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**Topic avoidance in close relationships: Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior**

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to demonstrate if the theory of planned behavior can expand our understanding of the factors that determine people's avoidance in close relationships. This study examined whether or not people's expected outcomes associated with communication (i.e., attitudes toward behavior), perceived partner's communication desire (i.e., subjective norms), and communication efficacy (i.e., perceived behavior control) contribute to the prediction of people's desire to talk about an issue (i.e., intention). The data revealed that partner's communication desire and outcome expectation predicted people's communication desire. In addition, the combination of communication desire and communication efficacy predicted people's avoidance behavior. The findings of the present study suggest that the theory of planned behavior could explain individuals' topic avoidance behavior within close relationships.

Keywords: The theory of planned behavior, communication efficacy, topic avoidance, close relationships



The quality of peoples' lives and their social worlds is associated with the quality of communication in which they engage. Communication is especially important in close relationships because it allows people to develop and maintain the relationship, which often provides pleasure in daily life (Knapp, Daly, Albada, & Miller, 2002). Despite the truth that communication is a key component in close relationships, people sometimes do not feel comfortable talking about some topics with their partner (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004) and resort to topic avoidance (Dailey & Palomares, 2004). Dailey and Palomares suggest that topic avoidance is "a goal-oriented communicative behavior whereby individuals [can] strategically try to keep a conversation away from certain foci" (p. 472). Given the idea that people may intentionally try to stay away from discussing some issues in close relationships, literature suggests that there are several motivations for topic avoidance. People may use avoidance to stay away from criticism and/or vulnerability that come with open communication (e.g., self protection), to keep away from conflicts or partner anger (e.g., relationship protection), and/or to deal with a partner who is unwilling or unable to provide support (e.g., partner unresponsiveness) (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). People may also choose to avoid discussing a topic when the nature of the topic is unimportant, uninteresting, or socially inappropriate.

Although previous research has revealed several motivations for topic avoidance, we still know little about the cognitive process of individuals' topic avoidance behavior. The purpose of the current study was to understand how people come to make decisions to use avoidance using the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). Accordingly, we began by looking at the TPB and examined if the TPB can be functional for topic avoidance behavior in close relationships.

#### The Theory of Planned Behavior

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991, 2002) suggests that individuals' behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs influence behavioral intention, which ultimately predicts behavior. Of the three beliefs, behavioral beliefs (i.e., attitude toward behavior) and normative beliefs (i.e., subjective norms) originated from the earlier version of this theory, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitude toward behavior reflects individuals' positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior and subjective norms reflect individuals' perceptions of perceived social pressure to do or not to do the behavior. The TRA suggests that, if people perceive positive attitudes toward a behavior and perceive significant others support the behavior, their intention to perform the behavior should be strong (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The focus of the TPB, however, is in the inclusion of control beliefs (i.e., perceived behavioral control) and its association with intention. The perceived behavioral control is referred to "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles" (Ajzen & Driver, 1992, p. 208). These scholars suggest that normative beliefs and behavioral beliefs could adequately predict behaviors that are relatively easy, where an intention could sufficiently predict behavior. They argue, however, that attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms may not sufficiently predict behavior when people believe that there are constraints on intended action. By means of control beliefs, the TPB explains why intentions may not predict behaviors.

According to Ajzen (1985; 1991), while attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence individuals' behavioral intention, the relative importance of each in the prediction of intention may vary across the types of behaviors and situations. Armitage and Conner (2001), explain that "in situations where attitudes are strong, or where normative influences are powerful, perceived behavioral control may be less predictive of intentions" (p.

472). In other words, in conditions where the association between attitudes and/or subjective norms and intentions are unsurpassed, perceived behavioral control should have little to no influence on intentions (Ajzen, 2002). In such cases, attitudes toward the behavior and/or subjective norms should have sufficient influence on intentions, which guide behavior. In short, perceived behavioral control has little to no affect on intentions in situations where there is minimum conflict between attitudes and/or subjective norms and behavior.

In contrast, in situations where behavior is not under complete volitional control, perceived behavioral control becomes an important factor that influences behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1985; Terry & O'Leary, 1995). When the link between attitudes and/or subjective norms and intention is weak, perceived behavior control should surface as the main belief that influences behavioral intentions. Although Ajzen (1991) put forward the claim that perceived behavioral control should moderate the link between intentions and behavior, due to the little evidence for the moderating effect, he later argued the direct association between perceived behavioral control and behavior. This alternative argument suggests that perceived behavioral control not only influences intention but also directly influences behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). In any case, perceived behavioral control may be the key belief that affects intention as well as behavior when a target behavior is seen as difficult to complete.

#### Topic Avoidance and the Theory of Planned Behavior

Infante (1980), suggests that human communication behavior is volitional; people generally speak about what they intend to say. However, intimate partners admit that some issues or topics are not easy to discuss with their partner, and, as a consequence, they resort to topic avoidance (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000). Individuals do not always talk about what they wish to say with their partner. If they did, people would talk about things that they wish to say. Nevertheless, research suggests that people prefer to avoid discussing some topics despite their desire for communication of them, because of, for instance, potentially negative relational consequences. That is to say, some communication topics may not be under total volitional control. Given this, Ajzen (1991) would argue that the TPB could be applicable to explain individuals' topic avoidance behavior in close relationships.

Since the current investigation is the first one, to our knowledge, to apply the TPB on topic avoidance behavior, we were guided by the literature when choosing appropriate measures. Consequently, communication efficacy was used to measure perceived behavioral control, outcome assessment and communication emotion assessed attitudes toward behavior, perceived partner's communication desire was used for subjective norms, and finally, communication desires was utilized to assess behavioral intention. In the following section, we discuss each with regard to topic avoidance in close relationships.

#### Perceived Behavioral Control

Although Ajzen (1991) argued that the perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy perception are interchangeable in the TPB, several scholars advocate the use of self-efficacy perception measure in place of perceived behavioral control (de Vries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 2003; Dziewaltowski, Noble, & Shaw, 1990). For instance, White, Terry, and Hogg (1994), found that self-efficacy, when compared with perceived behavioral control, had a stronger effect on intentions to talk about condom use as well as intentions to use condoms. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Armitage and Conner (2001) suggested that while both perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy are useful, "efficacy should be the preferred measure of perceived control within the theory of planned behavior" (p. 488). For that reason, the current investigation uses communication efficacy for perceptions of behavioral control. Communication efficacy referred

to an “individuals’ perception that they possess the skills to complete successfully the communication tasks involved in the information management process” (Afifi & Weiner, 2004, p. 178). In other words, when people believe that they lack the ability to successfully carry on a conversation about a particular topic, they are more likely to avoid discussing the topic with their partner.

#### Attitude Toward Behavior

Attitude toward behavior reflects individuals’ perceived positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When people consider whether or not they should talk about a difficult topic with their partner, they consider if talking about the topic would produce more positive or negative outcomes (Baxter & Simon, 1993). Individuals may communicate about a topic if they perceive that the benefits of discussing the topic outweigh the costs. People would choose topic avoidance if talking would produce more negative personal or relational consequences. Bandura (1986) states that “In any given instance behavior would be best predicted by considering both self-efficacy and outcome beliefs” (p. 140). In other words, attitude toward behavior is an important factor when predicting behavior.

Given the idea that attitudes toward behavior may be associated with intentions to complete the behavior, we used an instrumental measure (i.e., outcome assessment) and an affect measure (i.e., communication emotion) to assess individuals’ attitude toward behavior. The use of both instrumental and affect measures were noted in the previous research (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Outcome assessment (2004) is defined as individuals’ attitudes about the possible outcomes of talking about a topic with their partner (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). People may perceive more positive outcomes, more negative outcomes, or about the equal amount of positive and negative outcomes by discussing a topic with the partner. Because this measure is often used in research involving information seeking or avoidance decision making in uncertainty in close relationships, it could be an appropriate instrumental measure that taps into individuals’ attitudes toward communication/avoidance. It should be noted that we assessed outcome assessment of communication rather than that of avoidance. The decision was based on the idea that people may initially consider communicating a topic, and as they believe communication would not be an optimal choice, they would turn to avoidance. In addition to outcome assessment, communication emotion measure was added as an affect measure. Literature shows that people are more likely to avoid discussing some issues when they experience intense negative emotion as they think about discussing the issues (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). Thus, the affective component may be closely linked to attitude toward communication.

#### Subjective Norms

Previous research suggests that the subjective norms component may be an inadequate and useless construct, because it is weakly associated with intention (Sparks, Shepherd, Wieringa, & Zimmermanns, 1995). A number of scholars have argued that the way subjective norms are conceptualized in the TPB fails to tap important aspects of social influence (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999), and such may be the very reason for the weak association with intentions. An alternative explanation is due to the use of poor measurements of subjective norms (Armitage & Conner, 2001): the subjective norms were measured often using a single item. Although a few scholars have found that some actions were driven primarily by normative beliefs and not by attitudes toward behavior (Trafimow & Finlay, 1996), the majority of research on the TPB reported that the subjective norms construct needs more consideration. Given this, we used individuals’ perception about their partner’s desires about communication as a subjective norms measure. A relational partner is one of the significant others who could

potentially influence people. Moreover, when considering topic communication/avoidance, the partner is the very person with whom people are about to discuss/avoid the topic. Therefore, perceived partner's desire for communication may be the most important and relevant normative beliefs in the context of topic avoidance.

#### Intention

Although the intention construct is central in the TPB, many researchers have failed to accurately measure intention (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Hitherto, there are three prominent ways to measure the intention constructs. Warshaw and Davis (1985) suggest that behavioral intentions (e.g., I intend to perform the behavior) and self-predictions (e.g., I am likely to perform the behavior) are different methods to measure intentions to behavior. Alternatively, based on the idea that attitudes influence desires, which later develop into intentions to behave, Bagozzi (1992) suggests that perceived behavioral control should contribute more variance to the prediction of behavior when desires (e.g., I want to perform the behavior) is used. He adds that desires should take no account for facilitating/inhibiting factors unlike behavioral intention and self-predictions do. Armitage and Conner's (2001) meta-analysis has revealed that, of the three measures mentioned above, desires was most closely associated with the TPB variables: they reported that desires was the weakest predictor of behavior. Therefore, conservatively, the current investigation adopted desires to assess the intention construct.

#### Behavior

According to the avoidance literature, topic avoidance is a strategic behavior to circumvent discussing certain issues when people do not wish to talk about those issues (Dailey & Palomares, 2004). It is plausible that people might initially consider communication concerning a particular issue, and when they believe that discussing the issue is not optimal, they then choose the avoidance option. Alternatively, when people believe that discussing the issue/topic is advantageous, they would talk about the issue. That is, the cognitive process concerning communication about a topic may result in either topic avoidance or communication. Because the focus of the current investigation is topic avoidance, we believe that topic avoidance behavior would be an appropriate behavior indicator in the current study. Individuals who did not use avoidance, naturally, communicated the topic with their partner.

#### Pre-Test

#### Method

Prior to conducting the main study, pre-test data were collected to find frequently avoided topics between intimate partners. Bandura (1986) suggests that, to obtain a valid assessment of efficacy, researchers need to focus on the target behavior in a specific context. Because communication efficacy was used in the current study as a perceived behavioral control measure, we took the recommendation of Bandura. Accordingly, we planned to provide a specific topic to the respondents rather than asking them to think about a random topic. Based on the results of pre-test data, we chose two relatively frequently avoided topics in close relationships.

#### Participants and Procedures

Two hundred nineteen undergraduate students in a midwestern university have participated in the pretest. Ninety-two (42.1%) were men and 127 (57.9%) were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 56, and their mean age was 29.4 ( $SD = 12.53$ ). Respondents were instructed to list five topics that they try to avoid discussing with their relational partner. All respondents received extra course credits by participating in this survey.

## Results and Discussion

Two independent coders coded the topics. All the responses were read and categorized in a list of types of topics respondents avoided discussing with their partner. Then, similar types of topics were combined and infrequent types of topics were put together. Dailey and Palomares's (2004) operationalizations of topics were used to sort the topics by type. According to Dailey and Palomares, for individuals in close relationships, their frequently avoided topics generally fit within seven categories or fourteen topics. The seven categories include the concerns of the current relationship, life experiences, social relations, past relationship experiences, lifestyle, money, and politics/religion (Dailey & Palomares's, 2004).

While the current data showed the similar types of topics as taboo in close relationships, five new topics emerged. Thus, we made some modifications of the seven categories or fourteen topics of Dailey and Palomares's (2004) findings. We maintained all seven categories, but renamed 'social relations' category to 'social/family relations' category. Due to the frequency or the lack of, we dropped 'relationship problems' and 'failures' topics and added five topics, including 'children', 'extended family', 'hobbies', 'school/work', and 'health/weight/foods.' Finally, we renamed two topics due to the nature of the avoided topics: 'dating experiences' to 'past relationships' and 'state of the relationship' to 'future of the relationship'. As a result, we attained seventeen different types of topics. The dissimilar topics between Dailey and Palomares and the current study may be due to the age difference of the respondents. While the mean age for this study was 29.4 ( $SD = 12.53$ ), the mean age for Dailey and Palomares's study was 19.21 ( $SD = 1.35$ ). Because many of the respondents in the present study were married and/or have children, topics of avoidance might be somewhat different from those of traditional college students.

As revealed in Table 1, the most frequently avoided topic was money/financial concerns. Participants also reported that the topic of the future of their relationship was the next most frequently avoided topic. Then, in the order of more to less frequently avoided topics were the following: conflict inducing topics, hobbies, past relationships, sexual experience, school/work, family/extended family, children, health/weight, negative relational behaviors, friendships, politics, religion, rules about the relationship, drinking/smoking, and past negative life experience. Based on the findings of the pre-test survey, we selected two frequently avoided topics: a topic that is relatively more frequently avoided (i.e., the future of relationship or future topic hereafter) and a topic that is relatively less frequently avoided (i.e., the rules about the relationship or rules topic hereafter). We chose two topics in a same topic category with different frequency of avoidance: the future topic was the most avoided and the rules topic was the least avoided topic in the current relationship's concerns category.

In the last two decades, communication scholars have identified a number of topics that individuals consider taboo in close relationships. Avoided topics that Baxter and Wilmot (1985) found include the relationship's current/future status, extra-relationship activities, relationship norms, prior relationships, conflict-inducing topics, and negative information. A decade later, Guerrero and Afifi (1995) added five more topics including relationship issues, negative life experiences, dating experiences, friendships, and sexual experiences topics. Based on the aforementioned research, Dailey and Palomares (2004) incorporated four additional topics, such as money/financial, politics, religion, and drinking/drugs/smoking, as avoided topics in close relationships. The current study adds to the literature by suggesting that topics such as extended family, children, weight/health/foods, work/school, and hobbies are issues that people avoid when communicating with their intimate partner.

Table 1  
*Frequency of the Types of Topics that Respondents Avoid Discussing with their Partner*

Types of Topics	Frequency
(1) Current relationship's concerns	
Future of the relationship	89
Conflicts inducing topics	87
Negative relational behavior	37
Rules about the relationship	18
(2) Life experiences	
Past negative life experiences	12
(3) Social/family relations	
Family/extended family	52
Children	44
Friendships	22
(4) Past relationship experiences	
Past relationships	59
(5) Lifestyle	
Hobbies	63
Sexual experiences	57
School/work	54
Health/weight/foods	37
Drinking/smoking	15
(6) Money	
Money/financial	110
(7) Politics/religion	
Politics	20
Religion	16

Main Study  
Method

Participants

One hundred ninety-six undergraduate students in a midwestern university participated in the current study. Eighty-three (42.3%) were men and 113 (57.7%) were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 44, and their mean age was 24.4 ( $SD = 9.53$ ). Of the total sample, 70.4% were Caucasian, 12.8% were Asian-American, 11.7% were African-American, 4.1% were Hispanic,

and 1% were of other ethnicities. The duration of the relationships that participants described in the study ranged from 1 month to 291 months, with a mean of 37 months ( $SD = 42.97$ ).

#### Procedures

An on-line survey study opportunity was announced during undergraduate communication classes. The web address of the survey site was given to potential research participants. Once participants had gone to the site of the study, they read a brief introduction to the study, explaining and ensuring confidentiality, and a consent procedure. We explained to the participants that proceeding to subsequent pages indicated their agreement to partake in the study. After the consent page, the participants completed a questionnaire that consisted of numerous scales. Based on the findings of the pre-test, the future and rules topics were used in the main study. The definition of the future of the relationship topic was a discussion about marriage, engagement, separation, or the state of their relational future. The definition of the rules of the relationship was "time spent with one another, expectations, relationship roles, and acceptable behavior" (Dailey & Palomeres, 2004, p. 478).

Respondents were randomly put in one of the two topic conditions. Of the total sample, 83 participants responded to a questionnaire concerning the rules topic, and the remaining responded to that of the future topic. Respondents were given the definition of the topics and asked to think about the given topic when completing the questionnaire. Next, the respondents completed a series of measures, including communication desire, communication emotion, outcome assessment, perceived partner communication desire, communication efficacy, and topic avoidance behavior. Finally, demographics including age, sex, and ethnicity were assessed. After respondents had completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their participation.

#### Measurements

*Communication efficacy.* Participants were asked to consider their *communication efficacy* concerning the topic. Afifi and Weiner's (2004) communication efficacy scale was employed. An item from the scale includes, "I feel I could approach this person to ask about the topic." Each item was followed by a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree." The alpha reliability for the communication efficacy scale was .79.

*Attitude toward the behaviors.* Two measures were used to assess attitude toward communication in the current study. First, respondents were asked to assess the outcomes of communication about the topic with their partner. *Outcome assessment* measure asked respondents' expectations about the possible outcomes associated with talking about the given topic with their partner. This measure was comprised of three items (Afifi, Dillow, & Morse, 2004). Each item was followed by a Likert-type scale with -3 indicating "a lot more negatives than positives," 0 indicating "about as many negatives as positives," and 3 indicating "a lot more positives than negatives." Outcome assessment scores were recoded to eliminate negative scores. Thus, higher scores denote positive attitude toward communication about the given topic. This measure had an alpha reliability of .89.

Since previous research has not separated the affective dimension of attitude toward a behavior from the instrumental dimension (Ajzen & Driver, 1992), we added *communication emotion* measure, which can capture affective responses to communication concerning the given topic. Knobloch and Solomon's (2002) communication emotion scale was utilized. The scale included nine negative emotions such as mad, angry, irritated, sad, depressed, gloomy, scared, afraid, and frightened. Respondents were asked about the presence of nine negative emotions when thinking about having a conversation about the given topic with their partner. Each

emotion was followed by a 6-point Likert type scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 6 representing “strongly agree.” This measure had an alpha reliability of .94.

*Subjective norms.* As discussed earlier in the paper, we focused on respondents’ perception about their significant other’s (i.e., the partner) endorsement of communication behavior. Accordingly, two perceived partner communication desire items were developed to assess respondents’ perception of whether or not their partner wishes to talk about the given topic. An example item read, “Did you think your partner desired to talk about the topic with you?” Respondents answered in a Likert-type scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 7 representing “strongly agree.” This measure had an alpha reliability of .92.

*Communication desire.* To assess respondents’ communication desire, two items asked whether or not respondents desired to discuss the given topic with their partner. These items were developed for the current study. An example item read, “Did you wish to talk about the topic with your partner?” Respondents answered in a Likert-type scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 7 representing “strongly agree.” This measure had an alpha reliability of .95.

*Behavior.* Two questions asked whether or not respondents used avoidance or communication with their partner. The first item asked if they talked or avoided discussing the topic with their partner. A dichotomous “yes/no” measure was used for the first question. Another question asked how often they talked about the topic with their partner. This item was followed by a Likert-type scale with 0 representing “never” and 1 representing “once” to 5 representing “very frequently.” To score these items, the respondents who reported “no” in the first question and 0 in the second question were considered to have used avoidance with their partner. The respondents that indicated “yes” in the first item and 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 in the second item were considered to have communicated the topic at least once with their partner. Respondents that answered in any other combination of the two questions were excluded in the analyses because their answers were inconsistent. This procedure resulted in the exclusion of three respondents from the main analyses.

## Results

In this section, we report the findings on the TPB to the prediction of desire to talk about the avoided topic and to avoidance behavior. The data of the current study were examined using Ajzen and Driver’s (1991) analyses procedures. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are attainable in Table 2.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Avoidance	--							
2. Communication efficacy	-.24**	--					4.89	1.16
3. Communication desire	-.43**	.11	--				4.25	2.19



4. Communication emotion	.17*	-.48**	-.05	--			1.84	1.06
5. Perceived partner communication desire	-.35**	.23*	.66*	-.10	--		4.30	2.02
6. Outcome assessment	.14	.32**	.25*	-.22**	.26*	--	5.82	.98

\* Correlation is significant at .05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at .01 level.

Table 3 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis for topic avoidance behavior. In the analysis, communication desire and communication efficacy were regressed on avoidance behavior. Accordingly, communication desire was entered on the first step followed by communication efficacy on the second step. Topic avoidance was the dependent variable. Inspection of the regression coefficients revealed that communication desire made a significant contribution to the prediction of behavior,  $\chi^2 = 40.15$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , -2 Log Likelihood = 146.80. In addition to communication desire, communication efficacy made a significant contributor to behavior  $\chi^2 = 11.10$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ , -2 Log Likelihood = 135.72. The findings such as these support the idea that the TPB may be an appropriate model for topic avoidance behavior in close relationships.

Table 3  
Summary of Logistic Regressions Predicting Avoidance (N = 196)

Predictors	B	SE	$\chi^2$ (B)
Step 1			
Communication desire	.64	.12	1.90***
Step 2			
Communication desire	.71	.14	2.03***
Communication efficacy	.59	.18	1.81***
Step 3			
Communication desire	.68	.16	1.97***
Communication efficacy	.49	.21	1.64**
Outcome assessment	-.07	.24	.93

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Communication emotion	-28	.22	.76
Partner communication desire	.09	.13	1.10

Note. Step 1:  $\chi^2(1, 195) = 40.15, p < .001, -2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 146.80, \text{Nagelkerke } R^2 = .30$ ; Step 2:  $\chi^2(2, 194) = 51.24, p < .001, -2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 135.72, \text{Nagelkerke } R^2 = .37$ ; Step 3:  $\chi^2(5, 191) = 53.28, p < .001, -2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 133.67, \text{Nagelkerke } R^2 = .39$ .  
 $p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001$ .

Moreover, the TPB suggests that attitudes to behavior and subjective norms would have no direct effect on behavior. Instead, attitudes to behavior and subjective norms are presumed to influence behavior indirectly through intentions and perceived behavioral control. To test this claim, the two attitudes to behavior measures and the measure of subjective norm were added to the prediction equation on the third step. As revealed in Table 3, attitude toward behavior (i.e., communication emotion and outcome assessment) and subjective norms (i.e., perceived partner communication desire) were not significant contributors to behavior,  $\chi^2 = 2.04, df = 3, p = .56$ . This result supports the claim of the TPB that attitudes to behavior and subjective norms have no direct effect on behavior.

Table 4 deals with the prediction of communication desire. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the model. The analysis included communication emotion, outcome assessment, and perceived partner communication desire on the first step, and communication efficacy was entered on the second step. Communication desire was the dependent variable. The data revealed that outcome assessment,  $\beta = .26, p < .05$ , and perceived partner communication desire,  $\beta = .64, p = .01$ , made significant contributions to the prediction of respondents' communication desire about the avoided topic,  $F(3, 192) = 52.6, p < .001, R^2 = .45$ . Communication emotion, however, was not a significant contributor to respondents' communication desire,  $\beta = .02, ns$ . Additionally, the analysis showed that communication efficacy did not improve the prediction of communication desire,  $F(1, 191) = 1.38, \Delta R^2 = .004, ns$ .

Table 4

*Summary of Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Communication Desire (N = 196)*

Predictors	B	SE	$\beta$
Step 1			
Outcome assessment	.22	.12	.10
Communication emotion	.08	.11	.04
Partner communication desire	.62	.05	.64***

## Step 2

Outcome assessment	.26	.13	-.12*
Communication emotion	.02	.12	.01
Partner communication desire	.64	.06	.65***
Communication efficacy	-.14	.12	-.08

Note. Step 1:  $R^2 = .45$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .443$ ; Step 2:  $\Delta R^2 = .004$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .444$ .  
 $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion

Given the idea that people can purposefully avoid discussing particular topics in close relationships, the main goal of the current study was to demonstrate if the TPB can expand our understanding of the factors that determine topic avoidance in close relationships. This study looked at the four predictor variables (i.e., outcome assessment and communication emotion, partner communication desire, and communication efficacy) that contribute to the prediction of desire to communicate about a topic. The data revealed that perceived partner communication desire (subjective norms) and outcome assessment (attitudes to behavior) contributed to the prediction of communication desire (intention). Moreover, the combination of communication desire (intention) and communication efficacy (perceived behavioral control) predicted topic avoidance behavior. The findings of the present study suggest that the TPB could explain individuals' topic avoidance behavior in close relationships.

The current investigation, however, raises an important question that needs to be addressed. We found that communication efficacy (i.e., the perceived behavioral control measure) was not a factor that predicted communication desire. According to the TPB, communication efficacy should predict behavioral intention. Instead, the current study found that the outcome assessment (i.e., attitudes to behavior) and partner communication desire (i.e., subjective norms) predicted individuals' communication desire (i.e., intention). Nevertheless, in support of the TPB, we found that both communication efficacy and communication desire predicted topic avoidance behavior. On the surface, it may seem that the TRA may be more appropriate to explain topic avoidance, because the theory suggests that attitudes to behavior and subjective norms are sufficient to predict behavioral intention. However, although communication efficacy failed to predict communication desire, it directly influenced individuals' topic avoidance behavior. That is to say, communication efficacy may not affect communication desire, but influence topic avoidance behavior. The TPB suggests that intentions/desires do not always predict behavior and that perceived behavioral control provides the potential constraints on behavior. This investigation revealed that communication desire, together with communication efficacy, predicted topic avoidance behavior. Accordingly, the TPB is a fitting theory that expands our understanding of the factors that influence topic avoidance in close relationships.

With that said, we have some ideas of why the current data did not show communication efficacy as a predictor of communication desire. We believe that the issue may be mainly due to measurements used to capture the variables in the theory. To begin with, this study employed desire to assess behavioral intention instead of using other methods such as intention or self-prediction. The results of Armitage and Conner's (2001) meta-analysis suggest that "formation

of intentions and self-predictions are relatively more contingent on an assessment of perceived behavioral control than are desires” (p. 483). That is, perhaps communication efficacy may be the foundation of intentions and self-predictions. Consistent with this position, Armitage and Conner add that, when communication efficacy is included as a predictor, desire is a weaker predictor of behavior than intention or self-prediction. In other words, communication efficacy is a stronger predictor of behavior when desire is used. The effect of communication efficacy is largely directed to behavior, but not to desire. In contrast, when intention or self-prediction is used, communication efficacy not only affects intention or self-prediction, but also influences behavior. Thus, had we used intentions or self-predictions instead of desire, communication efficacy may have predicted behavioral intention.

An alternative explanation is that perhaps our attitudes to behavior and subjective norms measures sufficiently captured respondents’ behavioral and normative beliefs. Previous literature indicates the problem with the use of inadequate measures to capture normative beliefs, and as a consequence, some scholars have excluded normative belief in their study (Armitage & Conner, 2001). The current study used a perceived partner communication desire measure to assess individuals’ normative beliefs. We believe that people are more likely to value their partner’s perception about communication on the topic than other significant persons in their life (e.g., best friend or parents). [Afifi and Weiner \(2004\)](#) suggest that perceptions about the partner’s efficacy or honesty is one of the important attributes that people consider before seeking information about an issue in close relationships. Thus, the partner’s desire to talk about an issue may affect individuals’ communication desire.

Another possibility is that communication efficacy and perceived behavioral control are not entirely synonymous (Terry, 1993). Some studies found that efficacy perceptions and perceived control over behavior are distinct (Armitage & Conner, 1999); however, a meta-analysis revealed that the two have a comparable level of correlation with both intention and behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001). We used communication efficacy based on the previous research advocating the use of efficacy measures in the TPB. However, additional research is essential to investigate the claims of this research and its implications.

[Although Infante \(1980\)](#) puts forward that communication behavior is volitional and that people generally speak about what they wish to say, the findings of this research suggest an alternative idea. Perhaps communication behavior is volitional for most conversational topics, but not for some taboo topics in close relationships. Communication behavior of such topics may not be volitional. Ajzen (1991) suggests that when a behavior is under conditions of high volitional control, attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms should fully explain behavioral intention. While the current data showed that attitudes to behavior and subjective norms predicted communication desire, communication efficacy was a strong predictor for behavior. In other words, communication efficacy was an important component of understanding avoidance of the topics. Therefore, communication about frequently avoided topics in close relationships may not be under conditions of high volitional control.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations to the current investigation. To begin with, research based on retrospective self-report is potentially problematic. The participants in the present study may not have accurately recalled, for instance, their desire for communication or avoidance behavior. Although some scholars suggest that self-report data are relatively unreliable compared with more objective behavioral measures (Armitage & Conner, 1999), previous researches on the TPB and TRA heavily relied on self-report measures. In relation to the first limitation, the second

limitation concerns common method variance. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, (2003), method biases are problematic because they are a source of measurement error which threatens the validity of the results. In the present study, each respondent was instructed to report on several constructs, and several analyses were conducted by examining the associations between these self-reported measures. Although self-report is a common way to gather data in social science research, previous research has indicated that “self-report data are less valid as a result of common method variance than are other indicators such as physiological measures” (Kline, Sulsky, & Rever-Moriyama, 2000, p. 402). For example, correlations between variables measured with the same method as self-reported surveys are inflated due to common method variance. However, Armitage and Conner’s (2001) meta-analysis data revealed that the TPB accounts for both self-reported and observed behavior measures.

As mentioned earlier, another limitation may be concerning measurements. Previous research has revealed the problem in accurately measuring the TPB variables (Armitage & Conner, 2001). For instance, this research assessed desire instead of other methods to measure intention, such as behavioral intention and self-predictions. We chose desire because previous literature suggests that desire is closely associated with the TPB and is the weakest predictor of behavior. The current study found that both communication desire and communication efficacy were significant contributors to communication behavior, suggesting that desire may be an appropriate measure to assess intention. However, it would have been wise to add communication intention measure and to examine the differences, if any, between the desire and intention measures. When researching using the TPB, scholars need to be mindful of choosing the study measures.

This study raises many questions that may be elaborated and pursued in the future. The current research only examined two of the eighteen topics that people reported as taboo topics in close relationships. It would also be useful to look at other topics such as financial, health/weight/foods, or extended families. It also would be interesting to examine other groups of people. A type of relationship that might be interesting to study is friendship. Avoided topics in friendships are usually seen as more acceptable than they are in romantic relationships; individuals who are friends generally do not seek to understand as much as they would with a romantic partner. Afifi and Burgoon (1998) found that cross-sex friends are less likely to communicate about taboo topics than dating partners. It would be useful to understand how the TPB can explain topic avoidance behavior between same- and cross-sex friends.

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**Filipino Students' Communication Performance:  
Challenging Established Variables and Recognizing Impacts of ICT**

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Abstract

The study was investigative in intention, particularly to explore the possibility of developing a MODEL that would allow a teacher to predict his/her students' overall performance in a basic oral communication class. From among 11 established variables, the study found that only two could be used to predict students' performance: Factor 2 (Training and Exposure) and sex.

From the qualitative data, it was revealed that a common denominator was central to almost all students who performed well— it was exposure to different forms of information and communication technology not only during the students' years prior to the course but more so during their stay in the university.

### Introduction

Through the years, teachers have often reflected on how best to help their students, what approaches to employ to achieve the best results, what teaching tools to use to maximize learning, and what techniques to utilize to support difficult students. Being able to forecast students' performance would greatly aid teachers in planning learning activities to suit specific learners. Consequently, problems could be addressed even before they actually happen.

It was in the light of the above discussion that the present study re-examined the influences of established variables, individually and collectively, on the overall performance of students in a basic oral communication course. Corollary to this, the following questions were studied: What made students perform the way they did inside the classroom? Did, and to what extent did certain variables foretell students' behavior? Was it possible to actually forecast students' behavior? Further, could a MODEL be developed for purposes of estimating students' probable grades?

This study determined the predictability of students' class performance (referred to in this study as grades in oral projects and final grade) based on the following variables: Factors of communication anxiety, trait anxiety level, language/s spoken at home, preferred language in conversations, special training in oral communication, high school attended, mother's education, sex, age, course, and year level in college.

### Study frameworks

A number of previous studies showed that certain variables influence a student's performance in oral communication. These variables were: Factors of anxiety, trait anxiety level, language/s spoken at home, preferred language in conversations, special training received in oral communication, high school attended, mother's education, sex and age.

#### Attributions of anxiety

Studies were done on students' attributions about public speaking anxiety. One such study was by Bippus and Daly (1999) on the attributions about stage fright of students from a large American public university. Results showed that students usually gave one of these nine reasons for public speaking anxiety: Humiliation, Preparation, Physical Appearance, Rigid Rules, Personality Traits, Audience Interest, Unfamiliar Role, Mistakes, and Negative Results. The study concluded that the reasons given by naïve speakers for public speaking anxiety were by no means unimportant. The existence of those reasons proved that public speaking anxiety was a common difficulty.

Another study by Proctor, et al (1994; in Bippus and Daly, 1999) discovered four factors among the reasons given for public speaking anxiety. These were: Evaluation and Criticism, Mistakes and Failure, Attention and Isolation, and Unfamiliar Audiences.

Results of a study conducted by Del Villar (2007b) to determine the attributions of public speaking anxiety of beginning Filipino students in the University of the Philippines revealed an 8 Factor model explaining 69.11% of the total variance in the data. The Factors were named: Expectation, Training and Experience, Audience, Self-Worth, Rejection, Verbal Fluency, Preparation, and Previous Unpleasant Experience. These Factors were the concerns that beginning oral communication students brought with them when they first stepped into the classroom. These were the concerns that influenced their perceptions of public speaking anxiety.

#### Trait anxiety level

Communication apprehension or CA is defined as "the predisposition to avoid communication, if possible, or suffer a variety of anxiety-type feelings" (McCroskey, 1977, 27). It is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, 27). The person

experiencing CA feels fearful and uneasy about the communication situation he is about to participate in. He feels apprehensive and anxious about the speaking assignment as he anticipates its coming. He also foresees experiencing unpleasant psychological as well as physical manifestations on the day of the speech. He will, if possible, withdraw from the situation to escape the offensive feelings altogether.

On the other hand, communication state anxiety or CSA “refers to the reaction experienced during the actual communication” (Spielberger, 1966, 3). It is situational. It is the consequence or the “actual reaction” whereas CA is the “predisposition”. CSA is the unpleasant psychological and physical condition experienced by the apprehensive speaker on the day of the performance itself. He may sense any or all of the following physical and psychological manifestations: nausea, clammy hands, profuse sweating, knocking knees, palpitations, twitching of facial muscles, blushing, stammering, diarrhea, shortness of breath, mental block, confusion, fear, and panic.

McCroskey, Daly, and Sorensen (1976) stated that highly apprehensive people “avoid communication, if possible, or suffer a variety of anxiety-type feelings when forced to communicate” (376). One can almost always predict feeling the manifestations of CSA when he has CA. Other published studies agree that CA is “predictive of situational or state anxiety reactions” (Beatty, 1987, 1988; Beatty and Andriate, 1985; Beatty and Behnke, 1980)

A number of published researches found a positive correlation between CA and CSA as reported during public speaking (Beatty et al., 1991, 1989; Beatty, 1988, 1987; Beatty and Andriate, 1985). It was even found that there exists a causal relationship between CA and CSA (Beatty, 1988; Beatty and Andriate, 1985).

McCroskey (1978) who, in fact, developed the Theory of Communication Apprehension, indicated that “CA is a major determinant of a wide range of communicative behaviors”. Characteristic examples of such behaviors are stuttering, fewer utterances, nervousness, trembling, and sweating. Other researches done by Richmond and McCroskey (1989) and Beatty et al (1991) support those findings.

These studies also showed that levels of apprehension are partially due to the anxiety experienced in previous performance situations. Past anxious behaviors cause the individual to anticipate similar behaviors in future performances. CA is therefore developed, and as the individual continuously undergoes similar behavior, his CA is further maintained. In effect, CSA causes CA, and vice versa.

The James-Lange Theory explains that a person’s own attributions of his emotion are largely a result of his own self-reflection (Beatty et al., 1991). As applied to communication, this explains that if a speaker foresees himself behaving apprehensively, he will consequently behave in such manner. If indeed he behaves as he himself predicted, he will begin to expect the same behavior in future situations. The whole process thus becomes a pattern for the individual.

Spielberger (1985), in his extensive research on anxiety, differentiated between trait and state anxiety. He defines trait anxiety in terms of “relatively stable individual differences in anxiety-proneness, i.e., differences between people in the tendency to perceive stressful situations as dangerous or threatening, and in the disposition to respond to such situation with more or less intense elevations in state anxiety” (10). State anxiety is seen as the “more temporary condition while trait anxiety is the more general and long-standing quality of trait anxiety” (Spielberger, 1985, 10)

Del Villar’s study (2007b) determined if beginning communication students differed in their perception of Factors of anxiety. Students were first classified into high, moderate, and

low anxiety groups according to their scores in the STAI-Trait instrument (Spielberger, 1985). An arbitrary classification was done where scores of 26 to 40 in the STAI-trait instrument were classified as low anxiety, 41 to 55 were moderate anxiety, and 56 to 72 were classified as high anxiety. The three groups' Mean or average Factor scores were then compared using ANOVA.

Results showed that there were significant differences among the three groups in their perception of four out of the 8 Factors. The differences were in Factor 1 Expectation ( $p=.008$ ), Factor 2 Training and Exposure ( $p=.005$ ), Factor 4 Self-Evaluation ( $p=.000$ ), and Factor 5 Rejection ( $p=.029$ ). In these four factors, the high anxiety group consistently and significantly displayed the highest level of fear of the said Factors. The low anxiety group showed the lowest level of fear.

There were no significant differences in how the groups viewed the other four Factors (Factor 3 Audience, Factor 6 Verbal Fluency, Factor 7 Preparation, and Factor 8 Previous Unpleasant Experiences).

#### Language/s spoken at home

Del Villar (2007b) identified Verbal Fluency (or lack thereof) as the 6<sup>th</sup> Factor in the underlying structure of the 36 attributions of beginning oral communication students. This Factor was seen as a chief cause of anxiety. An explanation given was that the level of proficiency in English varied depending on where the students finished high school and the quality of training they received during their growing up years. Some high schools provided superior English training while others did not. Some homes spoke English as a first language while the majority did not. The fact that Verbal Fluency came out as a Factor in the study means that not being fluent in English, not being good at verbalizing thoughts, feeling embarrassed about mispronunciations and feeling nervous when speaking were all major concerns of beginning oral communication students.

Similarly, in Del Villar's study (1978), it was found that language spoken at home significantly influenced a child's speech performance. A home that spoke a language similar to the one used in school gave the child a definite advantage over others. Related to this, Chesebro's study (1992) found that Hispanic and black children in the US had higher levels of apprehension when communicating in the school environment. Because English to them was a second language, they felt more at ease speaking in their first language (Spanish for the Hispanics and a dialect of English that was different from the mainstream English for the Blacks). This finding was consistent with a study done in Puerto Rico (Fayer, 1985) where students whose first language was Spanish were found to be highly apprehensive when communicating in English.

#### Language Comfortable Using in Conversations

A study done by the faculty and students of the College of Mass Communication in 2006 revealed that Filipino respondents were "much more comfortable speaking in Filipino than in English" (17). In a scale of 1 to 6 where 1 meant very uncomfortable and 6 as very comfortable, the respondents had a Mean rating of 5.27 when speaking in Filipino and a Mean rating of 3.94 when speaking in English.

Other previous findings showed that training in the language resulted in facility in its use. Children who were comfortable in using English in the classroom as well as other places, for example, were those who most probably spoke the language in their homes and past schools (Del Villar, 2007c).

In Agravante's study (1973), it was found that language spoken at home significantly influenced speaking ability in school. If the child's predominant language at home were English, he would naturally feel comfortable speaking it in school or elsewhere. If English were the medium of

communication in the classroom and the child was at home with it, he would definitely have an advantage over those who did not feel at ease with it.

#### Special training in oral communication

Previous studies proved that training in public speaking significantly improved oral communication. One such study was by Ellis (1995) which reported that lab-supported skills training improved communication competence.

Connel and Borden (1987), Dwyer (1998, 2000), Kelly and Keaten (2000), as well as Robinson (1997) revealed that skills training was a significant way of remedying problems of public speaking anxiety. It was further proposed that skills training be combined with other training methods for more effective results.

Another study by Gerald Phillips (1986) discovered that combining individualized skills training with cognitive restructuring significantly reduced anxiety therefore improving confidence level. Kelly, Duran, and Stewart (1990) however found no difference between control and experimental groups using skills training and Phillips' (1986) formula respectively.

#### High school attended

Part of the individual's self concept is formed early in life through experiences outside of his home. School related experiences play a major role. His achievement in school gives him a powerful measure of his competencies'. Simmons (1973) in his study found that self-image is related to school experiences.

In the Philippines, it is generally known that education provided by private schools is of a much higher standard than those by public schools. This was evident from the number of students passing the University of the Philippines College Admissions test (UPCAT). In the June 2005 issue of the *U.P. Update Diliman*, it was revealed that of the 3,822 who passed the UPCAT 2,000 came from private high schools and only 944 came from public schools. The other qualifiers came from science high schools, state high schools and UP administered schools. In the May 1997 article published by the *UP Newsbriefs*, it was revealed that only 30% of the UP population came from the public schools, the rest were from private schools. The ratio changed in favor of the public schools when the admissions rules using handicapping for less privileged students from public schools were implemented for a few years.

#### Mother's education

The family plays an important role in the continuous formation of the individual's self-concept. What they say and do have a significant impact on the formation of one's self-concept in general and self-confidence in particular. The Filipino mother has always played a major role in the family. Because of this, she naturally becomes the principal instrument in the socialization of her children. Her children develop into persons that she herself shapes consciously or unconsciously. Whatever she is therefore influences her children in a very forceful way.

In a number of studies done on women the general findings were that women themselves accept the traditional roles of nurturer and homemaker that have been ascribed to them through generations (Torres, 1995). Manalang (1995) explained that the reason why women still clung to the old orientation was because 'their reality is focused on the family and its survival...they take identity from being mothers'(5).

As a result of the woman's family orientation through the centuries, she has gained the 'highest stature' in the home. According to Sevilla (1995) the woman has become the 'queen of the household...consequently family and home take precedence in her life'(10). Being queen, she has also gained some powerful influence in more areas of family life than the husband.

Because the woman's role is the nurturer of her children, she is naturally in close contact with them. Caring, feeding, training, disciplining, and modeling for them are primary responsibilities. She becomes the key instrument of the family in the socialization process.

As the woman's education increases, her status in the home also improves. According to Bautista (1995) this results in higher status in decision making. Her voice in the home becomes stronger not only in decisions regarding the home management but more so in decision affecting children. Palma (1995) discussed the merits that education did to the woman. Education not only enriches a woman it makes her a better mother and person as well. "Far from being a constant charge to the family, the educated woman has often been its sustenance and support in time of great need...[she is able] to argue and discuss on every subject with the men...she understands and can make herself better understood...[education] prepares... the woman for the proper performance of her duties"(14). He continued that with regard to education, the woman is not the only one who is benefited but also the people around her.

The woman's education influences her values and the values that she will pass on to her children. In response to her exposure to a wider horizon, her values too will change (Palma, 1995). As a consequence the values that she will teach her children will also change.

#### Sex

In a study conducted by the College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines (2006) results showed that sex did not play a significant influence in the ease of communication of the respondents. The specific situations identified were: communicating with family, with other people in social and professional circles, with people of higher or lower occupational status, with people in formal circles, with people from other socio-economic status higher or lower than theirs, with people using various modes of communication, and with people speaking in Filipino. It was however revealed that males were more comfortable than females when speaking with foreigners or dealing with strangers. Females on the other hand were found to be more comfortable when communicating with those from the same socio-economic status as theirs, when giving compliments to others, and when talking to gays and lesbians.

Another study by Crombie et al (2003) proved that sex was an important indicator of students' performance in the classroom because of unequal treatment and even prejudice against females. Presented were evidence such as significantly more male participation as a result of the emotional atmosphere in the classroom.

#### Age

In the College of Mass Communication study (2006), it was revealed that the variable age had no significant influence on the comfortableness of the respondents while communicating in various situations ranging from talking with immediate family, with people in social and professional circles, with people from socio-economic statuses lower or similar to theirs, talking through the telephone, dealing with strangers, speaking in formal circles, and speaking in Filipino. Compared with other age groups, it was the young ones whose ages ranged from 18 to 30 who displayed the most comfortableness.

The present study determined if all the important variables cited separately by previous studies could be used as predictors of students' class performance in oral communication classes, if considered collectively. Two other variables, course and year level, although not among those previously studied were included.

### Method

Since the study was investigative in intention, it employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. It ran from the beginning of one semester till the end of that semester. It involved 10 sections of a basic oral communication course in the University of the Philippine (UP). The use of 10 sections was seen appropriate for the purpose of getting an extensive investigation of the respondents for the duration of one semester.

#### Communication 3

Communication 3, a General Education course on the fundamentals of oral communication, is offered in the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts, UP. As calendared in the syllabus, after lectures and discussions on the various principles and techniques in Speech Communication, students are then required to apply what they learned through oral projects. Oral projects range from group discussion to speeches. The minimum number of oral projects is three although some teachers require as much as 6 oral projects. There are also other requirements such as short tests, exercises, reaction papers, and final examination. However, in the present study only the oral projects and the final grades were used to determine the students' performance in the course. It should be noted that the grading system followed in the University of the Philippines is as follows:

**Table 1: University of the Philippines grading system**

Grade	Equivalence
1.0	Excellent
2.0	Very good
3.0	Passing
4.0	Conditional
5.0	Failing

#### Procedure: *Phase 1*

- Ten Communication 3 sections (in English) were randomly selected to be included in this study. From the original 250 respondents, only 197 were included.
- During the first week of classes the following questionnaires were administered to the 10 Communication 3 sections:
  - Information Sheet
  - Attributions of Anxiety Questionnaire by Del Villar (2007b)
  - STAI trait by Spielberger (1983)

#### Procedure: *Phase 2*

- At the end of the semester, more information were gathered through the following:
  - Teacher's rating of her students. The Communication 3 teachers of the 10 sections were requested to provide an evaluation of their students' performance at the end of the semester. These were in the form of the grades in all the oral projects and the final grade.
  - In-Depth-Interview. An interview of selected students was conducted to complement the findings of the quantitative measures. Ten selected cases were those whose performances were outstanding.

## Research instruments

### 1. The Attributions of Anxiety Questionnaire (Del Villar, 2007b)

This is a 36 item Likert-type questionnaire that determines how a respondent rates the 8 Factors of anxiety (Expectations, Training and Exposure, Audience, Self-evaluation, Rejection, Verbal Fluency, Preparation, and Previous Unpleasant Experience).

### 2. The STAI – trait instrument by Spielberger (1983 )

This is an established and valid instrument for measuring the construct anxiety in various contexts. It provides a “reliable, relatively brief, self-report scales for assessing trait anxiety... in research and clinical practice” (Spielberger, 1983). Trait anxiety, as differentiated from state anxiety, is “the more general and long standing quality” (996). In the present study, this instrument was used to measure the trait anxiety level of the respondents. This enabled the researcher to classify the respondents into high, moderate, or low anxiety groups.

### 4. In-Depth-Interview

Questions in the interview range from factors that students thought were responsible for their overall performance in Communication 3, self-confidence and communication anxiety. Findings from the interview were used to complement the quantitative data.

## Data Analysis

Cross tabulations were done to compare the communication performance (grades in oral projects and final grades) of the respondents against the 11 variables. Also, ordinal logistic regression was applied to come up with a model that would allow for prediction of students’ performance based on their scores/ratings in the 11 selected variables (Factors of anxiety, trait anxiety level, language/s spoken at home, preferred language in conversations special training in oral communication, high school attended, mother’s education, sex, age, course, and year level) .

In addition, findings from the qualitative data (In-Depth-Interview) were used to complement the quantitative findings.

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic profile

From the ten Communication 3 sections a total of 197 students were included in the study. One hundred fifteen (58.38%) were females and 82 (42%) were males. Thirty one (15.90%) belonged to the 15 to 16 age group; 130 (67%) belonged to the 17-18 age group; 19 (10.%) belonged to the 19-20 age group and 15 (8%) to the 21+ age group. With regard the year level, 141 or 72% were freshmen; 28 or 14.29% were sophomores; 12 or 6.12% belonged to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year; 4 or 2.04% belonged to the 4<sup>th</sup> year; 8 or 4.08% were 5<sup>th</sup> year students; 3 or 1.53% were in their 6<sup>th</sup> year. The 197 respondents’ courses were classified into Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts courses. Those from the fine arts, human kinetics and other certificate courses were grouped with the Bachelor of Arts. There were 95 (48%) from the Bachelor of Arts courses and 102 (52%) from the Bachelor of Science courses. Thirty or 15.31% of the respondents attended public high schools, 16 or 3.16% attended private high schools in the provinces, 150 or 77% attended private high schools or special science high schools in Metro Manila.

### Predictability of students’ performance in Communication 3 based on the 11 variables

When all the 11 variables were individually cross tabulated with grades in oral projects and final grade only Factor 2, sex, and year level proved to be possible predictors. The other 9 variables were not found to be significant. The table below shows a summary of the cross tabulations:



**Table 2: Summary of cross-tabulations of all 11 variables and grades**

Variables	Grades in oral projects	Final grades
	Tests conducted, significance	Tests conducted, significance
Attributions (8 Factors):		
<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>p=0.012</b>	<b>p=0.012</b>
Factors 1,3,4,5,6,7,8	n.s.	n.s.
Trait anxiety	Gamma=0.123 p=0.813	Gamma=0.023, p=0.89
Language/s spoken at home	Chi-square=0.727, p=0.69	Chi-square=0.11, p=0.94
Preferred language in conversations	Chi-square=2.38, p=0.19	Chi-square=3.50, p=0.173
Special training in oral communication	Chi-square=2.38, p=0.30	Chi-square=0.50, p=0.77
High school attended	Fisher's exact test p=0.98	Fisher's exact test p=0.865
Mother's education	Gamma=-0.041 p=0.98	Gamma=-0.098 p=0.84
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Chi-square=12.26, p=0.002</b>	<b>Chi-square=15.19, p=0.001</b>
age	Gamma=0.138, p=0.125	Gamma=0.175, p=0.121
Course	Chi-square=2.97, p=0.229	Chi-square=2.15, p=0.34
<b>Year level</b>	<b>Gamma=0.33, p=0.026</b>	<b>Gamma=0.31, p=0.05</b>

#### Predictability of grades in oral projects based on the Factors of anxiety

When the 8 Factors or attributions to anxiety were tested against grades in oral projects, results showed that two Factors (Factor 2 and Factor 6) were possible predictors of grades in oral projects.

Communication 3 students' anxieties about their previous training and exposure to public speaking were influential in their performance in class as shown in their oral projects. Their anxieties were mostly about lack of training in speaking, not used to talking in front of an audience, and lack of practice. Among the students (n=65), who received grades between 1.0-1.875 their Mean score in Factor 2 was 12.05; students (n=118) who received grades between 1.876-2.875 had a Mean score of 14.24; while students (n=14) who received grades toward 3.0 had the highest Mean score of 14.93. This consistently showed that the higher the anxiety towards Factor 2, the lower the grades in oral project.

The same observation was seen in Factor 6 (Verbal Fluency). Students (n= 65) who received grades in the 1.0 to 1.875 range had a Mean score of 10.45; those in the 1.876 to 2.875 range had 11.99; and those in the 2.876 and below had 12.14. These Mean scores steadily showed that the higher the anxiety towards Factor 6 the lower the grades. These students' anxieties were about not being good at verbalizing thoughts, being worried about fluency in English, feeling nervous when speaking, and being embarrassed about pronunciation.

When subjected to further tests (ordinal logistic regression), only Factor 2 (p value =0.012) proved to be a predictor of grades in oral project. Below is a table summarizing the Mean scores of the Factors across grades in oral projects. Note that only Factors 2 and 6 showed consistent trend.

**Table 3: Mean scores and SD of the Factors across Grades in Oral Projects**

	1.0-1.875		1.876-2.875		2.876- 3	
	N=65		N=118		N=14	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Factor1	17.38	5.28	17.53	4.97	16.5	4.832
<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>12.05</b>	5.15	<b>14.24</b>	5.39	<b>14.92</b>	5.51
Factor 3	15.12	4.85	16.08	4.99	15.28	3.93
Factor 4	10.97	4.59	11.85	4.39	11.43	5.43
Factor 5	14.37	4.78	15.36	5.41	14.78	4.38
<b>Factor 6</b>	<b>10.45</b>	4.03	<b>11.99</b>	4.37	<b>12.14</b>	4.38
Factor 7	6.51	2.14	7.22	2.52	7	2.04
Factor 8	3.23	1.59	3.73	1.71	3.5	2.06

#### Predictability of final grades based on Factors of anxiety

Again, the 8 Factors or attributions to anxiety were tested against final grades. Results revealed that three Factors (Factor 2, Factor 4, and Factor 6) were possible predictors of final grades because they displayed consistent relationship with that variable. In Factor 2 (Training and Exposure), results showed that the lower the Mean scores in anxiety, the higher the final grades. The same was true for Factor 4 (Self-Evaluation) where lower Mean anxiety scores meant higher final grades. The tendency also proved to be true in Factor 6 (Verbal Fluency) where lower Mean anxiety scores guaranteed higher final grades. Further tests (ordinal logistic regression) however revealed that among the 3 Factors showing some trend, only Factor 2 proved to be significant (p value =0.012). The table below shows a summary of the Mean scores in the 8 Factors with their corresponding sample size and SD. Note that only Factors 2,4, and 6 showed consistent trend.

**Table 4: Mean scores and SD of the Factors across Final Grades**

	1.0-1.875		1.876-2.875		2.876- 3	
	N=85		N=97		N=14	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Factor1	17.6	5.29	17.31	4.89	16.5	4.83
<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>12.29</b>	5.11	<b>14.44</b>	5.45	<b>15.28</b>	5.5
Factor 3	15.14	4.6	16.28	5.21	15.28	3.93
<b>Factor 4</b>	<b>11.43</b>	1.48	<b>11.48</b>	4.42	<b>13.43</b>	5.68
Factor 5	14.85	5.67	15.08	4.81	15.21	1.41
<b>Factor 6</b>	<b>10.55</b>	4.05	<b>12.13</b>	4.41	<b>12.86</b>	4.13
Factor 7	6.62	2.28	7.29	2.5	3.85	1.75
Factor 8	3.22	1.55	3.85	1.75	3.5	2.06

#### Predictability of grades in oral projects based on sex

When sex was cross tabulated with grades in oral projects, results showed that females were dominant (46 or 70.7%) among those whose grades ranged from 1.0 to 1.875, while males comprised only of 19 (29.2%). Females also tended to dominate the 1.876-2.875 bracket (66 or

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57%) while the males dominated those in the 2.876 and lower grade bracket (78.52%). Chi-square test proved that the difference between the two sexes was significant (p value= 0.002). Females performed better than the males as shown in their grades in oral projects. Therefore, sex as a variable can be used as a predictor of probable grades in oral projects. These results confirmed the findings of Crombie, et al (2003) that sex was a predictor of class performance in a university context although their findings were in favor of the males. Their conclusions cited unequal treatment and prejudice as the reason why females did not do well. On the contrary, the present findings revealed that the difference was in favor of the females. In the Communication 3 context female students have consistently displayed more positive behavior (diligence, responsibility, maturity) than their male classmates. They were generally the ones who spent more time preparing their projects, studying for examinations, and attending classes religiously. In addition there were no findings to show prejudice of any kind against either of the sexes. Further, the present study's conclusions did not concur with those of the College of Mass Communication's that sex did not play a significant role in interaction. It should be remembered however that the CMC study had a different context. In the present study, sex significantly proved to be an important variable in the students' oral performance in the Communication 3 classroom. Summary is shown below.

**Table 5: Sex and Grades in Oral Projects**

SEX	1.01.875	1.876-2.875	2.876+	Total
Females	46	66	3	115
Males	19	52	11	82
Total	65	118	14	197

Chi square = 12.2650                      p value= 0.002

**Predictability of final grade based on sex**

When sex was cross tabulated with final grades, results showed that females (59 or 69%) dominated those whose grades ranged from 1.0 to 1.875 while the males comprised 27 or 31.3%. It was the same for the 1.876 to 2.875 grade range. Females comprised 54 or 56% while males were 43 or 44%. Females consistently did better than the males as shown in their domination of the 1.0-1.875 and 1.876-2.875 grade brackets. As was proven in the previous cross tabulation of sex and oral project, females consistently showed dominance over the males even as all the course requirements were considered together to comprise the final grade. Chi-square test result (15.1957, p value=0.001) showed highly significant difference between the two sexes with the females doing better than the males. Sex can be used as a variable for predicting final grade. Summary is below.

**Table 6: Sex and Final Grades**

SEX	1.0-1.875	1.876-2.875	2.876 +	Total
Females	59	54	2	115
Males	27	43	12	82
Total	86	97	14	197

Chi square = 15.1957                      p value= 0.001

### Predictability of grades in oral projects based on year level

When year level was cross tabulated with grades in oral projects, results showed that majority (53 or 81.5%) of those who got grades in the 1.0-1.1875 range were first year students, followed far behind by sophomores (5 or 8%), juniors (3 or 5%), then by those in their fifth year (3 or 5%) and sixth year (1 or 2%). This tendency showed that freshmen were the most hardworking students in the Communication 3 class. An explanation for this is that freshmen students were still highly motivated after having just graduated from high school. In addition, they wanted to prove that they were worthy of having passed the University of the Philippines College Admissions Test (UPCAT). Those in their higher years may have, for some reason, lost their steam. The gamma coefficient test showed that the difference among the year levels in their oral projects was significant ( $\gamma=0.3315$ ,  $p=0.026$ ). The gamma coefficient also showed there was a significant moderate positive linear relationship between year level and grades in oral projects. Another way of putting it is that as students get older by one year in the university, their chances of getting a grade toward 3.0 increase by 24% (Odds Ratio = 1.24). As a separate variable, year level can predict students' grades in oral projects. Summary in table form is shown below:

**Table 7: Year Level and Oral Project Grade**

Year Level	1.0-1.875	1.876-2.875	2.876+	Total
1	53	82	6	141
2	5	21	2	28
3	3	6	3	12
4	0	2	2	4
5	3	5	0	8
6	1	2	0	3
Total	65	118	13	196

$\gamma = 0.3315$  ASE = 0.130 Fisher's exact  $p = 0.026$

Oral projects	Odds Ratio	p-value	[95% conf Interval]
Year Level	1.24	0.11	0.952526 1.61716

### Predictability of final grade based on year level

When the year level was cross tabulated with final grade results showed that freshmen made up majority (69 or 80.2%) of those whose final grades ranged from 1.0-1.1875 followed far behind by the sophomores (8 or 9.3%), juniors (4 or 4.6%), fifth years (4 or 4.6%) and sixth years (1 or 1.1%). Again this showed that with all the requirements added up to make the final grade freshmen students consistently excelled in Communication 3. Statistical test results proved that the difference among the year levels was significant at  $p = 0.05$ . The gamma coefficient further showed that for every year increase in year level, the chance of having a final grade towards 3.0 increases by 22% (Odds Ratio = 1.225337). Or, as students get older by one year in the university their chances of getting a final grade toward 3 increase by 22%. As a separate variable year level can be used as a predictor of final grade.

**Table 8 : Year Level and Final Grade**

Year Level	1.0-1.875	1.876-2.875	2.876+	Total
1	69	66	6	141
2	8	17	3	28
3	4	5	3	12
4	0	3	1	4
5	4	4	0	8
6	1	2	0	3
Total	86	97	13	196

gamma = 0.3190 ASE = 0.120 Fisher's exact p= 0.05

Final Grade	Odds Ratio	p-value	[95% conf Interval]
Year Level	1.225337	0.104	0.959124 1.565441

Predictability of grades based on all the variables combined

Among the 11 variables combined, only Factor 2 (OR = 1.07, p value = 0.012) and sex (OR=2.36, p value =0.004), were found to be significant predictors of students' performance in the oral projects. Results of the ordered logistic regression showed that for every 1 unit increase in student's score in Factor 2 (Training and Exposure) his/her risk of having a grade in oral projects close to a 3.0 increases by 7%. Or, his/her risk of having a grade close to 3.0 in oral projects increases by 1.07 for every point unit increase in his score in Factor 2. Put simply, the higher the score in Factor 2, the higher the probability of getting a low grade. These results showed that from among the 8 Factors or attributions of anxiety, it was the fear of previous training and exposure that really affected the new Communication 3 students. Students were generally worried by their overall lack of experience in speaking prior to their enlistment in Communication 3.

At the same time, male students are 2.36 times more likely than females to have a grade towards 3.0 in oral projects. This means that male students are 136% more likely to have a grade towards 3.0 than their female counterparts. As was found earlier in the study, sex as a separate variable can be used as a predictor of grades in oral projects. It also proved to be a strong predictor even when subjected to the ordinal logistic regression. These results further confirmed previous findings that sex was a predictor of class performance in the university context (Crombie, et al, 2003). Although as was mentioned earlier, Crombie's findings were in favor of the males while the present study's were in favor of the females. Further, this disproved the findings of the College of Mass Communication (2006) saying that sex did not play a significant role in communication. It should be noted that communication contexts in the CMC study (communicating with family, with other people in social and professional circles, with people of higher and lower occupational status, with people in formal circles, with people from other socio-economic status higher or lower than theirs, with people using various modes of communication, and with people using the Filipino language) differed from that of the present study (oral communication in the classroom). Model A below shows the two variables and how they predict the dependent variable grades in oral projects.

**Table 9: MODEL A**

Dependent Variable: ORAL PROJECTS				
ORAL PROJECTS	Odds ratio	p-value	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Factor 2	1.071103	0.011	1.016492	1.136949
Sex	2.313629	0.007	1.255764	4.262647

As for predictors of final grade, the two variables combined - Factor 2 ( p value = 0.012) and sex (0.004) were found to be significant. For every 1 unit increase in score in Factor 2, the risk of having a grade towards 3.0 increases by 7%. Or, for every 1 unit increase in Factor 2 score, the risk of having a grade towards 3.0 multiplies by 1.07. Simply put, the higher the score in Factor 2, the higher the chances of getting a low grade.

Also, male students are 2.36 times more likely than females to get a final grade towards 3.0. Male students are 136% times more likely to have a final grade towards 3.0. Model B below shows how the dependent variable final grade was predicted by the two variables Factor 2 and sex.

**Table 10: MODEL B**

Dependent Variable : FINAL GRADE				
FINAL GRADE	Odds ratio	p-value	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Factor 2	1.071103	0.012	1.015426	1.129833
Sex	2.363116	0.004	1.322304	4.223169

### Conclusion

This study concludes that from among the 11 variables that were previously identified as important indicators of students' performance in the classroom only two proved to be significant - Factor 2 (Training and Exposure) and sex. These two variables persisted in influencing students even as the other variables ceased to be important.

The first variable Factor 2 (Training and Exposure) continued to influence students' performance because it was what commonly preoccupied students' minds at the beginning of a course that requires a lot of speaking. In an interview one respondent admitted that he was obsessed by the fact that he lacked previous speech training. He realized that he was disadvantaged and as a result he felt apprehensive. Another respondent related that what he considered most worrisome was lack of preparation. Just thinking about facing an audience and not being intellectually prepared made him extremely anxious. Another student disclosed that his lack of experience and exposure in facing an audience made him fearful of the course Communication 3.

The second variable sex also proved to be influential in students' performance in Communication 3. Generally, female students exhibited traits of industry, responsibility, and stability that consequently earned them better overall speech performance. As the outstanding female students admitted in the interviews they set aside adequate time preparing for their projects and examinations. No matter how busy they were with their other school work, they made sure they

spent time for their Communication 3 requirements. To most of them, planning their school days and prioritizing their studies were the keys to good grades.

The other variables which were once strong predictors of students' performance in the classroom, did not show much significance in the present study. What could be the new elements that provided these new generation of students with the equalizing advantage to do well? What could be the reasons why they did well despite the seeming disadvantage of having various attributions about communication anxiety, experiencing some levels of trait anxiety, not growing up in a home that spoke English as its first language, not comfortably using English in conversations, not having special training prior to Communication 3, not graduating from a private high school that provided good training, not having a mother with higher level of education, and not being more mature in age? The qualitative data gathered from the respondents provided valuable information that illuminated the seeming loss of influence of the previously significant variables.

From the journals and in-depth-interviews of the students, a common denominator was discovered in almost all of those who performed well in both the oral projects and final grades – it was the exposure to different forms of information and communication technology not only during their years prior to Communication 3 but more so during their stay in the university. When asked to what they attributed their good performance in class, most of them acknowledged access to different media even as they lacked exposure to the conventional forms of stimuli (cultural activities, specialized training, travel, etc). This access was the liberating force that made possible networking with anyone from any part of the world and accessing information about virtually anything instantaneously. To most of them socio-economic status was not an obstacle to having a ticket to information and media technology. Majority may not have traveled to other countries nor received costly training in special oral communication courses but they had access to the internet and the world wide web and therefore to an infinite world of influences and possibilities. As one respondent disclosed, she did not have her own computer and internet connection but she frequented an internet café in the campus shopping center and spent her free time exploring the web and filling her mind with myriads of fascinating information that she could not have possibly acquired through other means. Another student divulged that she may not have travelled outside the country but she regularly emailed and chatted with a lot of foreign friends and that the experience contributed to her personal growth. One student proudly analyzed that her experience with the information technology has added enormously to her intellectual maturity. She called herself savvy in so many areas and as a result she has also gained so much self-assurance. No wonder these new generation of students were knowledgeable about a variety of information and their knowledge consequently gave them the confidence to excel in a basic course like Communication 3.

#### Recommendations for future studies

Future research could be pursued to address the limitations of the present study. One could be a replication on a much bigger scale. Although the present study's sample size of 197 was quite adequate, a number of trends were established but were not confirmed when further subjected to statistical tests. A bigger sample might prove otherwise.

The qualitative data showed an interesting finding that was not hypothesized in the present study. This was the presence of information and communication technology as a probable important variable. Further studies could be done to confirm the role of this variable in the overall performance of Communication 3 students.

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**Communication Apprehension:  
What Have We Learned in the Last Four Decades**

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Abstract

Since the late 1960's one of the most researched constructs in the field of human communication has been Communication Apprehension. In this article communication apprehension and its related traits are reviewed and the research related to them is discussed with a personalized eye to explaining how they were developed and what we have learned about them in the past four decades.

Keywords: stage fright, reticence, communication apprehension, shyness, willingness to communicate, compulsive communication, self-perceived communication competence

The question I am most asked relating to my work with Communication Apprehension (CA) is “Where did you get the term ‘Communication Apprehension’?” It was chosen in 1968, four decades ago. There already were many studies that had been reported in the Speech discipline that addressed “stage fright,” “speech fright,” and “public speaking anxiety.” At Penn State, Gerald Phillips (1965) was actively writing about what he called “reticence” and developing classes to help reticent students survive in public speaking classes.

Two of my graduate students (James Barrick and Charles Ertle) at Michigan State University joined me to discuss what we thought were the problems in explaining to others what our research was all about. We recognized that there were a lot of different terms being used to describe what we were interested in (our working term was “communication-bound anxiety”) but none of them seemed appropriate because they were terms being used to describe things that were different from what we were studying. After a lot of discussion, we came up with CA. None of us can remember who brought this term into the conversation. Since I was the first to use the term in a publication (McCroskey, 1970), I have been the one to get most of the praise/blame for it.

#### *Before CA*

A century ago (1909) the academic discipline of Human Communication was launched by the members of what is now known as the Eastern Communication Association, soon (1914) followed by the members of what is now known as the National Communication Association. In the early decades, the focus of scholarship in human communication was on public speaking, rhetoric (persuasion), argumentation, and debate. Even before the establishment of the professional speech organizations, many high schools and colleges required that students present speeches before the other students and the faculty of the school in order to graduate. These presentations were referred to as “dissertations.” If the student was not able to present a high quality of dissertation he/she was not allowed to graduate (much like the written dissertations for doctoral degrees required today). Many people believed that there was a strong linkage between intelligence and speaking ability.

In most cases, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and most of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was no formal training in public speaking in most schools or colleges. Some students protested the required dissertations, but they usually were not successful. Those who could afford it, hired non-professional speakers to help them. The less wealthy students formed groups of students to help one another. It is thought that students at the College of William and Mary formed the first of these clubs. Students at many colleges began to demand that their school hire speech teachers so they could learn to present better dissertations. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of speech teachers in schools and colleges had increased.

Many of the speech teachers argued that learning how to speak better would improve a student’s personality. While the linkage between speaking ability and intelligence, general learning, and personality may seem to be “way out there” to communication professionals today, these views were still popular in the 1950’s when I took my first college speech class.

When I started high school teaching in 1957, I selected my top debate team members (two seniors and two sophomores) on the basis of their IQ scores. Our high school had never had a debate team. However, our senior team won the Class B (smaller schools) state debate championship the first year. I got a new job where I used the same IQ approach. My new team (Class A, large schools) won second in the first year, and won the championship the next year. During that same year my

former sophomores, now seniors, won the Class B championship (without me). As a result I got my first college teaching/coaching job. Do you think I questioned the speaking/IQ linkage?

In retrospect, I am sure that none of these students were high communication apprehensives. However, we had no concept of CA at that time, much less any way of measuring it or reducing it. However, we now do have evidence that IQ is not related to CA (Bashore, 1971; McCroskey & Andersen, 1976; and Davis & Scott (1978). We now know that communication and personality/temperament are correlated, because of their genetic connections (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998). However, there still is no solid evidence that increasing speaking skills improves learning. Most likely this view still is continued in some quarters because speech courses increase students' speaking skills (those who are not high CAs) and allows them to make better presentations in their other classes. However, we now know that speech classes do not eliminate CA for students who are high CAs.

#### Why Our Field Recognized a Problem

From the late 1940's to the late 1960's higher education underwent major changes. The speech discipline was influenced by these changes. Prior to this time, higher education was primarily available to students from the upper levels of the society, particularly the male children of the more wealthy white families. These children were seen as the future leaders of the society, hence it was seen that they would need to have high public speaking skills.

At the end of World War II the federal government launched the GI Bill of Rights. This program provided financial support to the veterans of that war to further their education. This was soon expanded to the veterans of the Korean war. Thus, many white males from the lower ranks of society, some white females, and some non-white minority veterans became college students. Movements to provide more freedom to females and members of minorities in the 1960's greatly increased the number of college students from these groups. Enrollments in colleges and universities sky rocked. The student population became much more diverse, and that diversity still increases to the present. Today, white males are a minority in most colleges and universities in the U.S.

Many of these new students (and some of the traditional ones) did not take the need for public speaking skills to be a given. They recognized that their education would benefit them in the future, but they did not see themselves as future leaders with a need to present speeches. The students made their views clear to many of the speech faculties. They believed that public speaking skills may not be needed for all, but instruction about other kinds of communication are badly need. As faculty (who's education was mostly in public speaking, debate, and rhetoric), we were slow to understand.

Gradually, we recognized the need for instruction in communication beyond just public speaking. This produced the expansion of classes in small groups and interpersonal communication. Again, gradually we recognized that some students had anxiety and fears about communication other than just giving public speeches. Even more slowly, we recognized that we needed to be able to identify students with severe fear/anxiety problems and try to find out why these problems exist, and what we could do about it, if anything.

#### The Beginnings

I almost began my CA research in 1965 at Penn State. Other doctoral students and I were aware that Gerald Phillips was beginning to develop speech classes directed toward reticent students. We were asked to send the reticent students in our public speaking classes to his reticent classes. Even though we didn't know what a reticent student was, we sent our problem students to him. I

thought we should have some kind of measure that we could use to identify the reticent students, so I offered to help Phillips develop such a measure (the minor in my doctoral program was in research methods in Educational Psychology). His response was clear: “I don’t need any d\_\_\_ measure! I know a reticent student when I see one!”

That ended my reticent research at Penn State. However. A short time after that I became even more concerned about reticent students. One evening I received a phone call at home from a Penn State psychologist. He asked me some questions about one of my students, wanting to know if this student was scheduled to present her speech the follow day. I informed him that she did. I asked him why he wanted he wanted to know. He informed me that they had just rescued this student from an attempt to commit suicide by jumping off the top of one of the highest buildings at the university. She had indicated that she just could not face having to give another speech. Needless to say, this shook me up. I had never noticed this student to be any more reticent than any other students. Obviously, I could not recognize a reticent when I saw one! Years later, we learned that many high CAs are able to conceal their fears/anxieties. One cannot be sure what students are high CAs by looking at them, unless you have the skills equivalent to those of Phillips.

I talked to Phillips about this attempted suicide, and he expressed concern also. He informed me that there had been a number of suicides by students in recent years. He and I were able to get the administration to identify the students who had committed suicide and the enrollments in required public speaking classes. There were 14 suicides recorded, and all but one of those students were currently enrolled in required public speaking classes at the time of their death. Was this just coincidence? Possibly, but the odds are strongly against it.

In the process of looking at the lists of students in the required public speaking class, we accidently identified a student who had enrolled for and dropped the class 12 times. He had a straight “A” record in engineering, but could not graduate because he had not passed the required public speaking class. Phillips located this student, got him into his reticent class, and he graduated. Later, when I was conducting my first study of treatment for CA at Michigan State University, we administered a measure of speech anxiety on the first day of class for all public speaking students. When we returned to the second class meeting, we found almost one third of the students had dropped the required class. Over half of those had high scores on our measure.

I drew two conclusions from this experience: 1) Th Phillips special class approach is helpful, and 2) there may be hundreds or even thousands of students in public speaking classes who drop the course, change their major to one that doesn’t require a public speaking class, or even transfer to another school that doesn’t have that requirement. This effect may also apply to non-communication classes that require public speeches in those classes, but to my knowledge no research has studied this possibility.

When I became chair of the communication department at West Virginia University (1972) I learned that the public speaking class was required for all students. I also learned that less than ten percent of the students who took the required public speaking class also registered for another communication class later in their college career. We convinced the administration to end that requirement and offered more interpersonal communication classes that did not include public speaking. The enrollments in the department tripled in four years. Clearly, public speaking classes are very beneficial to most students, those that are not high CAs. Requiring public speaking classes

for high CAs may do as much harm, or even more, than they benefit these students. I concluded that these are the students who need the Phillips approach—at least until a better program could be developed. I started looking for that approach.

#### Understanding and Treating CA

Early in my years in the Communication Department at Michigan State University I was assigned to teach a large graduate class in research methods. This class included students from communication, education, speech pathology, and a variety of other disciplines. One of those students was James Barrick, a graduate student in Educational Psychology. All of the students were required to submit a quantitative research proposal as part of the course requirement. Barrick submitted a proposal for a study involving the use of systematic desensitization (SD) to reduce the test anxiety of students. His very thorough review of the literature cited a study conducted in Psychology which had used SD to reduce public speaking anxiety with students taking required speech courses at the University of Illinois. I contacted Barrick to see if he thought that method could be used to reduce the more broad-based problem of communication-bound anxiety (now CA). He thought SD should be very effective. Hence he, David Ralph (a senior faculty member, my office mate, and the director of the basic public speaking class), and I decided to do a study to find out.

As they sometimes say, the rest is history. We did the study and found out several things. The first was that communication faculty were able to effectively employ SD (a major concern to us), we could use a revised version of the test anxiety measure that Barrick had planned to use for his test anxiety study to measure communication-bound anxiety, and we found SD statistically significantly reduced the students' communication-bound anxiety (McCroskey, Ralph, & Barrick, 1970).

As an aside, we assigned the students on the basis of the pre-test scores on our measure of communication-bound anxiety. Each group was composed of students who had either low, moderate, or high anxiety scores. We told each of the five-student groups that the “trainer” would be along in about 15 minutes. We simply observed, from a viewing area not visible to the students, their communication behavior. All of the low anxiety groups immediately began to talk. All of the high anxiety groups remained silent for the 15 minute period. In the moderate groups some students talked and some did not. This gave us some evidence of the validity of the measure we employed.

By the time this treatment manuscript was published, as was my first article on measures of communication-bound anxiety (McCroskey, 1970). Also, the term “Communication Apprehension” had been introduced to the literature (McCroskey, 1970). The criticism of by scholars began.

*Criticism—Some good, Some not so good.*

Two very important and valid concerns caught the most attention of critics. The first argued that our original measures (PRCA-College, PRCA-Ten, PRCA-Seven, and the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety-PRPSA) were not really measures of a broad-based communication-bound fear/anxiety (McCroskey, 1970). The critics were totally correct. These measures were based primarily on items from instruments that had been developed by earlier scholars dealing with public speaking anxiety. The PRPSA has proven to be an excellent measure for that purpose, and is still commonly used in public speaking research. But it is not a measure of communication apprehension.

Over the next five years, many efforts were made to improve the validity of the PRCA as a measure of CA. By the middle of the 1970's, the PRCA-25 had been developed and validated by many studies (McCroskey, 1978). It had much less emphasis on CA in the public speaking context of communication. Eventually, the PRCA-24 was generated. It has six items for each of four



communication contexts (one being public speaking) and has been the primary instrument used for measuring CA since that time (McCroskey, 1982a).

The second concern of critics was that our study of the use of SD to treat CA was a controlled experiment and the results might not be generalizable in normal academic circumstances. To answer this concern of the critics, we conducted an extremely large replication of the original study at Illinois State University (McCroskey, 1976). The results replicated those of the original Michigan State study. A subsequent study at West Virginia replicated this study employing cognitive restructuring (Glowgower, Fremouw, & McCroskey, 1978) and obtained similar results. Clearly it is possible to reduce the CA of individuals who have high CA. However, as we learned later, that reduction may not be very large (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998).

Early on, some people just didn't believe that there was something like CA in their classrooms. The most common comment was "My students get over CA in my classes." Since then, many different researchers' results have indicated that in studies with control groups such improvement does not occur. It is just regression to the mean. Other people commented that "I don't have high CA students in my classes." Given that we have learned that approximately one person out of five suffers from high CA, that seems unlikely to be true. These people may just not have Phillips' ability to recognize a reticent (or high CA) when they see one, or they just don't want to accept the fact that they have students who need help they can't provide. Of course, these people may be teaching non-required classes. It is quite probable that high CAs do not choose to take their classes. Most of these concerns were expressed by long-time public speaking teachers. We seldom hear similar comments from faculty who are teaching other kinds of communication classes. In recent years we do not often hear these views expressed at all. The validity of the CA construct has been accepted by most people in the discipline.

By the middle of the 1970's, a new concern appeared. Some individuals advanced the argument that CA and reticence are the same thing. This argument could not be answered at that time, since there was no measure of reticence to compare with the PRCA-25 (or the PRCA-24 later). While these constructs were recognized as related, Phillips and I both agreed we were not studying the same thing. Later research indicated that the instrument developed to measure the construct of "willingness to communicate" (WTC) probably provides the closest measure of reticence available (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). As expected, these two measures proved to be substantively correlated, but not isomorphic (Additional discussion of WTC later.)

Most of the CA research done in the early years focused on measuring CA and finding ways to reduce it. This became the big concern of the critics. This voice questioned whether CA was really a problem at all, except in public speaking. This valid concern literally launched hundreds of research studies of the next three decades, and continues to the present. This research centers on the effects of CA in a variety of communication contexts. The results of this research will be discussed later.

#### CA and Communication Traits

In the early years of the study of CA, a distinction was made between "Trait CA" (TCA) and "State CA" (SCA). TCA was seen as being a general pattern of low, medium, or high orientation of anxiety/fear across communication contexts. SCA was seen as experiencing anxiety/fear in one situation but not in others. For example, an individual could experience anxiety/fear anticipating

communication when applying for a job but not experiencing anxiety/fear in other interpersonal communication situations. It has been estimated that approximately 70 percent of the people in the U.S. report experiencing CA when they have to give a public speech. This does not mean that 70 percent of the population are high TCA communication apprehensives. Rather, it is estimated that only 15-20 percent of the people are high communication apprehensives. Thus, many people who are moderate or low in TCA may experience SCA when confronted by public speaking, but some may learn to control their to control their SCA over time and/or with experience. However, individuals with high TCA experience SCA in many communication situations, but those individuals with low TCA may seldom (or never) experience SCA in any context.

When it was recognized that there is a range of high to low TCA, several scholars began wondering if there were other communication traits that might be related to TCA. Four of these traits have received the most attention: Shyness (SHY), Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Compulsive Communication (CC), and Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC).

*Shyness.* While much of the research on shyness has been reported in the literature of psychology, it also has been studied by communication researchers. The definitions of shyness provided by researchers in psychology are highly variable, and their measures are equally variant. Some of the research studies in psychology focus on shyness as an internal experience, others focus on externally observable behavior (Leary, 1983). The research reported by communication researchers has employed a common definition of shyness: “The tendency to be timid, reserved, and most specifically, talk less” (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). This definition encompasses both of the elements discussed by Leary, and the McCroskey Shyness Scale (SHY) follows that pattern.

Factor analysis has determined that the items on the PRCA and the SHY form two clearly distinct dimensions. This indicates that communication apprehension and shyness are distinct constructs. However, this research does indicate that the CA and SHY are related. The original research (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982) found that these two measures are substantially correlated,  $r = -.57$ . This indicates that either measure can predict 32 percent of the variance in the other. Subsequent research has produced very similar correlations when the PRCA-24 is employed,  $r = -.58$ .

*Willingness to Communicate.* The first two attempts (to my knowledge) at development of an instrument which might measure something related to individual’s verbal orientation (reticence, verbosity) were not successful. The first of those focused on “unwillingness” to communicate (Burgoon, 1976). This work sought to develop an instrument which would provide a measure of CA and a measure of of communication unwillingness. The results produced two dimensions. One was a weak CA measure, and the other was a number of items that were not found to measure anything interpretable.

The second measure (Mortensen, Arnston, & Lusting, 1977) sought to measure “predispositions toward verbal behavior.” The results generated a 25-item measure with good reliability. However, only five of the items in this measure appeared to relate directly to WTC.

My colleagues and I made numerous attempts at developing a measure of reticence that was not also a valid measure of communication apprehension (never published). We were using the normal Likert scaling methods. We consistently failed to develop such a measure. After over a decade of failures, we changed methods and were successful. When we got our successful pilot study, we contacted Professor Phillips. He indicated that he had changed his view of reticence and didn’t want us to refer to our new measure as “reticence.” Hence, we changed the name of the

measure to “Willingness to Communicate” (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

In early and recent research we have found that the correlation between CA and WTC typically is about  $r = -.51$ . This indicates that either measure can predict 27 percent of the variance in the other. This indicates that communication apprehension and willingness to communicate are distinct constructs. However, this research does indicate that CA and WTC are related.

Since both SHY and WTC are correlated with CA, we recently have sought to determine the relationship between SHY and WTC. Based on the results of several studies, we determined that SHY and WTC are typically correlated by  $r = -.48$ . This indicates that SHY and WTC are related, but are distinct traits.

*Compulsive Communication.* Many people who are interested in CA have asked whether the people who are low in CA are “talkaholics,” the people who they think “talk too much.” If so, this might indicate that low CAs have a reverse problem compared to the high CAs. We recognized the possibility that these people might be on to something. Hence, we decided to find out if their speculation was correct. We chose to call these people Compulsive Communicators (CC), because we thought they might or might not have a problem.

From the results of the initial study (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993) we learned that the scores on the CC measure (referred to as the talkaholic scale) are not normally distributed. People are either compulsive communicators or they are not—much like people are either alcoholics or not, or either chocaholics or not. Some studies outside the U.S. have found similar results. In a subsequent study (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995), it was found that CC is substantially correlated with SHY,  $r = -.62$ , accounting for .38 percent shared variance. CC was also found to be correlated with introversion, assertiveness, CA, WTC, neuroticism, and SPCC, but all of these correlations were below  $r = .30$  and none could account for as much as nine percent shared variance. Responsiveness and affect orientation correlations with CC were found not to be statistically significant.

Clearly, CC is a distinct trait which is meaningfully (negatively) associated with only shyness. CC is not meaningfully associated with low CA. High, moderate, and low CAs do not differ in their likelihood to engage in CC. In addition, students who had high talkaholic scores were offered a training program to overcome “their problem.” Not a single student accepted the offer. We interpreted their response as an indication that people who are high in CC do not believe they have a problem. Interviews with a sample of high CC indicated that being a “talkaholic” was not a problem and they thought being one was an asset.

When we presented a paper on “talkaholism” at a NCA convention, over 100 members of this association attended (a larger group than for most sessions, all seats were taken, and people stood in the room, and a few out side the door). Prior to our presentation, we asked every person attending to complete the talkaholic scale. While only about five percent of the students in the previous study scored as high in CC, approximately 75% of the communication professionals scored as high on the talkaholism scale.

In a pilot study (never published because of the small sample), we asked 132 college students to identify another person they knew who “talks too much.” All of the students identified such a person. We were able to reach 73 of those people. Only four of these people scored as high CC.

While so few studies require caution in interpretation, it appears appropriate to speculate that

being a high CC is not associated with any communication problem, and it may be associated positively with communication competence. It appears that CC and “talks too much” are distinct and unrelated constructs. It also appears that the reference to “talks too much” does not relate to a quantitative (amount of communication) problem, but does relate to a qualitative problem—people who are seen as talking too much are viewed as incompetent communicators—talk when they should not, say things that are offensive, etc. Future research is needed to determine the accuracy of these speculations.

*Self-Perceived Communication Competence.* During the late 1970's and the 1980's a major concern of communication scholars was “communication competence” and its measurement (Wiemann, 1977; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980; McCroskey, 1982b). A variety of theories and a few measures were advanced. One of these was the Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

It was believed that one's CA, SHY, and/or WTC might be good predictors of their SPCC (Richmond, J. McCroskey, & L. McCroskey, 1989). The results of their research supported their speculation. The correlations of CA with SPCC obtained ranged from  $r = -.57$  to  $r = -.66$ . The obtained correlations of SHY with SPCC ranged between  $r = -.48$  to  $r = -.57$ . The correlations obtained were from  $r = .63$  to  $r = .74$ . These results clearly indicate that CA, SHY, and WTC influence SPCC, but CC does not.

We now know that there are strong relationships among these five communication traits. We also know that these communication traits are distinctive of each other. What we don't know is what other communication traits may be related to these, and what communication traits are important but not related to them. A task to complete in the next 40 years?

#### *Causes and Effects of CA in Human Communication*

A lot of attention has been given to the effects of CA in human communication. Comparatively, little attention was given to the cause(s) of CA until recently. I will deal with causes first.

*Causes of CA.* When research began on CA in the 1960's few, if any, researchers questioned the cause of CA. At that time the learning paradigm dominated scholarship in all of the social sciences and some of the hard sciences. Infants were thought to be blank slates and they learned everything from the environment (other people and experience) as time went on. So, of course, we presumed that CA was learned. And, the motto was “Whatever is learned can be unlearned and/or relearned.” This view dominated scholarship and nothing else was considered. When we sought a way to reduce CA, we considered no other view than learning. Even brain scholars were caught up in this view—and they could only study the brains of dead people, since physically probing a live brain would kill the person. It wasn't until the 1990's that the technology began to develop methods of studying live brains without killing the person. Almost everything we now know about live brains has been learned since that time. We chose our methods for reducing CA from various approaches to learning and selected the Systematic Desensitization approach to “unlearn and relearn” with our high CAs. Statistically, this was an effective method. Other methods were tried, and they seemed to work also. However, the effect sizes turned out to be relatively small, hence were not very effective. When we realized this, we sought some other approach to understanding the cause of CA.

We read some work in brain science and psychology and recognized some of this work might apply to our problem. At this point we recognized there were two kinds of causation for human factors—learning and genetics. So if one doesn't work, maybe the other one will. Genetics had

a bad name at that time because of the society's aversion to the horrible research conducted by the Nazi physicians before and during World War II. People had not gotten over the view that genetic research was evil, and understand that it was the Nazi approach and use of that research which was evil.

As we anticipated, our first two published studies (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997; Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998) received extremely negative verbal responses and numerous physical threats from many members of our field who were ignorant of what genetic studies are today. As far as those people saw it, we were the lowest creatures on earth and worse than the Nazi murderers. As an aside, I was a candidate for President of NCA at the time. Yes, I lost. That I expected, but the threats I did not. Particularly because many of these attacks were published in an NCA electronic publication.

At any rate, this work launched the communibiology paradigm. It now appears that genetics is a major factor in the causation of CA and maybe other communication orientations and behaviors. We hope that sometime soon we can develop genetically based methods for helping the people with high CA.

*Effects of CA.* As noted previously, some critics questioned whether CA is really a problem, except for public speaking. This appeared to be a valid concern. We thought there might be many negative effects of CA beyond just public speaking fear and anxiety. Hence, two of my former graduate students (John A. Daly & Virginia P. Richmond) and I joined together to launch research studies directed toward developing and understanding of the effects of CA in normal communication contexts (beyond public speaking).

We anticipated that this would take us a few years. We underestimated. We had conducted and published over 20 studies in a few years (1972-1978) on this topic. Simply put, our results indicated that virtually regardless of context, humans with high CA are handicapped by their CA, whereas humans with low CA are benefitted by their lack of CA. Virtually all of our later research in this area has supported this conclusion. The same is true for most of the research reported by others.

When we chose to launch this research effort, what we did not anticipate was the level of research on this topic could reach. Several of our colleagues, students, and former students began to do research in this area. Other communication researchers from all over the U.S. began to conduct research in this area. U.S. communication scholars began doing research in this area in other cultures. Scholars in other disciplines became interested in this area of research. And more recently, scholars in other cultures are doing research in this area. Books have been published that include discussions of the problems caused by CA, and some of these have been translated into the languages of other cultures. In a recent visit to "Google," "Communication Apprehension" resulted in over 39,000 responses. While most of the CA research in the early years was produced by my colleagues and I, now our work represents only a small percentage of that which has been reported.

While I do not have the room to describe all of the effects of CA that have been identified, in the following pages I will provide some of these:

1. [Daly and McCroskey \(1975\)](#) found that high CAs prefer occupations that have low oral communication demands while low CAs prefer occupations that require high oral communication demands. Problem: High CAs tend to have lower incomes.
2. Falcione, McCroskey, and Daly (1977) found that high CAs who are teachers (elementary or

high school) or are Federal civil service employees have less job satisfaction than those who are low CAs. Problem: High CAs may cause more turnover in their occupations and/or to leave their own jobs.

3. McCroskey and Andersen (1976) found that high CAs who are college students prefer attending large lecture classes over small classes which encourage interaction. Problem: Students who avoid interaction in class often receive lower grades because they don't "participate." Also, because they don't like the classes, students learn less in classes which demand interaction.

4. Scott, Yates, and Wheelless (1975) found that high CAs who are college students and are, when in small personalized classes, significantly less likely to seek the assistance of available tutors than were students with lower CA.

Problem: High CAs do less well compared to other students in these classes.

5. McCroskey and McVetta (1978) found that college students who are high CAs prefer classes where they may sit on the sides or back of the room, while low CAs prefer seats in the center and front of the class. Problem: When teachers require high CA students to sit in the center or front of the class, they learn less.

6. McCroskey and Sheahan (1978) found that high CA college students as compared to those who with lower CA are less likely to accept a blind date, have a date, interact with peer strangers, and to engage in exclusive (steady) dating. Problem: Students with weak social connections are more likely to drop out of college.

7. McCroskey and Kretzschmar (1977) found that college graduates with high CA (even though they are less likely to date) are more likely to marry immediately upon graduation than are graduates with lower CA. Problem: Early marriage has been found to be a good predictor of divorce.

8. Quiggins (1972) found that high CAs are perceived as both less credible and less interpersonally attractive than are low CS, by low, moderate, and even other high CAs. These results have been replicated numerous in subsequent studies. Problem: Negative attractiveness and low credibility lead to dislike and rejection in social and work environments.

9. Hurt and Joseph (1976) found that high CAs are less likely to be turned to as opinion leaders or to be selected as friends than other other people. Problems: People who are not opinion leaders have less influence in their work environment, and people who are not selected as friends can be lonely and accepted less in their social lives.

10. Richmond (1977) found that high CAs have less likely hood of being successful in the job applicant screening process. Problem: High CAs have less chance of being hired compared to others.

The ten examples shown above are just a small sample of the dozens of CA effects studies which appeared in a brief six-year period. Such research has continued on these and other kinds of contexts relating the impact high CA in everyday life. It almost seems like communication researchers are committed on finding a communication context where being a high CA is *not* a negative trait. There have been very few, if any, studies with these results in the past four decades.

It seems reasonable to come to the conclusion that high CA is a very negative trait for a person to have in the U.S. culture, and in at least several other cultures. We know it has many negative effects for about 1 in 5 of our acquaintances, our friends, our families, as well as our selves. We think we now know why it exists (genetics and learning). We know how to reduce it a little for some high CA people. We have learned about drugs which temporarily reduce a person's CA (and their potential negative side effects). I conclude with the hope that it doesn't take 40 more years for a method to be developed that can help high CAs overcome their CA, and hence avoid their

problems. I believe you , as a reader of this article, share that hope with me. There never will be enough research on communication apprehension until the effects of high CA can be prevented for everyone in our society and in other cultures.

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**Replication of the “Passing encounters East and West;  
Comparing Japanese and American Pedestrian Interactions” (2007)**

**By Patterson, L. M., Izuka, Y., Tubbs, E. M., Ansel, J.,  
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**~ A Study of Passing encounters; Comparing Japanese and American Pedestrian  
Interactions in Waikiki ~**

Aoki Keiko  
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Meinecke Lareina

## Introduction

“How do you locate a tourist?” This is a question we, the researchers, repeatedly asked ourselves while sitting in the shade, assessing the intersections crossing to and from the beach at Waikiki. “Oh, it’s obvious!” or, “You can guess,” we said over and over, although it became difficult to state exactly what distinguishes a Japanese tourist or a mainland U.S. tourist from the local population. In a moment we started to articulate, “They have lighter skin or are burned,” “They may have luggage tags attached to what they are carrying,” “They are dressed more expensively or in clothes inappropriate for the weather,” “They are carrying shopping bags,” “Japanese tourists often wear high heels or carry an umbrella,” and “Target people who look blond or red-headed are Caucasian.”

The specific issue being addressed in our study was the potential difference or similarity between Japanese pedestrians and American pedestrians in terms of their nonverbal cues, including civil inattention and/or interaction. We attempted to replicate the “Passing Encounter East and West: Comparing Japanese and American Pedestrian Interaction” by Miles L. Patterson and his associates with a few distinct alterations. We focused on the microkinesics of the interaction, but physical appearance and context clues definitely played into the early selection process of participants to the study.

The original study included Japanese confederates passing unknowing Japanese participants on the sidewalks of Japan and American study confederates passing Americans along streets in the United States. In both cases, the confederates were given various conditions to enact when passing, including glance, smile, nod, greetings, and avoiding the passerby completely, while observers determined the reaction of the participants. The setting to conduct these studies was as controlled as possible with a flat area always sought so that the participants would not be looking down to navigate the sidewalks, data were collected during clear weather, so as not to be dealing with rain and umbrellas, and moderate levels of foot traffic, so that the reaction of participants could be observed.

Ultimately Patterson and his colleagues, Iizuka, Tubbs, Ansel, Tsutsumi, and Anson (2007), determined that Japanese participants were more likely to enact civil inattention than American pedestrians, who more frequently responded to confederate interaction. This study is reflective of a trend across the social sciences to not universalize or look for commonalities as much as to notice cultural differences. The work of this team of researchers investigated Japanese in Japan and Americans in the U.S., so by looking at two case studies comparatively in two very different regions they confirmed hypotheses that predicted differences. The study basically supported the general hypothesis of the researchers that Japanese would be less likely to interact with other pedestrians than would Americans. The researchers posed various plausible cultural explanations for this study, including a respect of other’s privacy, and gave suggestions for future research involving a more inquiry into the effects of gender on participants, adding particular greetings, dealing with the diversity in the American sample versus homogeneity in the Japanese sample.

## Rationale

Recently, researchers focusing on the pedestrians' recognition of the others as they approached and passed on the sidewalk have been conducted. In Ellsworth and Langer (1976) study, it is shown that a belief glance would be ambiguous and serve as a nonspecific behavior, including a simple recognition of the other's presence, liking, or curiosity. If this holds true, then a nod might soften the potential negative effects of a belief glance alone. According to Patterson (1976), in general, two contrasting patterns of reaction in these settings might be possible, that is, 'compensation' and 'reciprocation.' For example, if the confederate's behavior (avoid, look, or look and nod) invites participant's discomfort, then the participant is likely to compensate by not gazing, or nodding. In contrast, if the same behavior from the confederate invites positive effect, then participant is likely to reciprocate in the form of looking, or nodding back at the confederate.

Of course the gender of the participants and confederates may also affect the results of these studies. Hall and Hallberstadt's (1986) meta-analysis of sex differences in gazing and smiling, involving 5 to 10 percent of field setting studies with strangers, showed that adult females glance and smile substantially more than adult males. Hinsz and Tomhave (1991) also found the sex differences, that is, females smiled significantly more than males did. Nevertheless, in the [Patterson et al. \(2002\)](#) study, it is shown that there was no main effect of sex of participants on either glancing or smiling. Specifically, more glances were gained by opposite-sex participants rather than the same-sex.

Other researchers have shown that there may be cultural differences between Americans and Japanese in the way they manage passing encounters. There is good evidence on the differences between America and Japanese showed by some researchers (Matsumoto et al., 1999; Matsumoto et al., 2002; Noguchi, 2007; Yrizarry et al., 1998). As one example, according to Matsumoto (2006), Japanese in collectivistic culture tend not to show any expressive reactions. As another example, it is shown that Japanese seem to care about preserving adequate privacy around strangers (Miyashiro, Inui, & Takeuti, 1984).

[Patterson et al. \(2007\)](#) examined the pedestrians' interaction in Japan and the United States, focusing on cultural effects, conditions and sex of the confederate on glances, smiles, nods, and greetings. Their results showed that Japanese pedestrians glanced at confederates slightly less than American pedestrians, but the differences between them were much bigger with smiles, nods, and greetings. They also showed that 'Look and smile' condition got greater responses than 'look-only' condition, which supported the study showing that the participants smiled back to a displayer's smile (Hinsz & Halberstadt, 1991). In their study, female confederates received more glances than male confederates.

The importance of the topic in terms of replicating it deals with our location in Hawaii and the aspect of this setting as a crossroads between these two cultures. Definitely the study addressed circumstances in Japan using Japanese confederates, and tested the American populace using American confederates. But what happens when both these parties are

displaced into the context of Waikiki and find themselves pedestrians on the same sidewalk? How much cultural tendency do they bring with them to the scenario when they are on vacation? Do the rules change?

Our rationale in conducting this study was to observe reactions of Japanese tourists to both an American Caucasian confederate and a Japanese confederate and to counter those results with mainlander American tourists passing the same confederates. In such a new study as that presented by [Patterson et al. \(2007\)](#), it seems curious that they did not examine the cross cultural effects of pitting American micro-interactions in pedestrian scenarios against Japanese pedestrian behavior. While it is important to know what goes on typically in a given culture, it is a definite trend of an ever-shrinking world to also inquire into the results of cultures in contact, as this is evermore the case. In Hawaii we have the advantage of watching the two worlds collide on the sidewalk and we intend to add to the understanding of the previous study by conducting research in this extra dimension.

#### Hypotheses

As researchers have shown, the differences between Japanese and American suggest that Japanese pedestrians would respond less than American pedestrians as they pass strangers on side walks. We expected, however, that there would be likely less difference between Japanese and Caucasian pedestrians in Hawaii because they were on vacation. Therefore, the first hypothesis was that Japanese pedestrians would respond with fewer glances and nods than Caucasian pedestrians would, as we have seen in the results of [Patterson et al. \(2007\)](#), but the difference in this present study would be less than the result of the Patterson et al.'s original study. Nevertheless, it was also expected that there would be an effect of condition with the initiation of "look and nod" increasing glances, nods compared to the "avoid" and "look-only" conditions because a nod might disarm the potential negative effects of look alone. At the same time it was predicted that Caucasians would not be likely to nod in response because nodding is a very Japanese gesture. Thus, the second hypothesis was that "look and nod" would increase glances, nods compared to the "avoid" conditions. The third hypothesis was that there would be differences between Japanese and Caucasian; Caucasian would not be likely to nod back in response. Our fourth hypothesis is that male pedestrians would glance more at female confederates than female pedestrians. This hypothesis was based on Hindsz and Halberstadt's (1991) research which showed that the participants smiled back at female displayer more than male displayer.

#### Method

Definitions of relevant terms will be quintessential in understanding the usage of certain words throughout the study. "Confederate" and "participant" are being used in the same manner they were for the original study, meaning that "confederate" is being used for the person who is engaged in the study as a pedestrian initiating a certain set of nonverbal cues in passing. "Participant" refers to the unknowing targeted pedestrians who receive cues from the confederates and whose reactions are recorded by the researchers as data.

Our conditions included “avoid,” “glance,” and “look and nod.” “Avoid” simply refers to civil inattention. “Glance,” for the purposes of this study, involves not merely eye contact but also a visible rotation of the head. “Look and nod” must be defined as a nod with the accent downwards as opposed to a nod with an accent upwards. This is an important distinction in Hawaii where a nod with the accent upwards serves a common kinesic function of acknowledgement.

For each participant, observers recorded “present” or “absent” in each condition. “Present” means the action indicated was present in the passing. “Absent” indicates that the specified action did not occur. Therefore, “absent” in regards to the “avoid” condition means that the participant did react in some way.

“Japanese,” for the purposes of this research and in keeping with [Patterson et al. \(2007\)](#), refers to Japanese people from Japan, not Japanese-Americans. In the case that we conducted studies in Waikiki, Japanese participants were individuals we identified as being Japanese tourists. The word “American,” as used by [Patterson et al. \(2007\)](#), will here be replaced by “Caucasian” or “Mainlander” interchangeably to indicate that we are dealing specifically with Caucasian participants identified, again, as tourists, in this case from the mainland United States, as opposed to Caucasian tourists from Europe or Caucasian locals. These two more stringently defined groups fit better with both our confederates (a Caucasian Mainlander and a Japanese student) and with our location.

#### Procedure

Participants were selected by consensus of the researchers and determined to be either Japanese tourists or Caucasian tourists based on kinesic, physical appearance, and occasionally vocalic codes. As such, more participants were passed than were ultimately recorded. Our sample size included 120 participants. Participants also had to be alone in order to minimize distraction and for the observer to have a clear understanding of who was being passed and a clear view of the reaction whenever possible. Both confederates passed five men and five women of same nationality and five men and five men and five women of the other nationality. The confederates themselves were dressed in their own clothing and what each would consider everyday attire as students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. As such no attempt for the confederates to appear as tourists was made. Both confederates were female, so the effects of gender were not a primary focus of this research.

We conducted our study during daylight hours spanning 10 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon and the results are spread over two days, one Thursday and one Saturday, so as to include a weekday and a weekend day. Days were selected based on favorable weather conditions, including little rain and relative warmth and sunshine. It should be noted that most mainland Americans were observed during morning hours and most Japanese were passed during afternoon hours, because of their respective time differences in relation to Hawaiian Standard Time.

We were situated at three intersections along Kalakaua Street crossing all directions, including

to and from the beach and to and from shops and restaurants on the side of the street away from the beach. An equal number of participants were recorded from each intersection so as to obtain evidence of a cross section of pedestrians along this particular street. Participant data was not chosen as a result of crossing along the north/ south crosswalks (to and from the beach) or along the east/west crosswalks (crossing the street between shops), but rather the confederates kept crossing the intersections as the lights changed, so direction is not evenly distributed in the results and is not examined as a factor.

We collected the data by situating observers on the corner of the intersection with the clearest view and in concealing them in the environment—at a restaurant table, or casually sitting on a wall—so the participants would not know they were being observed. The passing took place whenever the lights changed and the confederate in action could cross, provided there was an ideal candidate to pass. Again every effort was made to appear natural, so confederates would answer cell phones while waiting to cross or hit the crosswalk button and other such pedestrian activities so as to blend into the environment. In more crowded circumstances, only one confederate passed at a time, so as to avoid confusion for the observers, but in times of lighter foot traffic, both confederates would cross the street, beginning at different corners so they would alternate crossing as the lights changed. The conditions used by the confederates were predetermined before each crossing, so the observation could be clear at all times on confederate intention and only need to judge participant reaction. If mistakes were made by a confederate in a passing, the observers were signaled to not record the data.

### Results

Because we examined multiple categorical variables, we analyzed our data through an entry procedure that was conducted on SPSS. We tested the significance of the relationships between variables and dependant measures. A significant partial chi-square indicates that the odds ratios are significantly different from 0.05.

We examined our data by a procedure analysis of 2 (Sex of participant) x 4 (Pairs; Japanese confederate - Japanese participant, Caucasian confederate - Caucasian participant, Japanese confederate - Caucasian participant, Caucasian confederate - Japanese participant) x 2 (Same Culture) x 2 (Difficult Culture) x 3 (Condition: “avoid,” “glance,” and “look and nod”).

#### Culture

Our first analyses examined the amount of responsiveness from our two variables, Japanese participants and Caucasian participants. We believed that the Japanese participants would respond with fewer nods and glances than Caucasian participants. Our analyses discovered that 6 Japanese participants and 6 Caucasian participants responded with a nod. There was no significance of a difference, with a nod response more from a Caucasian participant than a Japanese participant. The Pearson Chi-Square from a Nod Response by the participants is 1.0.

## Chi-square Test on Participant Nod between Culture

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.000 <sup>a</sup>	1	1.000

The glance responsiveness showed that 26 Japanese participants and 19 Caucasian participants glanced in a total of 120 participants. Once again there was no significance of a difference, with a glance response more from Caucasian participant than a Japanese participant. The Pearson Chi-Square from a Glance Response by the participants is .209.

## Chi-square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.580 <sup>a</sup>	1	.209

Therefore, our first hypothesis was not supported. Japanese participants did not respond less than Caucasian participants with a glance and nod response.

## Condition

Next, we examined the condition responses from both participants when the confederate manipulated the condition. We believed that there would be an increase in glances and nods when the confederate had “look and nod” towards the participant, compared in the avoid condition. Our analyses showed that in the “avoid” condition, 2 participants had nodded in a total of 38; in the “glance” condition, 2 had Nod in a total of 40; and in the “look and nod” condition 18 had nodded in a total of 38. Therefore, there was a significant increase in nod responsiveness from participants when the conditions changed from “avoid” and “glance” conditions to the “look and nod” condition. The Pearson Chi-Square from an increase in Nod Response towards a Condition is .03.

## Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.988 <sup>a</sup>	2	.030

Therefore, our hypotheses that there would be an increase in glances and nods in the “look and nod” conditions compared to the “avoid” condition was supported.

## Culture x Condition

We wanted to examine the response based upon culture, thus we looked at how much glance and nod responses we would get from a Japanese and Caucasian participant. We



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believed that Caucasian participants would not nod in response than the Japanese participants. Our analyses showed that 6 Japanese participants out of 58 responded with glance and nod; and 6 Caucasian participants out of 58 responded with a glance and nod. There was no significant difference between the glance and nod response from Japanese and Caucasian participants. The Pearson Chi-Square for a Glance and Nod Response by Japanese participants is .080 and the Pearson Chi-Square for a Gland and Nod Response by Caucasian participant is .129.

Chi-Square Test

PartCult		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Jpn Participant	Pearson Chi-Square	5.048 <sup>a</sup>	2	.080
Cau Participant	Pearson Chi-Square	4.090a	2	.129

Therefore, our third hypothesis that Caucasians would respond less with a nod than Japanese was not supported.

**Sex of Participant**

Since we only had female confederates, we wanted to examine whether or not there would be more glance responses from male participants than female participants. We hypothesized that male participants would respond more to the female confederates. Our results showed that 23 males out of 59 and 22 females out of 58 responded with a glance. There was no significant difference between sexes. The Pearson Chi-Square for a glance response comparing females and males is .907.

Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.014 <sup>a</sup>	1	.907		

Therefore, our last hypothesis that males respond more to female confederates with a glance than females was not supported.

Table 1: Percentage of Responsiveness from Males in the Avoid Condition

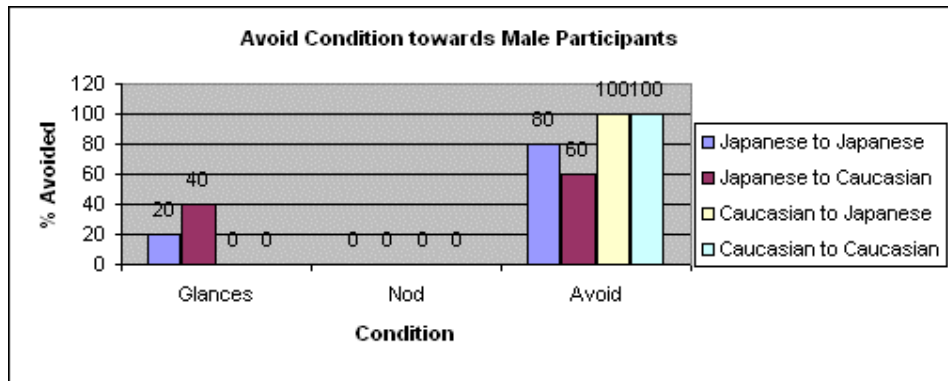


Table 2: Percentage of Responsiveness from Females in the Avoid Condition

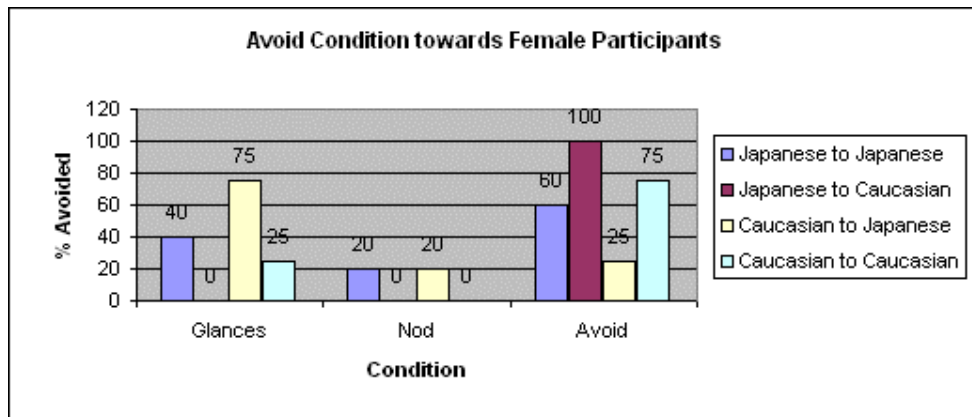


Table 3: Percentage of Responsiveness from Males in the Glance Condition

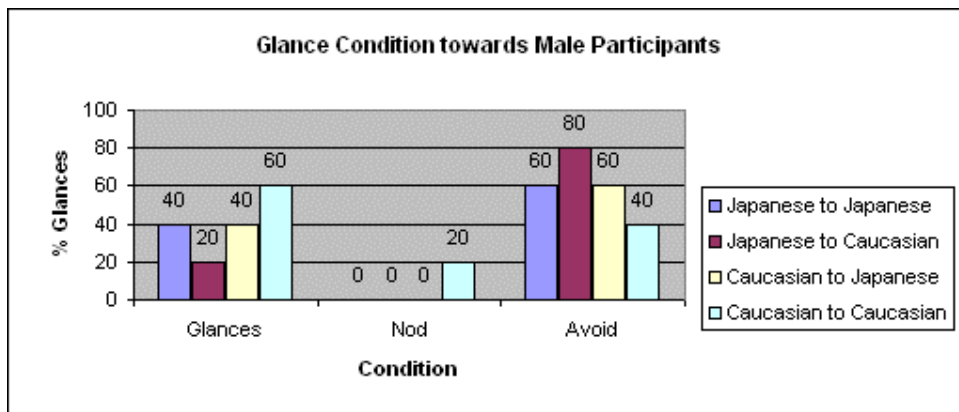


Table 4: Percentage of Responsiveness from Females in the Glance Condition

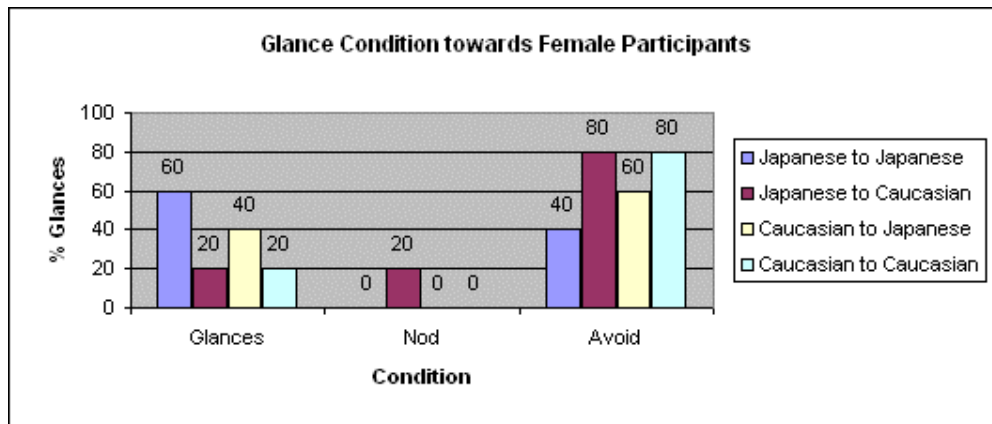


Table 5: Percentage of Responsiveness from Males in the Nod Condition

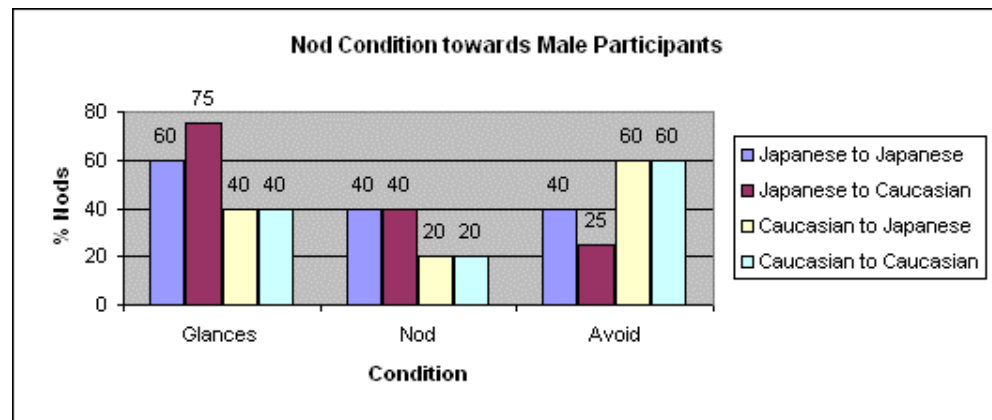
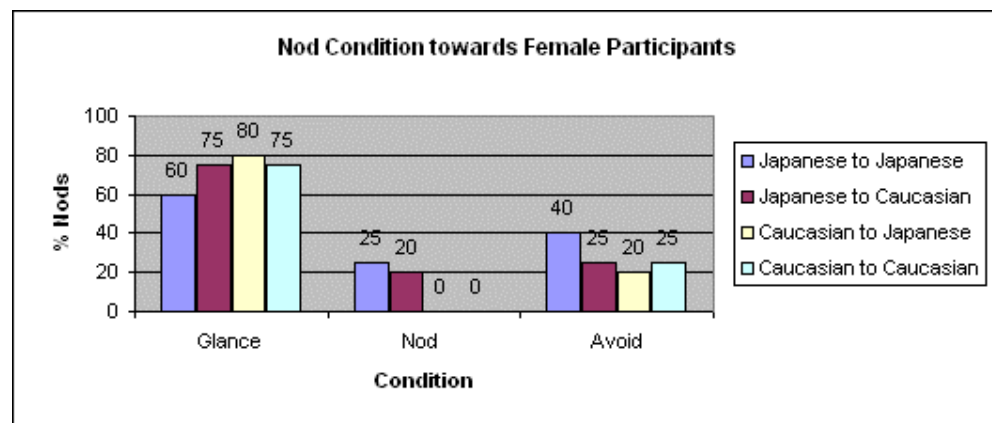


Table 6: Percentage of Responsiveness from Females in the Nod Condition



### Discussion

The results of this experiment did not support our first hypothesis of lower responsiveness among Japanese participants than among Caucasian participants. The Japanese tourist responded quite as much as the Caucasian tourist responds. According to Table 3, there were identical results of 40% of a glance response from a Japanese male to both Japanese confederate and a Caucasian confederate in the Glance condition. Therefore, our results are not consistent to the previous findings of Patterson et al.'s (2007). We found that the Japanese participants had responded just as much as the Caucasian participants. In contrast, our results provided support for our second hypothesis of an increasing response with the "look and nod" condition compared to the "avoid" condition. There was a significant increase with responsiveness from the "avoid" condition to "look and nod" condition. These results were consistent with the previous findings of Patterson et al.'s (2007). From this result, we believe that there is a common reciprocation among cultures in regards to nonverbal gestures. In relation to the nod responses, we hypothesized that Caucasian participants would not nod in response as much as Japanese participants. Our results, however, did not provide support for this hypothesis. In fact, out of 58 Japanese participants and 58 Caucasians, 6 Japanese participants and 6 Caucasian participants had nod in response; our results absolutely had no significant difference. Next, our results showed no support in our comparison of participant sex. It was not consistent to the previous results of Patterson et al.'s (2007).

We believe that a large range in age for participants and our vacation setting had affected our results. We explain our results to believe that there seems to be a reciprocating response, especially because our participants were on vacation. That is to say, our participants were on vacation; therefore, it limited our comparison of variables. We can say that the environment and the setting on vacation had increased the Japanese attention and responsiveness to unknown pedestrians. We can also say that both Japanese and Caucasian participants were very reciprocating of nonverbal gestures towards the confederate because they were on vacation. They were more inclined to display polite gestures because their moods were most likely in a positive one. When people are on vacation, we believe that they would be more aware of their surroundings and very observant to express kind gestures. Furthermore, there would be displays of civil inattention by both the Japanese and the Caucasian in the "avoid" condition.

There are obvious limitations to our study we conducted our research on crosswalk closer to the beach. The participant demeanors were much more of a positive polite manner because they were on vacation and the beach was in sight. If research was conducted further from the Waikiki beach, without the beach in sight, or if it was conducted in Japan, there would be different results. Additionally, in this present study the sex of confederate was only female. We could narrow results to make a better comparison of response in sexes if there were male confederates. Also, if we limited the age range in participants, we could have different results.

Although our results had some limitation, our results expressed valid interpretations of our research. We believe that the outcome was successful, though in future reference should be conducted in multiple settings in a tourist location with an increase in participants.

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**Uncertainty Reduction and Information Valence:  
Tests of Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Predicted Outcome Value,  
and an Alternative Explanation?**

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Abstract

Uncertainty reduction has a major role in communication theory of relational development. Two competing theories, Berger and Calabrese's (1975) *uncertainty reduction theory* (URT) and Sunnafrank's (1986) *predicted outcome value* (POV), provide different perspectives on the uncertainty reduction process during initial interactions. Research suggests that when forming a first impression, negative information weighs more heavily than positive information, which is called the "negativity effect" (Kellermann, 1984). This research examined the relationship between the level of uncertainty and the negativity effect in initial interaction.

This paper incorporates the negativity effect with uncertainty reduction to explain how negative information will affect uncertainty level during an initial interaction. The basic assumption of uncertainty reduction is that when two individuals meet for the first time, their primary goal is to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability through communicating with each other, since uncertainty is an uncomfortable state (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). This assumption suggests that the quantity of information is a major determinant of reducing the uncertainty level. The implication is that ANY kind of information will serve to reduce the uncertainty level tends to be hasty and deficient. This research will propose a different perspective on uncertainty reduction, that not only the quantity of information, but also the valence of information has an impact on uncertainty reduction.

The major goal of this research is to explore the function of information valence on uncertainty reduction in initial interaction. This paper will begin by discussing negativity effect and its relation to uncertainty reduction and impression formation. Next, a brief comparison will be conducted between two competing uncertainty reduction theories, Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory (URT) and Sunnafrank's (1986) predicted outcome value (POV). Then the relationship between uncertainty reduction and the characteristics of shared information will be presented.

#### Negativity Effect

The negativity effect occurs when negative information is disproportionately weighted more heavily when compared to positive information about objects, events, and people (Kellermann, 1984, 1989). Numerous studies reveal that even if the relative number of positive and negative attributes is controlled and balanced, negative impressions tend to emerge (e.g., Anderson, 1965; Brinbaum, 1973; Fiske, 1980; Oden & Anderson, 1971; Reeder & Coovert, 1986; Van der Pligt & Eiser, 1980). Similarly, studies of impression formation have found that negative personality traits generally outweigh equally polarized positive traits in the formation of an overall impression of a stimulus person (e.g. Anderson, 1965; Richey, Koenigs, Richey, & Fortin, 1975; Richey, McClelland, & Shimkunas, 1967; Wyer, 1970). For instance, Richey and colleagues (1967) report a finding of a negative effect in the impression of moral-ethical character. In their study, when participants were presented with equal amounts of polarized positive and negative information about a hypothetical stranger, the negative information had significantly more influence on character rating. As a follow-up study, they varied the amounts of favorable and unfavorable information to describe behaviors of an unknown person (Richey et al., 1975), and found that a single negative behavior neutralized five positive behaviors. This negativity effect in impression formation has been exhibited in naturally occurring situations, such as employment interviews where negative characteristics of employees influence hiring decisions more than positive characteristics (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Springbett, 1958). Similarly, negative information is more influential than comparable positive information in evaluations of political candidates (Klein, 1991, 1996; Lau, 1985).

To answer the question why negativity bias occurs, numerous explanations have been proposed (e.g., Brinbaum, 1973; Fiske, 1980; Helson, 1964; Sherif & Sherif, 1967). Yet no single explanation accurately answers that question, so Skowronski and Carlston (1989) proposed a "category diagnostic approach" as the ultimate explanation of the negativity effect. This approach asserts that the informational value of a perceived behavior is related to its category diagnosticity. Lupfer, Weeks, and Dupuis (2000) offer an explanation of a category diagnostic approach as when a negative behavioral trait is used to describe a target person, the observer infers that the trait is the person's true attribute, and the observer perceives that information as

highly diagnostic of understanding the target. Whereas a positive behavioral trait inhibits making confident inferences that the person possesses only that certain personality trait. For instance, an immoral behavior, such as habitually stealing money from acquaintances, appears to be high in the category of diagnosticity, whereas moral behavior, such as habitually donating money to charitable organizations, is less so.

Cost orientation explanation also provides an explanation for the negativity effect in terms of individuals' primary motivation (Klein, 1991). This hypothesis postulates that people tend to be more risk oriented in general, so that they are more strongly motivated to avoid potential costs than to approach potential gains. Hamilton and Zanna (1972) apply the cost orientation hypothesis in interpersonal communication, and explain when forming a first impression of a stranger, people are concerned more with determining "whether or not the person poses a substantial threat for future interactions with him, rather than focusing on those desirable qualities that might be a basis for a positive relationship with the person" (p. 205); consequently, individuals give more attention to negative information. The cost orientation hypothesis provides a motivational explanation that the desire to avoid costs is believed to increase motivation to change attitudes toward the target person more than the desire to obtain rewards (Allen & Burrell, 2000). For instance, when people interact with a person who is perceived to have a negative characteristic (i.e., dishonesty), people are more motivated to avoid costs resulting from the interaction than to approach a person who is perceived to have a positive characteristic (i.e., honesty), which might bring a potential reward for them.

As previously mentioned, if negative information affects impression formation of other people, then the question should ask how the negative information influences uncertainty levels. When developing an interpersonal relationship, uncertainty reduction plays a major role in interpersonal communication. Numerous researchers have established that uncertainty reduction is an important predictor of liking since uncertainty and social attraction are inversely related (e.g., Berger, 1979, 1987; Berger, Gardner, Parks, Schulman, & Miller, 1976; Douglas, 1990). The next section will discuss the uncertainty reduction and impression formation.

#### URT vs. POV

Two major theories of uncertainty reduction, Berger and Calabrese's (1975) URT and Sunnafrank's (1986) POV exist in communication, although no theory explicitly clarifies the function of information valence on uncertainty reduction. The goal of this research is to incorporate the negativity effect with uncertainty reduction, by inquiring how different valences of information have an influence on the uncertainty level, since the negative information is perceived to be deviant and non-normative (Kellermann, 1984, 1989; Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990), which will consequently reduce predictability in initial interaction.

Holmes and Rempel (1989) indicate that the state of uncertainty becomes increasingly dissonant with individuals' behavioral orientation. By attempting to reduce uncertainty, an individual can increase predictive certainty about the other's future behavior, as well as certainty about the self in the situation. The ability to verify others' behavior alleviates the anxiety and vulnerability from the high uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1985). As a result, the reduction of uncertainty is associated with a positive outcome of the initial interaction by lessening the negative affect caused by uncertainty toward both the other and self. If individuals are unable to "get to know" each other, the possibility they will develop a more enduring relationship is reduced (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In general, high uncertainty about acquaintanceship is associated with relatively negative views of initial interaction, increased avoidance of initial conversation sequences, and relative inability to manage acquaintanceship episodes successfully

(Douglas, 1991).

Berger's URT posits that interpersonal relationships develop as individuals reduce uncertainty about each other (Berger, 1979; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). It focuses on the initial phase of interaction between strangers by suggesting that when strangers meet, the primary motivation is to reduce uncertainty. Since people find such a state of uncertainty uncomfortable, they try to increase predictability of the behaviors of themselves and others (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Berger and Calabrese (1975) originally propose the first axiom:

Axiom 1: Given the high level of uncertainty present at the onset of the entry phase, as the amount of verbal communication between strangers increases, the level of uncertainty for each interactant in the relationship will decrease. As uncertainty is further reduced, the amount of verbal communication will increase.

The basic notion of the URT is that as an individual receives information about the stranger, information simply builds up, and eventually it will replace uncertainty. The amount of verbal communication can be inferred as the amount of information shared during the interaction. As stated in the first Axiom, URT does not point out the type of information shared in interaction. It rather assumes that only the quantity of information determines one's uncertainty level: the more information shared, the more uncertainty is reduced, regardless of the valence of information.

Sunnafrank, however, argues that URT has a limited perspective of human interaction (1986). He points out the lack of empirical support for URT as one of the methodological flaws. His argument also highlights a logical flaw of URT that human communication is not limited to reducing uncertainty and maximizing predictability, but also attempts to maximize relational outcomes. In order to supplement the deficit of URT, he proposes POV, which suggests that individuals seek to maximize their relational outcomes by minimizing costs and maximizing rewards. Sunnafrank indicates that a major determinant of one's reduction of uncertainty is the extent to which one perceives the forecasted relational outcome to be positive. Two basic assumptions of POV propose that (a) when individuals interact for the first time, communication is directed at reducing uncertainty in order to determine likely outcome-values for the relational future, and (b) communication occurs in a way predicted to result in the most positive outcomes (Sunnafrank 1986, 1988). As a result, he suggests the first proposition:

Proposition 1: During the beginning stage of initial interactions, both the amount of verbal communication and uncertainty reduction increase. Further increases in amount of verbal communication occur when uncertainty reduction results in positive predicted outcome values, whereas decreases in the amount of verbal communication follow from negative predicted outcome values.

At the same time, POV proposes that negative information will result in an expected negative outcome, and subsequently, it will decrease the amount of verbal communication. Nonetheless, POV tends to hold an ambiguous position in terms of the level of uncertainty as a result of having negative outcome value. Therefore, by making an assumption that uncertainty will be reduced to a certain threshold in the initial interaction, after that threshold it depends upon the predicted outcome value to reduce uncertainty.

#### The Relationship between Uncertainty Reduction and Information

Negative information of other individuals is perceived to be non-normative and deviant (Kellermann, 1989). Deviance is often defined as unpredictability (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990), in turn, this unpredictability must increase the uncertainty level. As Berger and colleagues (1976) suggest, perceived deviance affects individuals' uncertainty

about others, including their ability to predict and explain behavior in initial interactions. According to Planalp and Honeycutt (1985), events that increase uncertainty in intimate relationships are usually viewed as deviant. The events participants reported as deviant could be defined as behavior that violated expectations or social norms. Their finding is consistent with Kellermann and Reynolds' (1990) that deviance yields a moderate positive relationship with the uncertainty level. The findings on the relationship between deviance and uncertainty level suggest that not only the amount of information, but also the valence of information (i.e. positive information vs. negative information) plays a critical role in determining the uncertainty level. Thus, negative information about the target person presented in an initial interaction will increase the uncertainty level since the negative information is viewed as deviant and non-normative.

Three different rival hypotheses will be tested in this research. URT describes that when no information is given to the individuals during dyadic communication, the uncertainty level would be the highest, but the valence of information is not significant (uncertainty level: positive information = negative information < no information). In other words, as long as the same quantity of information is given to the individuals, the positive information group will not differ from the negative information group in terms of uncertainty level. POV is similar except that the negative information will reduce more uncertainty than no information, yet less uncertainty than positive information (uncertainty level: positive information < negative information < no information).

In this paper, the alternative hypothesis will propose that when negative information is perceived as negative, the uncertainty level will increase more than if no information is given. When people receive a piece of negative information about another person, the negative information will be perceived as non-normative and deviant (i.e. "Habitually stealing money from acquaintances is such an unusual behavior."). Due to the diagnostic characteristics of the negativity effect, people will be more likely to believe that the negative characteristic is a true personality trait (i.e. "He/she must have such a personality."). Then, it will arouse a precaution that this person might harm them (i.e. "He/she might steal my money someday."), thus uncertainty level about this person will increase. Negative information will exhibit the highest level of uncertainty, while positive information will exhibit the lowest level of uncertainty (uncertainty level: positive information < no information < negative information).

#### Method

##### Participants

One hundred and sixty seven students enrolled in an entry-level communication course at a large Midwestern university earned course credits for participating in this survey study. Participants were 67 males and 100 females. Participants ranged in age from 18 years to 38 years ( $M = 20.28$ ,  $SD = 2.27$ ). Fifty-nine, fifty-three, and fifty-five participants were randomly assigned to the positive information, negative information, and no information group respectively. Participation was voluntary.

##### Procedure

All students who wished to participate signed the consent form before beginning the experiment. Participants were placed into a hypothetical situation, which was they were set up for a blind date. After reading the introduction about their date, participants were given stimulus material. Then they were asked to fill out a revised Clatterbuck's CLUE7 scale. The manipulation check on the valence of the behavior of the hypothetical blind date partner was measured briefly afterward.

## Measurement

In order to manipulate the independent variable of valence of information, different hypothetical scenarios were created in order to ensure the external validity of the study. The stimulus asked participants to rate a person who has a potential to be their blind date partner. The stimulus included a hypothetical situation, where a friend has been set up on a blind date for participants. Basic demographic information (i.e., name and age) was given in all of the scenarios as an introduction.

The valence of information was manipulated as information coming from a third person (i.e. roommate). During initial interactions between strangers, revealing negative information about the self violates the norms of social appropriateness and politeness in conversational structures, which would be a potential confound. This study assumes that people would generally behave typically and positively, due to impression management (e.g., Tedeschi, 1981) and politeness concerns (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1978). By employing the hypothetical situation stimulus, where the information is presented by a third person, the potential confounds can be minimized.

The dependent variable was measured using a slight variation of the CLUE7 (Clatterbuck, 1979). The variation is made by Kellermann and Reynolds (1990), in that the eighth item (i.e., How well do you think you understand the person?) was included. Clatterbuck's CLUE7 scale has been employed in nearly all uncertainty research, since it is a fairly reliable measure throughout the studies (alpha ranged from .87 to .91). Participants indicated their feelings on a series of 7-point bipolar scales.

## Results

Prior to testing the hypotheses, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982) were used to test the validity of the factor structure of the items and to assess the reliability of the measures. The result of CFA suggested all items of the CLUE7 should be retained. The CLUE7 scale is a unidimensional construct that was internally consistent, and the alpha reliability for this study was .87.

A manipulation check for the independent variable was conducted to see how the participants actually perceived the valence of information. A five-item scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) was used to measure how these participants perceived the potential blind date's behavior in terms of its valence. An ANOVA was conducted, and a significant main effect was found for the valence of information on the manipulation check,  $F(2, 166) = 97.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .54$ . In order to be more specific, an ANOVA with weighted contrast coefficients was also conducted to compare each group. Participants in the positive information group ( $M = 5.27, SD = .85$ ) perceived the potential blind date's behavior (i.e. helping others) was significantly more positive than participants in the no information group ( $M = 4.25, SD = .60$ ),  $t(164) = 7.22, p < .001$ . Similarly, participants in the negative information group ( $M = 3.22, SD = .84$ ) perceived the potential blind date's behavior (i.e. cheating on exams) significantly more negative than participants in the control group,  $t(164) = -6.72, p < .001$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that the manipulation for the stimulus was successful.

Participants' uncertainty level after reading different valence of information was examined. The results indicated that participants in the positive information group reported the lowest level of uncertainty ( $M = 4.15, SD = .87$ ). The participants in the negative information group reported the second lowest level of uncertainty ( $M = 3.42, SD = .87$ ), and the participants in the control group reported the highest level of uncertainty ( $M = 3.11, SD = 1.08$ ). The simple oneway ANOVA indicated that these groups were significantly different from each other,  $F(2,$

166) = 18.31,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ . The oneway ANOVA with weighted contrast coefficients indicated that the mean difference between the positive information group and the negative information was significantly different from each other,  $t(164) = 4.09$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, the mean difference between the negative information group and the control group was not significantly different from each other,  $t(164) = 1.70$ , *n.s.*

Participants' uncertainty level after reading different valence of information was also submitted to a single sample t-test. In the positive information group, the mean uncertainty reduction level toward the hypothetical blind date partner of 4.15 ( $SD = .87$ ) was not significantly higher than the hypothesized population mean of 4 (the midpoint of the scale),  $t(58) = 1.33$ , *n.s.*, two-tailed. However, participants in the negative information group reduced significantly less uncertainty when comparing with the midpoint of the scale,  $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .87$ ,  $t(52) = -4.84$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants who received no information about the potential blind date partner also reported significantly less uncertainty reduction level when comparing with the midpoint of the scale,  $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ,  $t(54) = -6.12$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The results imply that the participants in the positive information group had significantly less uncertainty toward the potential blind date partner than participants in the negative information group. While the pattern of mean difference among these three groups supported POV (uncertainty level: positive information < negative information < no information), the difference between the negative information group and the control group was not statistically significant. Therefore, the actual data suggested that participants in negative information and no information groups were not different in terms of uncertainty reduction (uncertainty level: positive information < negative information = no information).

#### Discussion

The leading purposes of this investigation were (a) to explore how information valences influence observers' uncertainty state in initial interactions, and (b) to integrate the negativity effect and uncertainty reduction in initial interactions. The findings suggested that the function of information valence is strongly confirmed with the data. The role of information valence on uncertainty reduction is noteworthy in that positive information significantly produces less uncertainty than when negative information or no information is given.

URT assumed that the same quantity of information would reduce the same amount of uncertainty regardless of the valence of information. URT does not predict differences for the valence of information (i.e. positive information and negative information), but only differentiates the quantity of information (i.e. information and a lack of information). The data failed to support the URT since the oneway ANOVA results indicated that statistically significant mean differences were found between positive information and negative information group,  $t(164) = 4.09$ ,  $p < .001$ . This shows that URT overlooks the effect of information valence.

In terms of information valence, POV and the alternative explanation, which was proposed by this research, were confirmed by the data. Both hypotheses correctly predicted that the participants in the positive information group would significantly reduce the level of uncertainty compared to participants in the negative information group.

The result indicated that there was a significant mean difference between the positive information and negative information groups, although the mean difference between the negative information group and the control group was not statistically different. The pattern of mean difference was most similar with what POV hypothesized (uncertainty level: positive information < negative information < no information). The current study showed that the uncertainty level was highest in both negative information and no information groups, while positive information

significantly reduced one's uncertainty level (uncertainty level: positive information < negative information = no information). Therefore, the data did not fully support the relationship between the negativity effect and uncertainty reduction.

One of the reasons why no significant difference was found between the negative information and control groups is that there was no clear distinction between different types of uncertainty. In Douglas's (1990) research on uncertainty, he differentiates specific uncertainty from general uncertainty. General uncertainty is also called global uncertainty, which is usually measured by the CLUE7 scale (Clatterbuck, 1979). For specific relational domains, Douglas develops the special measure for his study, which is concerned about the relational context between one and his/her partner. However, the current research was only concerned with global uncertainty even though it is necessary to consider both dimensions of uncertainty. In order to have a substantial evidence for the negativity effect, these two different sub-constructs of uncertainty should have been differentiated. The specific domain of uncertainty should be measured, since the negativity effect tends to be directly related to one's relational uncertainty rather than global uncertainty.

Even though the negativity effect was not supported in this research, the negativity effect should not be overlooked. Out of curiosity, the perception of the negative information was analyzed as a post hoc. The result showed that there was a significant mean difference among three groups in terms of the perceived liking of a potential blind date's behavior,  $F(2, 166) = 87.21, p < .001$ . The pattern of mean difference for liking found participants who received positive information scored highest while participants who received negative information scored lowest. One item measure of whether the participants would date the potential blind date partner was also asked at the end of the questionnaire. A seven-point Likert scale (1: no and 7: yes) was used to see how the negative information affected the willingness to have future interaction with the target person. A significant main effect was reported in that three groups are significantly different in terms of the mean,  $F(2, 166) = 22.00, p < .001$ . The pattern of the mean is that the positive information has the highest mean ( $M = 4.72, SD = 1.23$ ), the control group reported the second highest mean ( $M = 3.96, SD = 1.17$ ), and the negative group had the lowest mean ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.28$ ). The oneway ANOVA with weighted contrast coefficients reported that the mean for the positive information group is significantly greater than the control group,  $t(162) = 6.63, p < .001$ , as well as the negative group,  $t(162) = 3.30, p < .001$ .

#### Limitation and Future direction

There are several possibilities as to why the negativity effect was not supported in this investigation. The first issue is what kind of relationship the person is likely to have with the target person. A relationship with a blind date partner has relatively low relational importance compared to any other relationships. If individuals are not willing to meet the blind date partner, they can always stop having future interactions. Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) state:

“One gets the sense that information simply accumulates, displaces uncertainty, and forms an increasingly comprehensive and precise basis for predicting and explaining others. Yet the intuitive theories that guide interpersonal communication may sooner or later confront serious challenges that increase uncertainty, temporarily if not permanently.”

Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) explain that when the knowledge people use to predict and explain others' behavior brings interpersonal doubt, uncertainty may increase. This implies that the quantity of information is not the only factor to decrease uncertainty, but there are certain kinds of information that even increases the uncertainty level. In their study, the participants



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were asked to write an event where they learned some surprising information about their friend, spouse or romantic partner. Their findings indicate that relational intimacy is a strong motivator to reduce uncertainty. Receiving negative information about the close friends or romantic partner might have a greater effect in terms of uncertainty reduction than receiving negative information about the stranger that people may not need to meet in life. The future direction of this research will be to specify the incentive value of the target person. Berger (1979) indicates that people would be more motivated to reduce the uncertainty about others when others mediate rewards and punishments for them. It will look at the specific level of the incentive value and how participants will react to the valence of information.

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**Cross-Cultural Differences in Approach-Avoidance Communication In South Korea and the US**

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Abstract

This study examines differences in the cultural motivations of South Korean and US Americans to communicate by reflecting on their different motivations to approach (i.e., immediacy) and avoid (i.e., intercultural communication apprehension) communication. Analyses of self reports completed by high-context South Koreans and low-context US Americans indicate that South Koreans have more overall shame and intercultural communication apprehension, than US Americans. Further results show that South Koreans have greater intercultural communication apprehension and are less nonverbally immediate than their US American counterparts.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Approach-Avoidance Communication in South Korea and the US Misunderstandings in communication tend to occur between members of different cultures because cultures encode and decode messages differently (Hulbert, 1994). Because the nature of intercultural communication is complex, it is imperative that differences relating to culture be considered lest, for example, inadvertent “insults” should cause others to lose face, which, in turn might cause communication to break down. Culture is significant because it is mostly through culture that human groups organize, direct, and pattern their behavior (Kim, 1993).

#### Culture, Values, and Needs

Historically, South Koreans and US Americans have lived their lives focusing on opposite value dimensions (Hofstede, 2001). In particular, South Koreans have emphasized Confucian values (Stipek, 1998), shame avoidance, conformity, and social comparison (Yang & Rosenblatt, 2001; Yoon, 1994). Alternatively, US Americans live their lives based on individualistic values (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede also classified Korea as a culture that is strong in power distance (PD) – culturally willing to accept all authorities – versus the US which is weak in PD (culturally accepting authorities yielding legitimate power). Because Koreans are strong in PD, which is correlated with collectivism, they show more obedience towards superiors and they are also more other oriented (Hofstede, 2001). Historically, status has been an important indicator of South Korean communication. Thus, the loss of status leads to being shamed (Ambady, Koo, & Lee, 1996). In contrast, US Americans traditionally have been more equally other-oriented toward all targets regardless of their status because status in the US is dependent on legitimate power or competence (Hofstede, 2001).

On the other hand, Korea’s fast-growing economy has created cultural changes resulting in a transformation from a face-saving culture to a modern culture (Lee, 1999). In fact, Thomas (1998) has found that South Koreans communicate with a low-context emphasis on relationships, choosing direct organizational patterns with deductive lines of reasoning, just like individualistic US Americans. Similarly, the increased exposure of Korea to the world has led some researchers to believe that South Koreans have become more individualistic (Choi & Kibum, 2004; Lee, 1999; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Thomas, 1998). If this is the case, then past findings on South Korean and US communication (e.g., Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996; Park & Kim, 1992) do not adequately reflect present South Korean communication --indicating a need for further examination of the divergence of perspectives between Korea and the United States.

For example, if differences in communication are understood correctly, the US could improve its relations with South Korea to help build an increasingly prominent position in the newer, more rapidly expanding areas of business it is trying to pursue. The South Korean economy has been the fastest growing economy in the world (Lydon & Wasik, 2008). Korea is also an important economic partner for America. However, Noland and Pack (2002) point out that South Koreans perceive US American prominence in the merchandise trade to be eroding, especially in comparison with China. Understanding communication differences between South Koreans and US Americans could help cultivate successful South Korean/US relationships. In turn, the purpose of this study is to examine cross-cultural differences in shame and communication behavior associated with shame to capture a present view of modern-day communication. This will be accomplished by examining communication traits associated with approach avoidance theory.

#### Approach Avoidance Theory

Approach avoidance theory is a motivational theory which distinguishes between the direction of behaviors (in our case communication) on the basis of different valences. The approach avoidance division relates to Lewin’s (1935) conceptualization of positive and negative valences that are linked directly to tendencies to approach or avoid stimuli based on individuals

needs. McClelland (1951) conceptualized approach and avoidance tendencies as well but focused primarily on underlying preferences for acquiring aspired states -- such as a need for achievement and for avoiding states such as failure. Similarly, those who hope for affiliation in relationships approach communication with warmth and those who fear shame most would be most likely to avoid face-threatening communication.

Empirical research has actually shown that positive or negative evaluations evoke approach or avoidance behavior (Chen & Bargh, 1999). The valences of evaluations however, vary by culture (Erez & Earley, 1993; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, cross-cultural differences in shame and communication behavior associated with shame (i.e., Intercultural Communication Apprehension, Nonverbal Immediacy) will be examined keeping in mind the distinction of approach-avoidance communication orientations.

#### Differences in Communication Approaching and Avoiding Shame

Shame, according to Scheff and Retzinger (1991), is a threat to the social bond. Moreover, Shame has been established as the cause of social conflict (Retzinger, 1991). For example, when someone feels shamed by another, the social bond comes under stress and he/she is likely to avoid communicating to relieve the tension of an interaction developing into a potentially face-threatening situation. In contrast to US American expressiveness, South Koreans and their inner Confucian values practice collective restraint (Bailey, 1997). South Koreans have also been found to be less likely than US Americans to reciprocate self-disclosures by discussing the same topic as that initiated by the other person than are US Americans (Ambady et al., 1996). This restrained mode of communication could be a reaction to a self-conscious fear of shame.

An avoidance of shame is likely to be expressed as communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is an "individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977). This anxiety results in withdrawal from communication, eliminating the need for managing one's impression through remedial communication. However, research shows that relationships are less likely to survive after a conflict has been expressed when communication apprehension is higher because parties are less able to discuss their feelings subsequently and thereby overcome the shame and rage that results from experiencing conflicts (Loveless, Powers, & Jordan, 2008).

Those with a stronger need for affiliation would be likely to communicate with a goal of emotional closeness referred to as immediacy. According to Mehrabian (1969), communicating immediacy diminishes psychological distances between people and increases social bonding. Immediacy has been shown to generate satisfaction between people because of its inherent inclusiveness, acknowledgement, and acceptance of others. Research shows, for example, that immediacy leads to satisfaction in relationships between physicians and patients (Conlee, & Olvera, 2002; Koermer, 2008) and instructors and students (Andersen, 1979, Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

#### Cultural and Individual Explanations of Shame and Communication

Doise and Mapstone (1986) indicated that it is important to make clear how levels of individual, interpersonal, intergroup, and cultural communication are interrelated in cross-cultural studies. On the interpersonal level, which explains our exchange of messages when we act as individuals based on our concept of self, we have a corresponding need for intimacy with people. At the intergroup level, that of employee workgroups, messages are exchanged based on group membership (our social identities). Finally, the cultural level is related to the development of complementary orientations among individuals from varying national cultures in how they share work values. One way of viewing varying levels of communication is based on the identities guiding our communication with other individuals, socially, and personally (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005). We use all of our identities during interactions with one identity predominating at a particular time depending on the context (Turner, 1987).

To avoid shame and resulting conflict, Erez and Earley (1993) propose that individuals choose salient identities for social comparison that enhance their self-efficacy, like national culture. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that situational factors might create and maintain in-group preferences within an organization in various types of interactions, despite the development of corresponding orientations among individuals from different national cultures in how they work together. These preferences could, in turn, cause differences in individual influence to be associated with nationality. An aspect of personal differences is the individual's orientation toward established norms. Acceptance as a member of a group in an organization entails being able to act in ways that are consistent with the normative expectations of other members (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The question is what multinational employees identify with as a group and how they will enact their communication. To help determine this, further analysis will be carried out on the cultural level.

In general, cross-cultural research has shown how basic assumptions, values, and behavioral norms vary across cultures (Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1989). Cross-cultural studies often identify cultural differences as causing difficulties including conflict, misunderstandings, and poor performance (Shenkar & Zeira, 1992). In other cases, cultural diversity could increase performance by providing more varied perspectives in problem solving (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991). Culture has been defined as the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9).

National culture is considered to be particularly compelling; and its effects on individuals are thought to be particularly resistant to change. Nevertheless, Schein (1985) puts forward that organizational cultures arise from specific historical events experienced by a group and organization in addition to the influence of individuals engaged in their routine interactions. Thus, within the same, relatively stable national cultural context, organizational and group cultures can vary (Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips, & Sackman, 2004). Even if members accord less attention to national identities over time, national identity-based intergroup dynamics can persist in the absence of conflict and performance difficulties (Salk & Brannen, 2000). In order to better understand cultural factors relating to a person's identity, the concept of a description of high and low-context cultural differences will follow.

#### High- versus Low-Context Cultures

Research has shown that the degree of context and the amount of information in a culture effectively differentiates between communication in Eastern cultures as opposed to Western cultures (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999). In particular, Hall (1973) categorized cultures into *high-context cultures* -- where the communication style in which most of the information is already shared by people in the society, leaving very little information in the explicit transmitted part of the message -- and *low-context cultures* -- where the communication style in which most of the information is incorporated into the message and detailed background information is needed in the interaction with others). Kim et al., (1998) found South Koreans to exhibit tendencies that are consistent with Hall's description of high-context cultures and US Americans to exhibit tendencies that are consistent with low-context cultures.

Findings support assertions that low-context relationships are based on equality rather than hierarchy (Hynson, 1990). In high-context cultures, however, the relational and hierarchical context, rather than the content of the message per se, conveys meaning (Hofstede, 2001). In high-context cultures, individual identity is embedded in socially defined roles. Therefore, contextual factors such as group membership and the roles of target and speaker are used in conveying and interpreting meaning (Ambady, et al., 1996).

According to social-identity theory, individuals are triggered by situational and other cues to "act out" primary social identities as a basis for self-evaluation and enhancement of self-images (Erez & Earley, 1993). An important factor that determines the difference in the



communication behavior of Koreans and US Americans at all levels is the need for inclusion (to be socially bonded) which emphasizes avoiding shame. Ting-Toomey (1993) argues that the more individuals need inclusion, the more they value ingroup and relational boundaries. In enacting one's social identity, individuals emphasize intraclass similarities and interclass differences (Erez & Earley, 1993) or in-group out-group distinctions (Triandis, 1989). The more individuals need this type of differentiation, the more distance they create between themselves and others (Gudykunst et al., 2005).

#### *Status in Korea and the US*

There is a universal notion of status as the designation of an individual's position in a socially agreed-upon hierarchy (Lips, 1991). In Korea, besides the high-context behaviors, the role of status is central because it is rooted in Confucianism. According to Confucian values, there is a moral responsibility of those with lower status to respect those with higher status (e.g., parents, employers, teachers, or government officials) who, in turn, have reciprocal duties to protect those with lower status (Yang & Rosenblatt, 2001). This is partially why South Koreans use different levels of other-orientation depending on the status of the target (Ambady et al., 1996; Tasaki, Kim, & Miller, 1999).

In the US, however, individuals' social position is often determined by their ownership of what is valued by the society -- like money, education, job title, and good looks -- or position within a status hierarchy of relationships in a social unit (Andersen, Guerrero, & Jones, 2006). Thus, in the US, status is either achieved or ascribed. People's position within a stratification system can be determined by their either earning their social status by their own achievements or by placement in the stratification system by their inherited position. However, this conception is based on people as individual units. Modern South Korean culture has also come to focus on personal competence; in that case, the threat to the social bond would be reflected in being unemployed or disabled. Moreover, the status of acquiring material wealth by South Koreans is then attributed to his or her entire family.

Because modern society requires competition and accomplishment, these values have become important to South Koreans. On the one hand, South Koreans feel proud if they are successful. On the other hand, they experience a feeling of inferiority born of competition that is closely related to feelings of shame (Lee, 1999). Lee (1999) points out that the crucial factor generating a sense of shame in South Koreans has shifted from a failure of self-realization and injury of the family in a face-saving culture to personal incompetence in modern society. Though the South Korean sense of status and shame has changed, it appears that shame is still a prominent concern among South Koreans.

Choi and Kibum (2004) point out that formerly, self-inflicted shame resulting from one's reflection on his or her behavior was regarded more highly than shame inflicted from the outside. However, Korean experiences of shame in the past and today now include outward appearances such as being fat and status such as how much money a person does or doesn't have. Today, other elements of external shame include being unemployed, disabled, or poor. While all cultures tend to avoid face-threatening situations, given South Koreans' Confucian emphasis on shame and knowing one's place, the following hypothesis is posed:

H1: South Koreans will experience more shame than US Americans.

#### Low Context Communication and Intercultural Communication Apprehension

Members of low-context cultures, which are mostly Western, practice explicitness and directness in their communication style generally (Spear & Bacon, 2003). They approach communication without trepidation because the purpose and outcome of the communication takes precedence over the interpersonal relationships involved. This inattentiveness to the other person's face is threatening to members of high-context cultures. Furthermore, the direct communication style prevalent in low-context cultures (Hall, 1973) can come across to

individuals from high-context cultures as rude (Hunt & Weintraub, 2007) because direct communication can be face-threatening to them (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

*High-Context Confucianism, Face, and Intercultural Communication Apprehension*

In fact, South Koreans are known to have deeply-rooted Confucian values that include the use of indistinct high-context communication which allows for *all* participants in communication to save face if possible (Lim & Choi, 1996). For example, Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, & Nishida (1991) found that South Koreans report a higher degree of focus on others' face than US Americans; whereas US Americans show a higher degree of self-face than South Koreans. In addition, Kim et al., (1998) found South Koreans to be more confrontation-avoiding than their US American counterparts. In high-context cultures, substituting direct communication with indirect communication is considered to be an important way to help others save face. If a stand is not taken, then people do not have to stick out, which is a form of face threat in South Korean cultures (Lim & Choi, 1996).

Thus, communicating explicitly is shunned in Korea. As a result, avoiding communication is likely to be higher among South Koreans whose Confucian values underlie their communication (Klopf, 1984). For example, South Koreans are less willing to do self-disclosure than are US Americans (Ambady et al., 1996). Moreover, both Aune, Hunter, Kim, and Kim (2001) and Yook and Ahn (1999) found that South Korean students reported significantly higher communication apprehension scores than US American students. In another study, Hong (2003) found that South Korean students in intercultural conflict situations were considerably more communicatively apprehensive than US American students as well. On the other hand, conflicting results exist. In particular, Klopf and Cambra (1979) found that US Americans had a higher incidence of apprehension than South Koreans. Nevertheless, this finding could be dated. Likewise, given their anxiety about shame and taking the above findings together, the following hypothesis is tested:

H2: South Korean citizens are more likely to be interculturally apprehensive to communicate than their US American counterparts.

*Culture, Touch Avoidance, and Nonverbal Immediacy*

Andersen and Leibowitz (1978) found that communication apprehension is positively correlated to touch avoidance. Immediacy reflects an approach towards affiliation and positive feelings while communication apprehension is an avoidance of affiliation in favor of restraint. Hence, if South Koreans are communicatively apprehensive, they are also likely to be touch avoidant.

In general, the degree of touch avoidance that people sense varies by culture (Beaulieu, 2004; Hall, 1966; Remland & Jones, 1988). In fact, Hall (1966) designated societies on the basis of how much they avoid touching. At least in terms of public touch, Hall designated both Korea and the US, as being touch-avoidant cultures. However, McDaniel and Andersen's (1998) study found this not to be the case in that people from the US were among the most tactile cultures in their entire study. On the other hand, McDaniel and Andersen as well as Ruch (1989) fully supported Hall's characterization of Korea as a culture possessing a disinclination toward touch.

In addition to touching behavior, all public displays of emotion are embarrassing and avoided by South Koreans (Park, 1993). According to Kim (1977), South Korean couples avoid any outward displays of affection. This was corroborated by Park and Kim (1992) and Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, and Krupp (1998) who found that after Russians, South Koreans exert the highest control over their expressions, which is likely to be a reflection of the Confucian value of restraint. In addition, Matsumoto et al. (1998) found US Americans as having the least controlled emotions in their sample. Thus, it would be likely that US Americans are also more nonverbally immediate than South Koreans.

*Nonverbal immediacy* is related to the emotional distance communicated nonverbally between people. A close emotional distance would be communicated nonverbally by touching

and affection displays. In contrast, one who is less immediate would be more touch avoidant and less likely to display emotion outwardly. While South Koreans are likely to avoid public expressions of emotion, touch, and nonverbal immediacy and US Americans are likely to approach emotions in the opposite direction, the following hypothesis is posed:

H3: US Americans will be more nonverbally immediate than South Koreans.

In order to update and extend findings on differences in South Korean and US American communication, this study assessed where both cultures stand in terms of shame and their degrees of two divergent communication orientations (1) nonverbal immediacy as an approach orientation and (2) intercultural communication apprehension as an avoidance orientation. If there are differences, they will instruct potential interactions between US Americans and South Koreans in the future.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 263 junior or senior undergraduate students (those who reported their gender were 87 men and 168 women) enrolled in classes in a New York City University ( $n = 117$ ) or in a South Korean University ( $n = 146$ ). The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 44 years ( $M = 22.25$ ,  $SD = 3.51$ ). Seventy-seven percent of participants reported their social class. From those who reported their class, 4% were lower class, 10% were working class, 51% were middle class, and 11% were upper class.

#### Instrumentation

This study operationalized shame with the Shame Perception Scale (SPS), a four-item dichotomous yes/no scale including separate items asking whether one would be ashamed if they were unemployed, fat, disabled, or poor ( $r = .79$ ). The principle components factor analysis conducted on the SPS instrument indicated one primary factor (eigenvalue = 16.82) accounting for 61% of the variance. The factor loadings were all very good, ranging from .66 to .85. The intercultural internal reliability of the SPS was also good (overall alpha = .78). Separate Cronbach alphas for the US ( $r = .70$ ) and Korea ( $r = .82$ ) were also satisfactory.

Intercultural communication apprehension was operationalized using Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale (ICAS). The reliability of the ICAS was ( $r = .93$ ). Nonverbal immediacy ( $r = .82$ ) was measured using Richmond, McCroskey, and Johnson's (2003) Nonverbal Immediacy Scale (NIS). The ICAS and NIS items both consisted of Likert-type questions. Participants were asked to self-report their use of communication using response options ranging from 1 (almost never true) to 5 (almost always true). Social class was measured with the following question: "What is your social class? \_\_\_\_\_ lower \_\_\_\_\_ working \_\_\_\_\_ middle \_\_\_\_\_ upper"

#### Procedures

Instructors gave students self-report questionnaire instruments to fill out in their spare time on a volunteer basis. After students returned the questionnaire, instructors input and analyzed the data. In this study H1 was tested using a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) design with country as the independent variable and shame as the dependent variable. To test H2-H3, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) design with country as the independent variable and intercultural communication apprehension, nonverbal immediacy as the dependent variables was carried out.

### Results

To test H1 to see whether there are cross-cultural differences in shame, a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out with country as the independent variable and shame as the dependent variable. Internal consistency reliabilities obtained for the shame scale were acceptable ( $r = .79$ ). The one-way ANOVA revealed that shame scores differed significantly as a function of country ( $F(1, 199) = 3.77$ ,  $p = .05$ ). The shame mean for South Koreans was much higher ( $M = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 1.57$ ) than the shame mean for US Americans ( $M =$

1.99;  $SD = 1.41$ ), indicating that Korea is more of a shame culture than the US. Thus, H1 was supported.

Results showed that multivariate analysis was warranted for H2-H3 because the multivariate main effect for country was significant (Wilk's  $\eta^2 = .78$ ,  $F(2, 244) = 34.64$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .22$ ). There were significant univariate effects for intercultural communication apprehension ( $F(1, 245) = 62.10$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .20$ ), and intercultural nonverbal immediacy ( $F(1, 245) = 21.27$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ). Internal consistency reliabilities obtained for both the US and Korea together were acceptable for ICAS ( $r = .94$ ) and NIS ( $r = .82$ ). The exact means and standard deviations can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Communication Means and Standard Deviations**

Communication Traits	South Koreans	US Americans
<b>Intercultural Communication Apprehension</b>		
<i>M</i>	37.21	27.79
<i>SD</i>	(9.34)	(9.70)
<b>Nonverbal Immediacy</b>		
<i>M</i>	56.14	59.73
<i>SD</i>	(6.23)	(5.33)
<b>Shame</b>		
<i>M</i>	2.42	1.99
<i>SD</i>	(1.57)	(1.41)

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation.

In general, the ICAS mean in Korea was higher than the mean in the US. This result substantiated H2, that South Korean citizens are more likely to be more communicatively apprehensive than their US American counterparts. H3, that US Americans will be more nonverbally immediate than South Koreans was also supported because the mean for NIS was lower for South Koreans than the mean for US Americans.

Scales had adequate power and an adequate sample size for this test because when this scale was factor analyzed, all samples warranted multivariate analysis given that all of the tested samples had Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) scores that were greater than the usual criterion of .66 (i.e., US/Korea KMO = .844; Korea KMO = .743; and the US KMO = .836).

#### Discussion

##### Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine cross-cultural differences in shame and communication behavior associated with shame to capture a present view of modern-day South Korean communication and its relationship to shame. On the whole it appears that despite widespread global influences, Confucian values and low/high-context communication are reflected in present-day South Korean and US American shame perceptions and communication. Thus, this study's results corroborate Inglehart & Baker's (2000) observation that despite sometimes dramatic economic, political, and social change, the impact of a society's cultural heritage persists in shaping values and beliefs.

Although the forces of globalization appear to be strong, so are Confucian traditions and so are shame perceptions. These findings add to the literature on Korean/US communication by answering the question as to whether things have changed and by extending communication findings by showing that modern day Koreans do actually perceive more shame than US Americans due to modern-day factors such as their appearance, employment status, and economic status. While this study tested US Americans, the primary focus was on South Korean

communication which seemed more likely to change, given this country's changing status as a global trading partner. However, it appears that communication patterns in the US have remained constant as well, at least in the communication traits tested in this study.

In particular, the results supporting H1 show that external factors that reflect on a person's face (such as employment status, appearance, and economic status) matter a great deal to the modern South Korean psyche. Thus, mentioning a weakness relating to a possibly lowered status would be likely to cause South Koreans to experience a loss of face that leads to shame. Causing South Koreans to experience shame could possibly destroy potential relationships. Thus, while low-context US Americans, who are instrumental in their communication, see nothing wrong with communicating directly to save face (e.g., explaining why things are the ways they are, or making a joke about the way things are), this same communication could have devastating effects on the more shame-prone South Koreans who use high-context communication to avoid sticking out. Thus, Hall's (1966) high-low context schema still applies to South Korean and US communication.

The high-context South Koreans need to obscure meanings to militate against shame helps to explain this study's support for H2, that South Korean citizens are more likely to be communicatively apprehensive about intercultural interactions than their US American counterparts. This is because shame is attributed to communication itself. There is a profound high-context distrust of communication itself which leads South Koreans to avoid explicit intercultural communication. If a message's meaning is unclear, the shame cannot be realized. Thus, it is likely that the nervousness that accompanies their fear of shame could be expressed through a heightened intercultural communication apprehension.

Another side of the cultural clash between the South Korean Confucian value of not-sticking-out and the US practice of touching and public display of emotions is the restraint and stoic controlling of emotions that still appears to be practiced by South Koreans. H3, that US Americans will be more nonverbally immediate than South Koreans, still appears to be the case; and the cultural implications are many. This is because the possibility of misunderstanding communicated on the nonverbal level is on the one hand more subtle, yet, on the other hand, more powerful. People's implicit responses to nonverbal messages cannot necessarily be understood because it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint what exactly is wrong. Unwanted touching, for example, can be perceived as a major violation by people when it implies a lowering of their status which could lead to shaming. Thus, differences in nonverbal immediacy between the US and South Korea should be noted by businesses and social concerns that have intercultural contact between US Americans and South Koreans.

All in all, these findings support assertions that in low-context cultures (e.g., American culture) the content of communication is extremely important: clarity, direct communication and precision are valued, and relationships are based to a greater extent on equality rather than hierarchy (Spear & Bacon, 2003). In high-context cultures (e.g., Korean culture), however, the hierarchical status context rather than the content of the message per se conveys meaning (Hofstede, 2001). In South Korea, individual identity is interrelated with socially defined roles. Therefore, contextual factors such as group membership and the hierarchical position of the target and speaker are used in conveying and interpreting meaning. These concerns need to be addressed in modern-day intercultural communication between US Americans and South Koreans.

#### Strengths and Limitations

One of this study's strengths was that the data was collected in the native cultures of both Korea and the US. This allowed for a more representative sample of viewpoints than for example, foreign students who might have been more readily available. One of the limitations of this study is that the information presented here is based on self-report data; and while the

sample was reasonably large and had statistical adequacy and power for the tests carried out, it was not truly random; thus, caution should be exercised in interpreting the findings.

Another limitation of this study was the use of college students. On the one hand, the use of college students is not truly representative of an entire population. On the other hand, the use of college students in both samples allowed for psychological matching to be carried out, as suggested by Hofstede (2001). The demographic variance present in more random populations can be controlled for in college populations because both populations were matched on socioeconomic variables. These caveats notwithstanding, it was clear from the present analyses that South Korean and US communication has been relatively stable over time. Furthermore, highlights on the composition of shame and its impact has moved the literature on South Korean communication forward.

#### Future Directions for Research

Future research should explore the impact on shame and other communication such as face-saving strategies and conflict resolution strategies. The present research has provided updated findings to previous research on cultures carried out more than a decade ago. Though the conclusions of this study were, for the most part, consistent with past research, this may not be the case with other theoretical conclusions about culture in the literature of the past. The consequences of intercultural interactions are more vital than ever. Given the rise of terrorism, the outsourcing of work, and the increasing markets abroad, it is important for scholars to update cultural studies to assess whether or not past conclusions still stand or whether communication has changed to make sure that dire communication mishaps do not occur. Then, constructive outcomes are more likely to be reached by using the appropriate intercultural communication in the future.

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**Explaining Why Young Adults Use MySpace and Facebook  
Through Uses and Gratifications Theory**

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Abstract

Using a grounded theory approach and a uses and gratifications framework, this exploratory study examined through focus groups why young adults use social network sites (MySpace and Facebook). Young adults have been found to depend heavily on the Internet for entertainment and information. Based on consistent themes emerging out of focus group discussions, it is proposed that individuals use social-networking sites to experience selective, efficient, and immediate connection with others for their (mediated) interpersonal communication satisfaction and as an ongoing way to seek the approval and support of other people. This theory is expected to help communication researchers and educators develop a better understanding of the powerful influence social networking sites (SNS) have on users. Limitations and suggestions for future research are provided.

### Introduction

MySpace and Facebook are two leading online social networking sites (SNS) that are popular with young adults. Individuals can develop their own home page to include their favorite music, television shows, and photos. These SNS have attracted millions of members who socialize with other people on the Internet including and sometimes supplanting traditional socialization agents (family, school, peer groups and environment). MySpace and Facebook enable individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and in constructing their own identity. Dye (2007) pointed out that this new medium has created a new generation of individuals whose identities are defined by their connections and the content they produce online.

SNS provide members with an easy and convenient medium for communicating with family, friends, and others. Additionally, individual users' needs and wants can be fulfilled constantly and instantaneously. In the past, people have used a combination of face-to-face human interaction as well as mass media such as television, radio, and movies to fulfill these needs and wants. Often, these gratifications were delayed due to factors including inaccessibility, unresponsiveness, programming and scheduling. In contrast, SNS are different from these other forms of mass media due to the fact that they empower individuals to play an active role in sending messages to others in their social network. Moreover, this active role is revolutionary insofar that it changes the traditional model of mass media effects. In the new model, individuals can be instantly gratified by their use of SNS through both mediated social contact and through selective and on-demand access to other media content provided as part of SNS services.

Over the course of the past five years, MySpace and Facebook have become the two most popular SNS on the web today. Despite the large number of studies that have recently examined SNS, there continues to be a gap in our understanding of why people use these two SNS. The primary research question of this study is: how do members of these SNS use the sites to fulfill their wants and needs? Answers to this research question are expected to help us better understand why young adults have been reported to be so addicted to these SNS.

### Literature Review

#### Background

Haythornthwaite (2005) believes that the uniqueness of SNS is not in their ability to allow individual to meet strangers but rather their ability to enable users to shape and make their social networks visible to others. Many SNS members do not necessarily develop a network to meet new people but rather to communicate with people who are already a part of their existing social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

MySpace was originally created by current CEO Tom Anderson's Internet company eUniverse. As the CEO and largest shareholder of eUniverse, Anderson recognized that online communities were the future of the Internet and made the decision to use the technology, resources, and capital of eUniverse to launch Myspace.com in August 2003. The first users of Myspace were eUniverse employees who participated in contests to see who could recruit the most friends to the site. The growth of Myspace was generated mostly by word of mouth as members began inviting more friends and acquaintances to join the site (FreeMyspace). Indie-rock bands from the Los Angeles region were some of the earliest users of MySpace. "These bands began creating profiles and local promoters used MySpace to advertise VIP passes for popular clubs" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 7). By 2004, teenagers started joining MySpace *en masse*. As these teens signed up, they encouraged their friends to join. This word-of-mouth

phenomena ultimately made MySpace what it is today, the third most popular website in the United States and recipient of roughly 80 % of all SNS visits (Alexa.com).

Facebook began in early 2004 as a Harvard-only SNS (Cassidy, 2006). To join a user had to have a harvard.edu email address. This exclusivity was one of the primary features that attracted college students to the site. "As Facebook began supporting other schools, those users were also required to have email addresses associated with those institutions, a requirement that kept the site relatively closed and contributed to users' perceptions of the site as an intimate, private community (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 8)." In 2005 Facebook opened access to high school students and in 2006 opened the site to the general public and introduced communities for commercial organizations (Smith, 2006). By 2007, Facebook was reported to have more than 21 million registered members generating 1.6 billion page views a day (Needham & Company, 2007). In 2006, Facebook was used at over 2,000 United States colleges and was the seventh most popular site on the World Wide Web with respect to total page views (Cassidy, 2006).

Several functions of SNS make them particularly attractive to users. These include walls, blogs, bulletins, profiles, and photo albums. Walls are comment sections on a user's profile that can be written on by friends within the user's network. People who visit a member's profile can view the comments that his or her friends write on his or her wall. Cross (2002) defined a blog as "a site with dated entries that its editors visit regularly." Many members of SNS use their blog to project their thoughts and feelings. Cross also noted that blogs can be used to communicate with a wide array of groups including the public, friends, and family. Bulletins are messages posted by users that are visible by all the members in the user's network. Profiles are web pages that display a user's picture and contains information that depicts a user's interests and biographical data. Photo albums are a place where users can upload pictures on their profile.

#### Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications can be viewed as a psychological communication perspective which focuses on how individual use mass media and other forms of communication such as interpersonal communication to fulfill their needs and wants (Rubin, 2002). This psychological perspective constituted a shift from the traditional mechanistic approach which suggests that individual media consumers are passive.

According to the uses and gratification perspective, media use is determined by a group of key elements including "people's needs and motives to communicate, the psychological and social environment, the mass media, functional alternatives to media use, communication behavior, and the consequences of such behavior" (Rubin, 1994, p. 419). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) defined that the uses and gratification perspective as focusing on "the social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectation of the mass media or other sources, which lead to different patterns of media exposure resulting in need gratifications and other consequences" (as cited in Rubin, 1994, p. 419).

Previous uses and gratification research by Kayahara and Wellman (2007) has grouped media gratifications into two categories: process and content. Process gratifications arise from the performance of the activity, such as unstructured Web browsing or creating content on one's profile whereas content gratifications occurs from acquiring information (Kayahara & Wellman, 2007). Furthermore, Baran and Davis (1995) conceptualized that "the person follows his or her interests, choosing media content according to his or her needs and synthesizes that content to satisfy those needs" (p. 219). In short, the selection and usage of media is a goal-directed, purposive, and motivated action (Rosengren, 1974).

Uses and gratifications research has typically focused on how media are used to satisfy cognitive and affective needs involving personal needs and entertainment needs (Rubin, 2002). These include the need for personal identity, escape, and self-presentation. Stafford and Gonier (2004) have identified several gratifications from Internet use that motivate users' behaviors. These include web searching, the acquisition of information, the ability to engage in interpersonal communication, and socialization. It is important to note that some of these gratifications are mediated versions of face-to-face human communication. As the number of members of SNS increases, so does the popularity of using the sites for satisfying cognitive and affective needs. Research has shown that college students spend at least 100 minutes per day online (Anderson, 2001) and "the Internet serves interpersonal utility functions (such as relationship building, social maintenance, and social recognition) as much as entertainment and information utility functions" (Leung, 2007, p. 205). Starkman (2007) has demonstrated that motivations for using the Internet are primarily caused by desires for "relaxation, fun, encouragement, and status" (p. 211). Other studies regarding online image building and relationship maintenance point to similar "motivations for Internet usage [such as] interpersonal relations, information, and entertainment" (Ho Cho, 2007, p. 341).

The Wollfradt and Doll Internet Motivation Scale comprises three underlying motives for using the Internet: information, interpersonal communication, and entertainment (Matsuba, 2006, p. 278). According to Matsuba (2006), certain people are more likely to use the Internet for mood management (such as entertainment and information seeking) and social compensation (such as gaining recognition and relationship maintenance) (p. 278). They may also use the Internet to "connect and maintain social relationships" (Stevens & Morris, 2007). A 1995 study of college students' Internet usage resulted in "six motivational categories: entertainment, social interaction, passing the time, escape, information, and Web site preference" (Kaye, 1998, p. 34).

As previously noted, many individuals are motivated to use the Internet by their desire to socialize with other people. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) proposed that the Internet can satisfy interpersonal communication gratifications through functions like email and chat rooms. Song, LaRose, Eastin, and Lin (2004) pointed to the satisfaction that people receive as members of virtual communities due to the fact they can generate their own content and use it to satisfy their desires. Dominick (1999) determined that individuals use their home pages as links to others who share their interests and to foster supportive relationships with others. Even the observation of other people's behavior can yield gratification for viewers (Eastin, 2002). In short, an individual will be motivated to use the Internet if he or she believes it will help serve his or her objectives to socialize with other people.

Ray (2007) explored the multifunctional uses of SNS for simultaneously fulfilling entertainment, information, surveillance, diversion and social utility needs. In her study, Ray demonstrated that SNS satisfy a variety of needs in one central location, thus making it a popular destination for many Internet users. This, in turn, increases the interpersonal connectivity and organizational involvement of people who are members of these sites (Wellman et. al., 2001). It also increases the social capital available to individuals as they increase their network of acquaintances through bonding and bridging (Ellison et. al., 2007). Donath and Boyd (2004) hypothesized that social networking sites have the ability to greatly increase weak ties within a community because the technology is conducive to maintaining such ties cheaply and easily.

#### Summary & Research Questions

The uses and gratification perspective proposes that individuals use media to fulfill their various needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). The underlying principle of the perspective is that people

will choose media according to their expectations and their drive to attain a gratifying experience. The perspective assumes that people are active consumers of media (Katz et al., 1974) and they make choices about where to go and to what to pay attention. This assumption of an active audience seems particularly well suited to studying a medium designed for active use and known for its interactivity (Morris & Ogan, 1996; Stafford & Stafford, 1998). Through the use of SNS like MySpace and Facebook, members are now able to satisfy their various needs in one central location within the context of a large network composed of a diverse body of individuals. Based on the review of literature, this study proposed the following research question: To what extent do young adults use social networking sites (MySpace and Facebook) to fulfill their needs and wants?

This study seeks to understand the factors that motivate individuals to use SNS to fulfill their needs and wants. SNS have become a central component of many users' lives for the simple reason that members desire to engage in forms of interaction online. This question seeks to reveal the motivations behind these desires and also the tactics employed by members to fulfill their needs and wants.

### Method

In order to investigate why individuals use SNS, the focus group method was selected due to its advantages in exploratory studies. This qualitative approach provides insights into the thoughts, ideas, perceptions, and attitudes of individual SNS members who use the online source to fulfill their needs and wants. This inductive process fit this investigation well in that focus groups facilitated the collection of rich data for answering the research question. By formulating empirical generalizations, the study developed a theoretical rationale that explains why people are using SNS.

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) have noted that the focus group method tends to be used for "obtaining general information about a topic of interest" (p. 15). Krueger and Casey (2000) observe that "focus groups work particularly well to determine the perceptions, feelings and thinking of people about issues [and] products" (p. 12). Moreover, focus groups are unique from other methodologies including personal interviews and questionnaires. Krueger and Casey (2000) add that "the focus group presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others - just as they are in real life" (p.11). Additionally, Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) state that, "because focus groups produce a very rich body of data expressed in the respondents own words and context...there is a minimum of artificiality of response, unlike survey questionnaires that ask for responses expressed on five point rating scales or other constrained categories" (p.17).

### Subjects

A total of 50 undergraduates from a university in Central California participated in one of six focus groups. Students were selected using convenience sampling to participate in these focus groups. As a motivation for participating in the study, extra credit was offered for students who were enrolled in a large general education class at the university. In order to avoid selective bias, the researchers paid great attention to selecting broadly representative focus groups for the investigation in terms of gender, ethnicity, and major. The main criteria for selecting these subjects included: 1) being either members of MySpace or Facebook; and 2) wanting to share their thoughts and experience with using the SNS with other students. Approval from the university human subject review committee was obtained prior to conducting the study.

### Procedures



A focus group discussion guide was used in each focus group investigation. Questions on the uses and strategies employed by members of SNS were asked and participants were encouraged to elaborate on statements that were relevant to the research questions. A moderator who was experienced in using this method of data collection directed the sessions. During each focus group session, students were provided drinks and food to create a relaxed and comfortable setting for the moderator to become familiar with each participant. The focus group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed by an assistant to the principal researcher. Subsequently, direct quotes by participants in the focus groups were transcribed from the audio recordings by the principal researcher.

#### Data Analysis

The principal researcher listened carefully to the audio tapes and read the complete transcripts for key concepts and key ideas related to the research question. Next, main themes were identified. Direct quotes were then extracted for the purpose of elaboration on each theme related to the research question and categorized under the appropriate theme. Finally, based on the key concepts, themes and direct quotes, answers were provided for the research question.

#### Results

Five themes emerged from an in-depth analysis of all results in order to answer the research question: “To what extent do young adults use social networking sites (MySpace and Facebook) to fulfill their needs and wants?” The themes of why individuals use SNS to fulfill their needs and wants included: 1) efficient communication, 2) convenient communication, 3) curiosity about others, 4) popularity, and 5) relationship formation and reinforcement.

#### Efficient Communication

The vast majority of participants stated they use SNS because they are an efficient way to communicate with friends. One participant stated, “if you want to spread news quickly about an event or something, you can do it very easily on MySpace.” Many users take pleasure in this capacity for dispersing messages to multiple friends at one time. As one participant put it, “with MySpace I can tell the same thing to everyone, which prevents a million questions being asked.”

Participants noted that many significant events are either shared or learned via SNS. “I found out my friend was getting married and another friend was in a car accident.” One participant shared that she liked the informality SNS offers for sharing these events with others. “I had a friend who announced her engagement via MySpace. She made a video and sent it through MySpace.” The use of bulletin postings appears to be a very efficient way for an individual to get a quick response from others when he or she desires attention. One participant stated “people will post that they are bored so they can have someone call or message them.” In this respect it appears that members will use SNS to initiate communication with others in order to satisfy their needs and wants. One participant put it, “when people post bulletins they are doing it to get attention and have someone comfort them.” SNS allow members to attain others’ attention quickly and efficiently with one single bulletin.

Many participants shared that they use SNS to inform their friends about events in their life in a single message. One participant stated:

“It’s not a hassle [like having individual conversations]. If something major is happening in my life I don’t want the same question from thirty people [inquiring about] what happened. I don’t want to have to talk to all my friends individually.”

Participants also shared that the ability to communicate quickly was another attractive feature that motivates them to use SNS. One participant stated,

“if you want to say something to someone, but don’t want to have a conversation, you can quickly comment them on MySpace.” Another participant added, “it’s much easier to comment them on MySpace or Facebook [compared to having] a conversation.”

### Convenient Communication

Two key factors emerged in the focus groups addressing the convenience SNS offer to users: staying in touch with friends and family, and managing communication. All participants noted the capacity to stay in touch with friends was one of the most attractive features for using SNS. The vast majority acknowledged that the primary reason they opened their MySpace or Facebook account was because they were encouraged by friends and/or family to do so. The ability to stay connected with friends and family in distant locations was especially appealing. One participant stated, “it is an easy way of keeping in touch with people and is good for long-distance relationships.” Another added that “I use MySpace because I don’t want to pay the long-distance charges to talk to people back home.”

Many participants acknowledged that they enjoy the convenience SNS offer for managing communication. One participant stated, “[SNS] are convenient because people can log on in their spare time.” Another noted, “it’s easier to talk to people. You have a chance to think about what you’re going to say and how it will be received by the other person.” Still another added, “you don’t have to deal with [the other person] right away or respond right away.” It appears that SNS empower individuals to communicate with others at a rate and manner that he or she desires. Comparing this to other forms of communication where individuals must respond immediately and extemporaneously, one participant said that “you don’t need to have an answer right away on MySpace whereas with a phone conversation you do.” Some participants acknowledged that they enjoy being on the receiving end of communication without having to engage in turn in any dialogue. One participant stated:

“I personally use [SNS] because [compared to] other methods of communication it allows me to check up on people without actually asking them questions and allows me to understand what going on in their lives without speaking with them. Sometimes I’m busy and don’t have the time to talk with them or find out what’s going on in their lives.”

Overall, participants agreed they enjoy the convenience and accessibility SNS offer users for communicating with others.

### Curiosity about others

The majority of participants in each focus group acknowledged that they use SNS to acquire information about people in whom they are interested. This includes romantic interests, old friends, new roommates, classmates, and people in their community who they would like to know better. Participants also addressed issues of accessibility to other members’ profiles. While very few participants shared that they have used SNS to acquire more info on someone they were romantically or platonically interested in, most admitted that they knew someone else who has. One participant stated, “I opened my MySpace account so I could learn more about a girl I thought was cute.” Another participant disclosed that her sister uses SNS to find out information about people she would like to date.

Many participants shared that they use SNS to obtain updates about old acquaintances. One participant stated, “I like the fact that I can see what old high school friends are up to.” Another stated blatantly, “I use MySpace to spy on people from high school because I like to find out what everyone is doing.” Still another participant noted that she enjoys learning about events that happened to old classmates who were mean and cruel. “I look to see if anything bad has happened to them. Especially if they were mean to me.” This demonstrates a desire to use SNS to satisfy one’s curiosity about people who have made an impression in their lives.

Some participants shared they read discussions that occur in the comments portion of a member’s profile to find out information about what is happening in that member’s life. One participant stated:

“My friend has daily comments on her page about her engagement. There are conversations [in these comments] between her and someone else. [By observing these comments] I can know what’s going on and have an image of what her life is currently like. It’s a source of information.”

A majority of participants also acknowledged they use SNS to acquire more information about new people they meet. One participant noted one of the biggest uses of SNS among college students is to find out information about future classmates, hallmates, and roommates. “It’s kind of nice to know who your roommate is and who the people you are going to go to school with are like beforehand.” A participant in another focus group shared that she ended up changing roommates before school started based on what she found on her future roommate’s profile. “I used Facebook to check up on my soon to be roommate. I noticed differences between us [in tastes and lifestyles] and knew right away that we wouldn’t get along.” These examples show that many members use SNS to gain information on other people who they will be living and interacting with on a regular basis.

Participants also shared that they use SNS to acquire information that will help them judge what a person is like. Many participants noted they examine the profile of a person in whom they are interested to form an opinion about that person. One participant stated, “you can find out a lot of information on [a person’s] MySpace profile and it gives you a pretty good idea of who they are in real life.” Participants shared specific items they look for on a person’s profile to learn more about a person they are interested in. One participant stated, “I look at their ‘About Me’ section and personality tests they’ve posted. It tells me their personality and [allows me] to figure out who they are as a person.”

The final issue that came up within this topic of convenient communication was accessibility. The majority of participants noted that their profiles are set to private to avoid “stalkers.” Many participants echoed the statement of one participant who noted, “my profile is private due to the fear of having stalkers. I like having a page that only my friends can view.” Several participants shared that they were forced to terminate their membership because of stalkers. One participant, however, stated that she enjoys having her profile accessible to the public. “I’m not concerned [about stalkers] and really enjoy the openness that SNS provide. I want old friends to be able to locate me and view my profile if they are searching.” Ironically, many participants acknowledged that they use SNS to inquire about other members even though they are uncomfortable with idea of having people inquire about them. One participant stated, “we like snooping, but don’t like it when participants snoop on us.” Other participants added they get frustrated when they want to acquire information about someone and are unable to do so because that person’s profile is on private even though the vast majority of participants stated that their profiles were set to private.

#### Popularity

The vast majority of participants agreed that many individuals use SNS to become more popular. Several tactics emerged in the course of the focus groups on how people use SNS to appear more popular. These include, the number of online friends a member has, comments that are posted by other members about the profiles owner and his or her pictures, and the MySpace “Top 8.”

Most participants noted that many members attempt to add as many friends as possible to their profile in order to appear more popular. One participant stated, “there’s a benefit to having as many friends as you can on MySpace.” Another added, “It’s like a popularity contest. During high school and when MySpace first came out, it made you popular to have tons of friends.” Many participants stated that for many people with hundreds of friends on SNS, these “friends” in actuality are not as dependable or close as “friends” one has in real life.

Participants agreed that obtaining comments from other members is a potent means of increasing one's popularity on SNS. One participant noted, "people like getting comments to build up images of themselves." Another added, "people will post bulletins asking other members to comment on their picture [in order to appear more popular.]" Participants in each group acknowledged that comments on pictures and wall postings make a person feel more popular. Moreover, a large number of comments tend to make a person appear more popular to others because they are receiving attention. Consequently, some SNS users compete with other members for attention. As one participant put it, "I have friends that compare comments. One friend may get 300 comments, while the other gets 10 comments...and they put up similar pictures from the same event. One of my friends averages 300 comments on every picture so it's kind of a competition as to who can get more comments." In this instance, it appears members will use SNS to construct content that will illicit positive feedback from others.

Participants also shared stories of their experiences with ranking friends in the "Top 8" section of their profile. As one participant described it, "with the 'Top 8,' there's a sense of hierarchy. People think it's ranked according to who they're closest with." Many participants admitted they were very conscious of where they ranked in their friends' lists. One participant stated, "I notice where I am on other people's lists. I notice when people move me up or move me down or when I'm not on someone's top list at all." This has caused a lot of conflict between friends and couples. One participant stated, "with a boyfriend or girlfriend, someone might get mad if they're not number one. Sometimes there's drama between a boyfriend or girlfriend and best friend for who's first on the friend list." One participant stated:

"That number one spot in the "Top 8" \* is very important. I just kind of threw my close friends and my girlfriend up there and my girlfriend ended up getting really upset because she wasn't in the top spot."

Some participants admitted they terminated their "Top 8" section to avoid conflict and upsetting other people. "I got the code to take the Top 8 off of my page because it was just creating drama. Certain people were getting upset because they weren't number one." In these situations, it appears the costs outweighed the benefits of using SNS for popularity purposes.

Finally, it is worth noting several participants' insights on an emerging group of teens on MySpace who call themselves "Scene Kids." These teens primarily use MySpace to become more popular online compared to traditional avenues like joining school clubs in the real world. According to one participant, "[Scene Kids are] a subculture of people who take pictures from overhead that mostly look like Emo people and punkrockers. Some of the people also take half-naked pictures." The same participant further noted, "they probably don't have a lot of friends so they think that when they're online they can be a different person just to seem cooler than they really are. They are just in the Scene Kid Group to get more friends and add as many people as possible." When this subculture of teens was brought up in another focus group, one participant noted that she was familiar with the social group and stated, "they always carry a camera around and boast about how many friends, comments and pictures they have to others."

#### Relationship Formation and Reinforcement

Many participants noted that SNS are extremely useful for meeting new people and maintaining pre-existing relationships. Additionally, some participants acknowledged that SNS allow you to identify who your true friends are based on the interactions that occur on SNS.

In terms of creating new relationships, one participant stated "I was able to use MySpace to look for people who attended [our university] because I didn't know anyone when I came here. It's a good way to get to know people and meet new people." Another added, "I start relationships by initiating it with MySpace. I'll send them a message along the lines of 'I met

you the other day...” Many participants agreed that they use SNS to obtain more information about someone they met in real life that they are interested in forming a more meaningful relationship with.

In terms of maintaining pre-existing relationships, many users found SNS to be extremely helpful. One participant stated, “without Myspace or Facebook, I wouldn’t be in touch with that many people...it allows you to maintain relationships at your own or their own convenience.” As previously mentioned, SNS are very convenient for communicating with friends and acquaintances. Consequently, this provides more opportunities for two people to communicate with one another, which in turn, reinforces the relationship between these two people. Some participants noted they use SNS as a “yearbook” to collect and reflect on memories. One participant stated, “I could never delete my page especially because of the comments people leave me. It’s nice to go back and read old comments. Sometimes you remember an event happening but not specific events so you can go back and look at comments to remember something funny that happened.”

It is important to note that many participants observed that communicating via SNS can strengthen or weaken relationships based on the responses friends make to postings and comments or the lack thereof. One participant stated:

“With MySpace and Facebook you can find out who your true friends are based on who messages you or comments you back and who remembers your birthday. If someone doesn’t [do these things] than you know they are just an acquaintance and not a true friend.”

Another stated, you can use bulletins to see who is paying attention or to gauge a level of friendship. “If people respond, [it lets you know] they are actually paying attention to your life and care about you.” Other participants agreed with this point sharing experiences where they have had people fail to contact them after posting announcements that they deemed significant. Many participants stated that it is ludicrous people have to post bulletins in order to maintain and strengthen relationships. As one participant put it, “if someone really cares about you, you wouldn’t have to post bulletins obsessively.” On this point, another participant added, “if someone only contacts me through MySpace it makes me feel like I am not that important. I call people who are important.” Based on these anecdotes, it appears members can use SNS to assess a fellow members attitude about them as a person and their relationship.

#### Summary of Results

These results inform us why young adults use SNS to satisfy their needs and wants. Because of the nature of individuals’ curiosity and the desire to build and develop relationships, SNS users enjoy convenience, efficiency and popularity of using the powerful medium to convey messages and find answers. These results suggest that an immediacy driven tendency motivates young people to use SNS. At a more abstract level, this suggests members use SNS to satisfy a specific gratification that they seek.

The research question of this study was, “how do young adults use social networking sites (MySpace and Facebook) to fulfill their needs and wants?” Based on these five themes, it is evident that individuals are using SNS to satisfy both personal and interpersonal desires. Within these five themes, participants indicated that they enjoy the freedom and capacity SNS offer users for producing and consuming content in a manner that serves their interests. Wimmer and Dominick (1994) proposed that media selection is initiated by the individual based on his or her expectations for media use which are often produced from the predispositions, social interactions, and environmental factors of the individual. On SNS, an individual is able to produce content that fulfills his or her expectations as a consumer of media. This includes creating an attractive profile for one’s admiration or the admiration of others. It also includes

using SNS to foster and maintain relationships with others through the creation of content and discourse that is formulated online.

We propose a uses and gratifications theory that states: members use SNS to experience selective, efficient, and immediate contact with others for their (mediated) interpersonal communication satisfaction and as an ongoing way to seek the approval and support of other people. SNS allow a user to be selective in choosing who will and will not see his or her posts and other site information. The information on a user's site can be customized to a selected network of friends in a very efficient way. In a sense, the user becomes a "broadcaster" to an audience that he or she creates and gives access. Additionally, responses from other members in the form of wall posts and friend requests serve as approval and support from mediated relationships that change on a daily basis. Consequently, many users experience addictive behavior in constantly checking for responses to their presentation of self and/or their concerns expressed on daily blogs.

### Discussion

Through the use of inductive reasoning, this study has developed a uses and gratifications theory that posits that individuals use SNS to experience a selective, efficient, and immediate connection with others for their (mediated) interpersonal communication satisfaction and as an ongoing way to seek the approval and support of other people. Such uses are only now possible through new technology offered by the Internet. Today's young adults are heavy consumers of digital products and consequently are influenced by computer technology, becoming impatient and more demanding for fast results. These young adults constantly text-message and call others in order to find out current information or to know "what's going on." SNS are a useful and convenient tool for staying connected with the events of a friend's life with ease. Compared to calling a person and having a conversation, members of SNS can visit a member's profile or send them a quick message to find out what they want to know. Moreover, SNS users can update their profile to convey impressions of themselves and occurrences in their lives to a large audience without contacting each member of that audience on an individual basis.

Results also suggest that the openness and transparency of SNS is highly popular among users. Many participants stated that this transparency allows them to gain information on others quickly. Moreover, the vast majority of participants state that they have accessed personal information about another user through SNS without that user's knowledge. Gardner and Eng (2005) state that the majority of college students born after 1982 demand instant access to information. Because SNS are so accessible and open, many young people today use these sites to acquire information on someone they are interested in. One reason for this may be because going to a person's profile is quicker and more efficient than actually talking to the person face-to-face or finding out information about that person from others. Moreover, it appears that the openness and transparency of SNS is highly popular among users because it is a simple means for re-establishing contacts with old acquaintances. Due to the large number of young people who are members of MySpace and Facebook, many members are able to use these SNS to reconnect and socialize with friends and classmates from the past.

Results also suggest that many young people use SNS to make themselves look attractive and to increase their social capital. This study's findings on Scene Kids suggests that many young people today are using SNS to create a virtual identity that resembles an idealized self that will boost one's status and self-esteem in both the online and "real" world. In short, SNS are a convenient and efficient way to tailor one's appearance from the comfort of his or her home.

Accordingly, many members are using SNS to make themselves aesthetically more appealing to others with the intention of gaining admirers and friends.

Finally, this study suggests that there is a noticeable distinction between online friends and “real” world friends. Many participants cited incidences where statements made by online friends appeared disingenuous and superficial. Consequently, this demonstrates that there should be a deeper examination of what it means to be friend online compared to being a friend in the “real” world.

The results of this exploratory study provide a basis for future qualitative and quantitative studies on SNS. Each theme in the results section of this study provides keen insights on the motivations and behaviors of individuals who use SNS for pleasure and self-presentation. The findings of this study support many conclusions that have been drawn in previously-reviewed literature. Participants in this study felt that SNS are a very effective means for building and maintaining relationships. This supports Donath and Boyd’s (2004) hypothesis that SNS have the ability to greatly increase weak ties within a community because the technology is well-suited to maintaining such ties cheaply and easily. Many participants acknowledged that SNS make staying in touch with friends much more convenient, which in turn, increases their motivation for maintaining relationships through communication on SNS. Participants also shared their experiences using SNS to foster new relationships. This supports Dominick’s (1999) finding that individuals use the Internet to find other individuals they can develop relationships with and Leung’s (2007) claim that “the Internet serves interpersonal utility functions such as relationship building, and social maintenance.” Creating content on one’s profile is a popular strategy for relationship development. Self-expression is another common theme that came up during the course of the focus groups. The fact that so many participants admitted to creating content on their profiles to fulfill their needs and wants supports Kayahara and Wellman’s (2007) finding that people will produce content online to attain gratification.

This study has a number of limitations. The first limitation of this study involves the lack of time available to fully examine the topic of SNS using the model of uses and gratifications. Because of time constraints, only five focus groups were conducted. While focus groups produced a wealth of information, the small number of participants in each focus group does not provide a large enough group to be a relevant sample of the population. The population of participants is also problematic insofar that each participant is a student at a four-year university. Consequently, the data collected comes from the viewpoints of college students. This makes it problematic to generalize findings to the entire population of SNS members who have diverse backgrounds and levels of education.

Lack of an outside moderator is another limitation of this study. While the researcher took great care in organizing and facilitating each focus group, the possibility of asking biased questions still existed. The researcher also acted as the principal coder of this study. If another coder had been available, the reliability of the study would be higher due to the assistance and confirmation another coder would offer.

Several findings in this study have not been examined in the current body of literature and warrant future research. First, new studies should examine the authenticity and intimacy of relationships on SNS compared to those in the real world. Second, researchers should also examine the emerging subculture of Scene Kids and gather data on how SNS influence a member’s behavior both online and offline. Next, members’ attitudes towards privacy and accessibility on SNS should be researched. Finally, future studies should examine the influence that online and offline peers have on self-presentation through SNS.

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**Intercultural and Nonverbal Communication Insights For  
International Commercial Arbitration**

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Intercultural communication has been defined as “communication between people of different cultures” (Rich and Ogawa, 1972, p. 24). Intercultural communication is an entire field of study within human communication (Morsbach, 1976; Jakobson, 1976; Ruben, 1977; Klopff, 1998; Richmond & McCroskey, 2004) The study of intercultural communication helps people understand how challenging communication can be when national, regional, religious, socioeconomic, age, and other cultural variables are dissimilar. Klopff and Park (1982) explained that people encode messages based on their cultural histories and experiences, while others will decode that same message using the communication tools at their disposals—their cultural relations, records, and overall experiences.

One only has to consult court case reporters—collections of cases from appellate courts—to learn that people from one culture frequently misunderstand (decode) messages sent from (encoded) other people within the same culture. When senders and receivers from different cultures communicate regarding valuable cargo and performance worth large sums of money, the potential for misunderstandings increases. Nevertheless, today’s communication technologies allow cross-cultural communications to occur with more ease and at lower costs than at any other time. Additionally, the economic systems of nations are intertwined to such an extent that widespread commerce and effective intercultural communication are necessary.

In the aftermath of the North American Free Trade Association and the World Trade Organization, economic health, if not survival, depends largely upon the success of intercultural communication between parties from different nations, who trade with each other. While a myriad of cultural differences may exist between contracting parties, a single perceived cultural difference—whether real or imagined—may result in major misunderstandings. Specifically, different national systems of jurisprudence utilize different legal jargon, assumptions, expectations, prohibitions and requirements. Differences between nations’ legal systems could result in tremendous uncertainty at best and distrust at worst between parties to international trade agreements. In fact, if a large sum is involved, one can reasonably expect that one party would sue the other in her native country, and the other would do the same in his country. This would be a recipe for an expensive legal nightmare, unless an early settlement or other creative solution could be agreed upon quickly. International Commercial Arbitration is needed because accidents, bad faith, and intercultural communication problems, among other things, continue to result in disputes in need of efficient resolutions.

#### The Two Dominant Legal Traditions

Uncertainty is often the prelude to distrust and dispute. It may manifest early when contracting parties are from nations with similar systems of jurisprudence, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Uncertainty may exist, to an extent, when parties to litigation and their representatives are from different states within the United States. The most striking example of this within the United States is the law in Louisiana and the law in the other 49 states and commonwealths. Much of Louisiana’s original state substantive law was derived from the French civil law system of jurisprudence, as it existed at the time of the Louisiana Purchase. The remainder of the states derived their original law from the English common law system of jurisprudence, as it existed at the time of the Revolution. While this is interesting for conversational purposes, the 49 states have adopted some aspects of the French civil law system of jurisprudence, such as codes. Every state and the federal government now have compilations of statutory laws in codes. Likewise, Louisiana has gradually implemented common law features. For example, Louisiana now follows the fundamental common law policy of *stare decisis*—courts generally following principles of law from earlier cases when deciding cases

with substantially similar facts. This process of following law made in earlier appellate cases is supposedly how the law becomes common throughout a jurisdiction. In reality, state codes and the federal corollary bear little resemblance to the civil law codes, which were extremely brief and concise. Today, state codes and states' common law varies to extreme extents on many topics.

Uncertainty between parties to business agreements (contracts) often breeds disputes and ultimately financial losses for one or all parties to the agreements. For example, despite no wrongdoing, one or more parties may interpret another party to be in breach of an agreement, based upon conduct alone. Nonverbal communication indicating that a party cannot or will not perform according to the terms of a contract may legitimately result in the other parties refusing or failing to perform. It is common to see one or more parties to a contract, who believe other parties to be in breach of their agreement, halt performance in order to "cut their losses." Under the American common law system, this is known as anticipatory breach or repudiation. Certainly, in the event of a disagreement regarding one party's alleged failure to perform according to the expectations of the another party, both parties would want the dispute decided by the courts of his or her culture. That is unlikely, as increasing numbers of contracts between international parties mandate international arbitration. Increasingly, such clauses in contracts specify the location where the arbitration must be held.

Leon Trakman (2006) observed that "The International Court of Arbitration (ICA), the International Bar Association (IBA), and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), have relied greatly upon the two great legal traditions" (p.) discussed above—common law and civil law. However, he noted that William Slate, President of the American Arbitration Association, questioned whether the common law and civil law traditions were sufficiently pervasive to justify their dominant status in providing the superstructure for international commercial arbitration. Trakman revealed the vast scope of common law, civil law, and their worldwide lineage. He appeared to conclude that the two systems were sufficiently pervasive when he wrote that,

The common law was incorporated into legal systems across Southern, South East, and South West Africa. Elsewhere in Africa, in addition to the common law, civil law was incorporated by colonial France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. South America reflected predominately Spanish and Portuguese legal traditions, while the United States and Canada acquired English common law heritage. A common law legal tradition was also introduced into India and Pakistan. French and Dutch legal traditions have permeated through other parts of Asia, while a German legal tradition was incorporated into the Japanese and to some degree the Chinese legal system. Then there are states that occupy the hybrid space between common and civil-law traditions: Scotland, Quebec, Louisiana, Sri Lanka, and South Africa along with Israel's combination of common civil, and Talmudic law (p. 15).

Trakman, (2006) one of the few legal scholars who delves deeply into legal culture, argued that legal cultures are wider than legal traditions. He claimed that the source of legal cultures might depend on social, political or economic history. He also stated that a culture might result from social traits, such as businessmen doing business on the golf course. After explaining that legal cultures may differ with locale, time, and space, Trakman admitted that "given the complex public and private influences on the legal culture of international commerce, one may conclude that serious analysis of that culture is likely to be flawed" (p. 10).

International Commercial Arbitration

Disputing parties from different nations should not be able to force controversies into their preferred court system (i.e., shop for a friendly forum). Lawyers refer to the tendency of parties to choose friendly court systems as forum shopping.<sup>1</sup> Within the United States, there are moderately, if not well respected scholars of conflicts of laws, jurisdiction and venue (the latter two are often considered as part of the body of law known as civil procedure). However, enforceable and agreed-upon international laws regarding the available forums for disagreements were once difficult to understand, if international law even existed regarding the question at issue. This has been an area of law that has benefited greatly from one Alternate Dispute Resolution method known as international commercial arbitration. Sheldon Eisen (2006), an experienced international lawyer, wrote that “International disputes have long been the special province of arbitration (p. 34). While nonverbal communication may have limited importance in arbitration proceedings, it would be misleading to maintain that it has as much potential in arbitration proceedings as some maintain that it does in the context of jury trials.

International commercial arbitration has developed and benefited from two international goals—the private and public traditions (Trakman, 2006). That would not appear to leave much middle ground. The former is focused on harmonization of laws. The latter concentrates on reducing global barriers to trade. Considering that there is little uniformity of laws among the states, One public law victory was the 1946 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Then in 1993, the WTO was formed. (Trakman, 2006). “The world has seen how arbitration has stopped being a private matter practiced in very few nations” (Cantuarias, 2008, p.148).

Nations and cities are soliciting international commercial arbitration. In a November 2004 Mondaq Business Briefing, Singapore made a strong pitch to become the major international commercial arbitration provider in the Asian region. The following information could be persuasive to many businesses.

“In Singapore, the IAA governs international arbitration. The IAA makes provision for the conduct of international commercial arbitrations based on the familiar Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration (“the Model Law”) adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (“UNCITRAL”) and conciliation proceedings. It also gives effect to the New York Convention on the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards. While the U.N. Model Law is preferable to most parties, not all want to always be bound by it. Rather, the most attractive international arbitration sites appear to offer a variety of arbitration associations’ choices. London may be the exception to this, as the English apparently feel almost married to the English way. Apparently, the affinity for tradition has changed in England since 1980, when this author studied comparative law at Oxford. Intercultural communication with the English may be enjoyable or painful for Americans. Until an American determines which extreme applies, one should speak little, if at all and never ask for ice in a beverage. However, the Arbitration Act of 1996, which was consistent with the U.N. Trade Law

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<sup>1</sup> Forum shopping does not require multinational parties. For example, assume that a Red Trucking Company vehicle collided with a car in Nebraska. The four occupants of the car were terribly injured. Assume Nebraska has a one-year statute of limitations for torts and does not allow punitive damages, whereas the Iowa, the state where the four injured people live, has a three-year statute of limitations for torts and allows punitive damages. Finally, Red Trucking has its principle place of business in a third state—Delaware—that has a two-year statute of limitations for torts and limits punitive damages to \$250,000 per person. If the injured people did not hire lawyers until one year after the collision, they will want to avoid the jurisdiction and venue of Nebraska, and they will try to successfully file the case in Iowa. On the other hand, Red Trucking will prefer Nebraska or in the alternative Delaware. Since the injured plaintiffs will probably file the case in Iowa, an example of forum shopping.

Model, and added liberal and accommodating features. This has helped London recapture much of the international litigation and arbitration share that it once held because of its location and skilled personnel (p. 2).

As if that were not enough, the advertisement thinly disguised as an article, added the following:

Singapore has welcomed international commercial arbitration from any nations.

It has purposely adopted “arbitration-friendly laws and an efficient judiciary where the courts protect and support the international arbitration process. When requested by a party, the courts have the power to: stay proceedings in court that are being carried out in breach of an arbitration agreement enforce foreign arbitral awards made in New York Convention countries enforce awards made in international arbitrations taking place in Singapore”

Granted, the verbal communication in the 2004 ad said one thing, but the nonverbal message between the lines appeared insidious. Apparently, the author’s skepticism was evidence of a character flaw instead of a systematic flaw, as Singapore has accomplished much of what it unabashedly coveted. Khoo (2007) reported that ICC data shows Singapore to be the preferred venue in Asia for international arbitration. Furthermore, it ranks sixth in the world.

South Africa, on the other hand, “should be a major centre for African commercial dispute resolution” but has failed to take a prominent place due to “lingering allegations of racism in the South African legal system” (Temkin, 2008, p. 7). The alleged form of racism in South African arbitration involves nonverbal and intercultural elements. Respected South African lawyer Des Williams said that “parties to a pending arbitration have been reported to “have postponed cases for the reason that the judge allocated was a black judge” (p.8). He acknowledged that the frequency of such occurrences has been low, but has adversely affected confidence in the system. The system may be part of the problem. Williams said the reports of racism have “reinforced perceptions that arbitration is a form of privatized litigation” (p.8). In most other nations, arbitration is just that.

The cultures surrounding international commercial arbitration are dynamic, for the most part. Nations are competing to attract the firms and organizations that are associated with it. One question that lingers is if international commercial arbitration firms are so beneficial to nations, why is the same not true for courts that can handle the same disputes? Both will bring in many professionals. Parties must pay court costs to use government tribunals, but the same is not true for international commercial arbitration proceedings. Court decisions are typically public while international commercial arbitration results are secret. Why all the love for international commercial arbitration proceedings and so little for more transparent government trials?

#### Conclusion

This article demonstrates that effective intercultural communication skills and nonverbal communication skills can be useful when considering the value and potential risks involved in doing business with international parties. However, effective intercultural communication skills are not inherently good or bad. Effective skills can help a con man wreak economic destruction on others. Effective skills may also help others enjoy wealth, health, and love.

When involved in an international business transaction, one would be well advised to draft an international commercial arbitration clause and insert it in the original contract. Otherwise, to use this remedy, the parties must agree to an ad hoc international commercial arbitration agreement. In such a situation, it is possible that one party will use an advantage that comes with the prospect of bringing repeat cases to the firm.

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Finally, nothing in this article should be interpreted as commenting on mandatory binding arbitration clauses that banks, insurance companies, credit cards, automobile dealerships, and other businesses are inserting in consumer contracts. This author may examine them in future research.

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