaking, talking in meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads--and three types of receivers--strangers, acquaintances, and friends. The scale includes twelve scored items and eight filler items. In addition to an overall WTC score, presumably representing the general personality orientation of willingness to communicate, seven subscores may be generated. These represent the four types of communication contexts and the three types of receivers.

Available data on the instrument are very promising (McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986a; 1986b; McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 1987). The internal reliability of the total WTC score is .92. Internal reliabilities for the subscores for communication context range from .65 to .76. Internal reliabilities for the subscores for types of receivers range from .74 to .82. The mean correlation among context subscores is .58. After correction for attentuation, the mean correlation among context subscores is .88 and among receiver-type subscores it is .82. Factor analysis indicates that all twelve scored items load most highly on the first unrotated factor indicating the scale is unidimensional. No interpretable multidimensional structure could be obtained through forced rotations in the McCroskey and Baer (1985) study.

The above correlations and reliabilities suggest an individual's willingness to communicate in one context or with one receiver type is highly related to her/his willingness to communicate in other contexts and with other receiver types, precisely as the construct of willingness to communicate assumes. This does not mean, however, that individuals are equally willing to communicate in all contexts and with all types of receivers. In fact, major mean differences were observed across the samples of subjects in the studies on the basis of receiver type. In one study, for example, the observed mean percentage of time people indicated they would be willing to communicate with friends was 85.5. For acquaintances and strangers the percentages were 75.0 and 41.3, respectively. Contexts produced substantial, but less dramatic, differences in willingness. The

percentages for the contexts were as follows: dyad, 79.5; group, 73.4; meeting, 60.0; and public, 56.1. In general, the larger the number of receivers and the more distant the relationship of the individual with the receiver(s) the less willing the individual is to communicate.

The data generated by the WTC scale suggest the validity of our construct of a general predisposition toward being willing or unwilling to communicate. The scale also appears to be valid. The items clearly represent the construct as we have outlined it and the subscore correlations suggest the instrument is measuring a broadly based predisposition rather than a series of independent predispositions. whether the WTC can be used as a valid predictor of actual communication behavior is another question. Early results have been extremely encouraging (Chan & McCroskey, 1987; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1986). when subjects' communication behavior has been observed under circumstances where they truly had free choice of whether to communicate or not, their scores on the WTC scale were highly predictive of their actual behavior.

ANTECEDENTS OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

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

The antecedents which we will consider below are variables that have received considerable attention from interpersonal and intrapersonal scholars in communication and/or psychology. Each of them is of interest to scholars for a variety of reasons, only one of which is a possible relationship with willingness to communicate. The variables we will consider are introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, communication skill level, communication competence, and communication apprehension.

Introversion

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

Introverts often are characterized as quiet, timid, and shy. Other things being equal, they prefer to withdraw from communication. This may stem in part from anxiety about communication, However, the relationship between introversion and communication apprehension is modest (.33, Huntley, 1969). Numerous studies have indicated a relationship between introversion and communication behaviors characteristic of people presumed to have a low willingness to communicate. For example, Carment, Miles, and Cervin (1965) found introverts participated in a small group discussion significantly less than extroverts and tended to speak only when spoken to rather than initiating interaction. Similarly, Borg and Tupes (1958) found introverts were significantly less likely to engage in the communication behaviors necessary to exercise leadership in small groups than were extroverts. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a) found introversion and willingness to communicate to be significantly correlated ($r = -.29$).

Anomie and Alienation

Anomie refers to a state of an individual in which normative standards are severely reduced or lost. Anomics are normless, they have failed to internalize society's norms and values, including a value for communication. They often feel alone and socially isolated (Bloom, 1970; Dean, 1961; Elmore, 1965). Alienation, an extreme manifestation of anomie, is a feeling of estrangement, of being apart and separate from other human beings and from society in general.

Alienation has been found to be directly related to withdrawal from communication (Giffin, 1970; Giffin & Groginsky, 1970). Anomie-alienation have also been found to be associated with negative attitudes toward communication and reduced interaction with peers, parents, teachers, and administrators (Heston & Andersen, 1972). In short, anomie and alienation appear to generate behaviors characteristic of people

presumed to have a low willingness to communicate. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986 a) found both anomie (r = -.14) and alienation (r = -.17) to be correlated with willingness to communicate, but the relationships were not high.

Self-Esteem

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

In an unpublished study we found self-esteem to be significantly related to amount of times people talk in a small group setting--the higher the self-esteem the more times talked. However, we also found that if the variance attributable to communication apprehension were removed first, self-esteem accounted for no significant variance in times talked. Thus, it may be that self-esteem is related to willingness to communicate but only as a function of the relationship between self-esteem and anxiety about communication, a relationship which has been found to be quite strong (McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, & Falcione, 1977).

The only research reported to this point which provides data directly bearing on the relationship between self-esteem and willingness to communicate was provided by McCroskey and McCroskey (1986 a,b). They observed a modest correlation between the two, r = .22.

Cultural Divergence

Although communication exists in all human cultures and subcultures, communication norms are highly variable as a function of culture. Thus, one's communication norms and competencies are culture-bound. In a few countries, like Japan, a single culture is almost universally dominant. In other countries, like the United States, there is a majority culture and many subcultures. These subcultures exist both as a function of geographic region and ethnicity. People from Texas and people from Maine have differing communication norms. So too do Mexican rican, Black Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, and so forth.

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

The culturally divergent individual is very similar to the person who has deficient communication skills (whom we will discuss below). They do not know how to communicate effectively so they tend to be much less willing to communicate at all to avoid failure and possible negative consequences. The difference between the culturally divergent and the skill deficient is that the culturally divergent individual may have excellent communication skills for one culture but not for the other. Cultural divergence, then, is seen as being highly related to a trait-like willingness to communicate if a person regularly resides in a culture different from her/his own. On the other hand, if the person communicates primarily in her/his own culture and only occasionally must do so in another culture, the impact would only be on situational willingness.

Communication Skills

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

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

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

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

The relationship between skills and willingness probably is a complex one. Low skills, as noted above, may lead to lowered willingness. Conversely, low willingness may result in decreased experience in communication and, hence, reduced skills. In addition, such things as low self-esteem and high communication apprehension may lead to reduced levels of both skills and willingness. For all these reasons, however, it is reasonable to believe that skill level and willingness level should be related.

Communication Competence

Recently, McCroskey and McCroskey (1986b) studied the extent to which self-perceived communication acceptance and willingness to communicate were related. The results of the study revealed there is a substantial relationship between self-perceived competence and willingness to communicate ($r = .59$). Approximately 35 percent of the variance in willingness to communicate could be predicted by self-perceived communication competence.

The results were consistent with previous thinking that a person's predisposition to approach or avoid communication is at least in part a function of how competent the person believes he or she is as a communicator. If a person intrapersonally feels incompetent then she/he most likely will be less willing to communicate with others. The researchers suggested that self-perceived communication competence may actually be more associated with both willingness to communicate and actual communication behavior than is actual communication skill. The choice of whether to communicate or not is made intrapersonally and is heavily influenced by feelings about communication. One may not be accurate in judging their own skill level, but they make decisions based on those judgments whether they are correct or incorrect. Thus, some highly skilled people will be un-

willing to communicate while some people with low skills will be very willing to communicate.

Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977; 1978; 1982; 1984). An individual's level of CA probably is the single best predictor of the person's willingness to communicate. The higher the CA level the lower the level of willingness to communicate.

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

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

Regardless of the operationalization of the construct, research overwhelmingly indicates people who intrapersonally experience high levels of fear or anxiety about communication tend to avoid and withdraw from communication. Although not measured directly, these research results strongly suggest CA directly impacts an individual's willingness to communicate. In addition, research has indicated a substantial relationship exists between CA and WTC. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a; 1986b) observed a correlation of -.50 between the two. Because we believe CA may be the most potent of the antecedents of willingness to communicate, we will examine this construct in greater detail in the next section.

THE COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION CONSTRUCT

In the following section we will outline the essential components of the CA construct. In particular, we will discuss the types of CA, the causes of CA, the effects of CA, and the measurement of CA.

Types of CA

Our concern with CA here centers on CA as a trait-like, personality-type variable. Over the almost two decades in which research on CA has been conducted, most of the attention it has received has centered on this concern. However, the conceptualization of CA extends beyond the trait-like predisposition and identifies four types of CA which extend from the trait-like to the pure situational. The four types are referred to as trait-like, context-based, receiver-based, and situational. We will consider each below.

Trait-Like CA is viewed as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts. Our concern here is with oral communication. However, trait-like apprehension about other modes of communication have also been studied under the labels of writing apprehension (Daly & Miller, 1975) and singing apprehension (Andersen, Andersen, & Garrison, 1978).

Trait-Like CA is presumed to be a relatively stable predisposition toward experiencing fear and/or anxiety in a variety of communication contexts. While an individual's level of trait-like CA is presumed to be subject to change over time as a function of differing communication experiences or treatment interventions, it is presumed to be relatively consistent over extended time periods in the absence of major traumatic experiences or systematic interventions. In short, it is embedded in the total personality of the individual.

Context-based CA is viewed as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward communication in a given type of context. Apprehension about public speaking, commonly known as "speech fright" or "stage fright," is an example of this type of CA. whereas trait-like CA is presumed to generalize across communication contexts, context-based CA is presumed to be restricted to a single type of context. A person, for example, could have consistently high CA with regard to communication in public but experience little CA in dyadic or small group interactions. Similarly, a person could have consistently high CA with regard to interpersonal communication but experience little CA when presenting a public speech or talking in a large meeting. As was the case with trait-like CA, context-based CA is presumed to be stable over extended periods of time.

Receiver-based CA is viewed as a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people or a given type of person or group of persons. This type of CA is viewed as personality based and/or a response to consistent situational constraints generated by a given person or group of people. Receiver-based CA which centers on a certain

type of person or group of persons (i.e., strangers, acquaintances, or friends) is presumed to be rooted in personality. However, that which centers on a particular person or group of persons (i.e., the boss, the teacher, one's colleagues) may be a function of both personality and situational constraints generated by the other person or group. If one is apprehensive about all bosses, this probably stems from a personality orientation and would likely be quite stable over time. If, however, the person usually is not bothered by bosses, but is bothered by one particular boss, this probably stems from situational constraints generated by that boss. This would be much more subject to change as a function of the boss generating different situational constraints.

People can differ greatly in their levels of receiver-based CA. For example, a teacher might experience very little CA when talking to one of her/his students but a great deal when talking to the principal. Similarly, a speaker may experience a great deal of CA when talking to a group of strangers but experience very little when talking to a group of friends.

Length of acquaintance may be expected to have a major impact on the degree to which receiver-based CA is impacted by personality as opposed to situational constraints generated by a given receiver or group of receivers. The shorter the acquaintance period, the more we should expect personality to be a factor (Richmond, 1978).

Situational CA is viewed as a transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people. This type of CA should be expected to fluctuate substantially as a function of changed constraints introduced by the environment in which the communication takes place and the behavior of the other person or people in the communication encounter.

Receiver-based, context-based, and trait-like CA should be expected to be predicitve of situational CA considered across relevant situations. However, they should not be expected to be equally predictive. Receiver- and context- based CA should be expected to be more predictive than trait-like because they more directly and restrictively relate to elements present in given situations. However, trait-like CA is also presumed to be predictive of CA experienced across a wide variety of situations. It will be most predictive of the average situational CA experienced when a variety of types of context and types of receivers are considered together.

Causes of CA

The two primary explanations provided for the development of personality in human beings center on heredity and en-

vironment. In short, one can be born with it or learn it. Explanations for the development of CA have focused on these two factors.

Researchers in the area of social biology have established that significant social traits can be measured in infants shortly after birth, and that infants differ sharply from each other on these traits. One of these traits is referred to as "sociability," which is believed to be a predisposition directly related to adult sociability--the degree to which one reaches out to other people and responds positively to contact with other people.

Research with identical and fraternal twins of the same sex reinforces the theoretical role of heredity in personality development. Identical twins are biologically identical, whereas fraternal twins are not. Thus, if differences between twins raised in the same environment are found to exist, biology (heredity) can be discounted as a cause in one case but not in the other. Research has indicated that biologically identical twins are much more similar in sociability than are fraternal twins. This research is particularly important because it was conducted with a large sample of adult twins who had the opportunity to have many different and varied social experiences (Buss, 1980).

This research strongly suggests that heredity may have an important bearing on an individual's willingness to communicate. whether such hereditary influence passes through CA to impact willingness to communicate, however, remains an unknown. No hereditary research to date has involved measurement of CA, so the question of the impact of heredity on CA must remain open. At this point we doubt that a substantial impact exists. Research on the treatment methods for reducing high CA (e.g., McCroskey, Ralph & Barrick, 1970; McCroskey, 1972) suggests that methods based on learning models are highly effective and require relatively brief time periods to implement. It strikes us as unlikely such would be the case if CA were biologically based. Thus, at present we believe any substantial impact of heredity on willingness to communicate more than likely passes through some other antecedent of this predisposition. The one we think most likely is extroversion-introversion. In any event, in the absence of directly relevant research, any presumed relationship must rest on pure speculation.

We believe that CA is a learned phenomenon. More specifically, trait-like CA represents an accumulation of state anxiety experiences (McCroskey & Beatty, 1984). An explanation of this process centers on work in expectancy learning, particularly that concerning learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975).

People develop expectations with regard to other people and with regard to situations. Expectations are also developed

concerning the probable outcomes of engaging in specific behaviors (such as talking). To the extent that such expectations are found to be accurate, the individual develops confidence. When expectations are found to be inaccurate, the individual is confronted with the need to develop new expectations. When this continually recurs, the individual may develop a lack of confidence. When no appropriate expectations can be developed, anxiety is produced. When expectations are produced that entail negative outcomes that are seen as difficult or impossible to avoid, fear is produced. When applied to communication behavior, these last two cases are the foundation of CA.

Reinforcement is a vital component of expectancy learning. Organisms form expectations on the basis of attempting behaviors and being reinforced for some and either not reinforced or punished for others. The most gestalt expectancy is that there is regularity in the environment. This forms the basis for the development of other, more specific expectations. when no regularity can be discovered in a given type of situation, either because none exists or there is too little exposure to that type of situation to obtain sufficient observation and reinforcement, the organism is unable to develop a regular behavioral response pattern for that situation that will maximize rewards and minimize punishments. Anxiety is the cognitive response to such situations, and the behavior is unpredictable to a large extent. However, nonbehavior such as avoidance or withdrawal is probable, since even though this does not increase the probability of obtaining reward, it decreases the probability of receiving punishment in many instances. The organism essentially becomes helpless.

In the early animal research concerning helplessness, dogs were placed in an environment in which rewards and punishments were administered on a random schedule. After attempting behaviors to adapt to this environment but receiving no regular response from the environment, the dogs retreated to a corner and virtually stopped behaving. They became helpless, and some actually died (Seligman, 1975). Although a major portion of the research supporting the learned helplessness construct has been conducted with animals, Feinberg, Miller, and Weiss (1983) have demonstrated its applicability to the learning of communication behavior by humans.

We learn our communicative behavior by trying various behaviors in our environment and receiving various rewards and punishments (or absence of rewards or punishments) for our efforts. Over time and situations, we develop expectations concerning the likely outcomes of various behaviors within and across situations. Three things can occur from this process. All can occur for the same individual. However, they may occur to

greatly different degrees for different individuals. All are environmentally controlled. The three things than can occur are positive expectations, negative expectations, and helplessness. Let us consider each.

When we engage in communication behaviors that work (that is, are reinforced, we achieve some desired goal), we develop positive expectations for those behaviors and they become a regular part of our communicative repertoire. While in the early childhood years much of this occurs through trial and error, during later stages of development, cognition becomes more important. We may think through a situation and choose communication behaviors that our previous experience suggests we should expect to be successful. Formal instruction in communication adds to our cognitive capacity to develop such expectations and choose appropriate behaviors. To the extent our behaviors continue to be reinforced, we develop stronger positive expectations and our communication behavior becomes more regularly predictable. In addition, we develop confidence in our ability to communicate effectively. Neither anxiety nor fear--the core elements of CA--is associated with such positive expectations.

The development of negative expectations follows much the same pattern as the development of positive expectations. We discover that some communication behaviors regularly result in punishment or lack of reward and tend to reduce those behaviors. During later stages of development, we may make cognitive choices between behaviors for which we have positive and negative expectations, the former being chosen and the latter rejected. However, we may find situations for which we have no behaviors with positive expectations for success. If we can avoid or withdraw from such situations, this is a reasonable choice. However, if participation is unavoidable, we have only behaviors with negative expectations available. A fearful response is the natural outcome. Consider, for example, the person who has attempted several public speeches. In each case, the attempt resulted in punishment or lack of reward. when confronted with another situation that requires the individual to give a public speech, the person will fear that situation. The person knows what to expect, and the expectation is negative.

The development of helplessness occurs when regularity of expectations, either positive or negative, is not present. Helplessness may be either spontaneously learned or developed over time. Spontaneous helplessness occurs in new situations. If the person has never confronted the situation before, he or she may be unable to determine any behavioral options. while this is much more common for young children, adults may confront such situations. For example, visiting a foreign country where one

does not understand the language may place one in a helpless condition. Similarly, some people who are divorced after many years of marriage report they find themselves helpless in communication in the "singles scene." Such spontaneous helplessness may generate strong anxiety feelings, and the behavior of people experiencing such feelings often is seen by others in the environment as highly aberrant.

Helplessness that is learned over time is produced by inconsistent receipt of reward and punishment. Such inconsistency may be a function of either true inconsistency in the environment or the inability of the individual to discriminate among situational constraints in the environment that produce differential outcomes. For example, a child may develop helplessness if the parent reinforces the child's talking at the dinner table some days and punishes it on other days. If the child is unable to determine why the parent behaves differently from day to day, the child is helpless to control the punishments and rewards. Similarly, the child may be rewarded for giving an answer in school but punished for talking to another child in the classroom. If the child is unable to see the differences in these situations, the child may learn to be helpless. When helplessness is learned, it is accompanied by strong anxiety/intrapersonal feelings.

Learned helplessness and learned negative expectations are the foundational components of CA. The broader the helplessness or negative expectations, the more trait-like the CA. Inversely, the more situationally specific the helplessness or negative expectations, the more situational the CA. It should be stressed that helplessness and negative expectations (as well as positive expectations) are the product of an interaction of the behaviors of the individual and the responses of the other individuals in the environment. The development of the cognitive responses of the person, then, may be heavily dependent on the behavioral skills of that person, partly dependent on those skills and partly dependent on the responsiveness of the environment, or almost entirely a result of the environment. Thus, any hereditary component which may exist may only have impact through its interaction with the environment.

Internal Effects of CA

The effects of trait-like CA have been the focus of extensive research. Much of that work has been summarized elsewhere (McCroskey, 1977). Unfortunately, much of the research has centered on the impact of CA on communication behaviors. This research is not completely compatible with the conceptualization of CA as a cognitively, intrapersonally based variable.

Although CA indeed may be linked with communication behavior, current theory suggests that trait-like CA is a precursor of CA in a given situation which may have, but not necessarily will have, an impact on situational willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Beatty, 1984).

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

The importance of this conceptualization of CA must be emphasized. Since CA is experienced internally, the only potentially valid indicant of CA is the individual's report of that experience. Thus self-reports of individuals, whether obtained by paper-and-pencil measures or careful interviews, obtained under circumstances where the individual has nothing to gain or avoid losing by lying, provide the only potentially valid measures of CA. Measures of physiological activation and observations of behavior can provide, at best, only indirect evidence of trait-like CA and thus are inherently inferior approaches to measuring CA. Physiological and behavioral instruments intended to measure CA must be validated with self-report measures, not the other way around. To the extent that such measures are not related to self-report measures, they must be judged invalid. Currently available data indicate that such physiological measures and behavioral observation procedures generally have low validity as measures of trait-like CA but may be somewhat more valid for measuring situational CA (Clevenger, 1959; Behnke & Beatty, 1981).

External Effects of CA

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

Three patterns of behavioral response to high trait-like CA may be predicted to be generally applicable: communication avoidance, communication withdrawal, and communication disrup-

tion. A fourth pattern is atypical but sometimes does occur--excessive communication. Let us consider each.

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

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

Generally, then, verbal communication is substantially reduced when a person wishes to withdraw from communication. Nonverbal communication, on the other hand, may not be reduced but the nonverbal messages which are sent may be primarily of one type. That type is referred to as "nonimmediate." Nonimmediate messages include such things as frowns, standing or sitting away from other people, avoiding eye contact, and standing with arms folded. These messages signal others that a person is not interested in communicating and tend to reduce communication initiation attempts from others.

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

of high CA from observations of such behavior often is inappropriate.

Overcommunication as a response to high trait-like CA is believed to be uncommon (McCroskey, 1984), but does exist as a pattern exhibited by at least some people. This behavior may exhibit overcompensation for a person's high level of apprehension and low level of willingness to communicate. It also might represent a circumstance where a person has a high need and willingness to communicate but also has high apprehension. Willingness and apprehension are presumed to be substantially, but not perfectly, correlated. Thus, this may represent the "fight" response, an attempt to communicate in spite of the presence of high apprehension. The person who elects to take a public speaking course in spite of her/his extreme stage fright is a classic example. Less easily recognizable is the individual with high CA who attempts to dominate social situations. Most of the time people who employ this behavioral option are seen as poor communicators but are not recognized as having high CA. In fact, they may be seen as people with very low CA.

DYSFUNCTIONAL IMPACTS OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

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

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

Since this research has been thoroughly summarized (Daly & Stafford, 1984) and interpreted (Richmond, 1984) previously, we will not take the space here to repeat those efforts in

detail. Instead, we will draw from that work some of the conclusions which appear most important.

We will review the impacts of willingness to communicate in three major communication environments--school, organizational, and social. The impacts are of both an interpersonal nature and an intrapersonal nature.

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

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

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

On the social level, the picture is very similar. People with a high willingness to communicate have more friends and are less likely to be lonely. They are likely to have more dates and to date more people than people less willing to communicate. The latter are more likely to engage in exclusive dating and to marry immediately after completing their schooling. People who are highly willing to communicate are seen as more

socially and physically attractive by others, which may explain some of the other effects noted above.

CONCLUSION

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

While not denying the existence or importance of other personality variables in interpersonal communication and intrapersonal perception we believe willingness to communicate plays the central role in determining an individual's communicative impact on others. Willingness to communicate deserves to receive a high degree of attention from scholars concerned with individual differences in communication and scholars interested in dysfunctional intrapersonal communication processes.

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