

THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION
PATTERNS ON COMMUNICATION
APPREHENSION LEVELS

By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Communication scholars have long recognized that people vary in their desire to engage in verbal behavior. Certain individuals are competent and eminently skilled in communicating, while others possess a fear that surpasses their ability to communicate. The latter individuals are considered high in communication apprehension. Communication apprehension (CA), as conceptualized by McCroskey (1977, 1978) is “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (cited in Daly & McCroskey, 1984, p. 13). CA afflicts 20% of individuals at the elementary, high school, and college levels, as well as senior citizen groups (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; McCroskey, 1977 cited in Frymier, 1990; Phillips, 1991). In fact, “surveys indicate that 60 to 75 percent of a class admit that they are bothered by ‘nervousness in speaking’” (Ross, 1992, p. 13). There is a substantial accumulation of literature that focuses on communication apprehension (Beatty & Dobos, 1993; Bourhis, Allen, & Wells, 1993; Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Hutchinson & Neuliep, 1993; McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977; Phillips, 1991). In fact, “no communication variable has been examined more during the past two decades than has communication apprehension” (Lustig & Anderson, 1994, cited in Hutchinson & Neuliep, 1993, p. 16).

Although numerous studies have been conducted to examine the effects and treatment of CA, there is not a wealth of information that addresses the factors

that contribute to the development of CA (Bourhis et al., 1993; Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977). Because it is so important for children to obtain good communication skills to succeed in life, and because CA seems to progress as a child ages (Garrison & Garrison, 1979; Wheelless, 1967, cited in Garrison, 1977), it is important to identify the causes of CA to deter its development. Because a child's environment plays a vital role in the development of social competence in children (Tunstall, 1994), this paper investigates the relationship between family communication patterns and the development of CA.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communication Apprehension Effects

There is an abundance of research that addresses the effects of CA (Beatty & Dobos, 1993; Garrison, 1979; McCroskey, 1977; Porter, 1982; Richmond, Beatty, & Dyba, 1985). Communication apprehension makes an individual unable to perform effectively in a social situation. Individuals high in CA often feel more inhibited and inadequate, and they feel they must conform more often to other's wishes or requests (Watson, Monroe, & Atterstrom, 1984). Persons with CA are often perceived less favorably than persons without CA (McCroskey, 1977).

McCroskey et al. (1992) found that individuals with high CA could not participate actively in social situations, and that communication apprehension was associated with lower levels of learning and higher drop-out rates. Moreover, high levels of CA have been associated with lower GPAs and less than favorable academic achievement (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, & Payne, 1989, cited in Frymier, 1993). In related research, teachers were found to have lower expectations of children with CA than of those who did not display CA (Frymier, 1993; Watson & Monroe, 1990), and McCroskey et al. (1992) discovered that these students deem CA a very serious problem not only in academic situations, but in small groups as well.

Richmond et al. (1985) found that poor communication skills and higher levels of CA resulted in a lack of popularity for children among their peers, and

McCroskey (1977) and Zimbardo and Radl (1981) found that children with higher CA were perceived more negatively. Poor communication skills can also result in a lack of social competence (Tunstall, 1994). These findings suggest that more programs to help children with communication skills be instituted at younger ages (Richmond et al., 1985). In light of the numerous detrimental effects of CA, it is important to examine the origins of CA.

Causes of CA

Although studies claim that lack of experience, low self-esteem, or public self-consciousness can be determinants of CA (Phillips, 1991), the preponderance of literature asserts that there are two determining factors in the development of CA. The first factor is heredity. Some writers hypothesize that children are predisposed to become apprehensive about communicating simply because of genetics (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Daniels & Plomin, 1985; Garrison, 1979), and previous studies confirm this claim (Freedman, 1974; 1979, cited in Garrison, 1979). If one parent is high in CA, his or her child's CA can be attributed to innate causes, and is reinforced by the child's environment (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Daniels & Plomin, 1985; Freedman, 1979, cited in Garrison, 1979). Parents who have a high level of CA can also instill ineffective communication or CA in their offspring (Belsky, 1984; Terkelson, 1976).

A second, related factor in the development of CA is the type of interaction that takes place between the child and his or her parents (Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977; Richmond et al., 1985). Bourhis et al. (1993) found that children with low CA experienced

positive parental interaction throughout their childhood. Specifically, those individuals reporting good communication at home indicated that they modeled their parents' communication style and received reinforcement when they did. However, if children are not taught how to communicate, or are unrewarded for their communication or interaction, they can eventually develop a fear of communication (Fredricks, Stinson, & Soukup, 1993). Daly and Friedrich (1981), also noted that the amount of parent-child communication, as well as the style of communication, are significantly related to the development of a child's communication behaviors. Specifically, they confirmed that the home environment is a contributing factor in the development of communication apprehension (cited in McCroskey et al., 1981).

Yet another study suggested that family size and communication stimulation between parents and children play an important role in the development of CA (McCroskey & Randolph, 1977). This study found that individuals from families containing more siblings, and those who were later in the birth order, reported less parental interaction, and, thus, more CA. Conversely, children who were provided positive communication stimulation and reinforcement for communication interaction reported less CA (McCroskey & Randolph, 1977).

In summary, although some sort of shyness can come naturally (Zimbardo & Radl, 1981), high levels of CA can be traced back to the parent-child communication style prevalent in the home environment. Thus, if parents are interacting with their children and are not displaying CA, then children will be less prone to CA (MacDonald & Wilkening, 1994).

Parent-Child Interaction and the Development of Communication Skills

A multitude of research indicates that parent-child interaction is important in a child's growth and development (Belsky, 1984; Bourhis et al., 1993; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Fredricks et al., 1993; Galvin & Brommel, 1991; Macdonald & Wilkening, 1994; McCroskey, 1977; Scarf, 1995; Socha & Stamp, 1995; Stafford & Bayer, 1993; Tunstall, 1994). In fact, Beatty et al. (1984, cited in Bourhis et al., 1993, p. 6) claim that "parents serve as the most important significant other in the developmental process," and the nature of the parent-child relationship can shape a child's future communication style (Beatty, Plax, & Payne, 1984; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Scarf, 1995). By addressing such issues as openness and emotional accessibility, families can cultivate a positive, caring environment (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

A child's social outlook is governed by the type of communication environment to which they are accustomed (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Several researchers posit that a child encouraged to express himself/herself and function openly with a parent becomes a better communicator (Bourhis et al., 1993; Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Dixson, 1994; Fredricks et al., 1993; MacDonald & Wilkening, 1994; Stafford & Bayer, 1993). To facilitate this process, parents must instill in children the value of expressing feelings, and provide feedback to the children to encourage open communication. Strong and Devault (1992) assert that a reciprocal relationship between parents and children can aid in the child's development in becoming a responsible and moral person with good mental health and high self-esteem.

Modeling (social learning theory) and reinforcement seem to be the pervasive theme for several studies (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; Garrison, 1979; Jackson, 1965; McCroskey, 1977; Moerk, 1975). Consistent with the behaviorist view of modeling is the idea that the child reenacts or emulates the type of communication witnessed in the home (MacDonald & Wilkening, 1994). The child whose environment is conducive to good communication (or the enjoyment of communication) will produce a child that imitates the equivalent of that environment (Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; Seitz & Stewart, 1975; Socha & Stamp, 1995). Accordingly, a child who models a parent high in CA may ultimately duplicate the CA.

Daly and McCroskey (1984) note that "most writers allege that reinforcement patterns in a person's environment, particularly during childhood, are the dominant elements" (p. 24). The child that observes and interacts with a parent in the home, and engages in positive communication, is more likely to emulate that aspect of the parent-child interaction (Daly & McCroskey, 1984). A child that experiences reward or praise for their communication patterns continues the communication in hopes of a recurrence of the desired response from the parent (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977). Conversely, negative responses to communication in the home environment create an opportunity for the development of CA. McCroskey (1977) states, "if a child is reinforced for being silent and is not reinforced for communicating, the probable result is a quiet child" (cited in McCroskey et al., 1981, p. 122).

Principles such as matching (where a child learns from parents how to communicate and behave) foster a child's ability to communicate, and parents who pay more attention to their style of communication facilitated the development of communication competency in their children (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Furthermore, this matching or imitation process helps children develop effective communication styles (Bourhis et al., 1993; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Fredricks et al., 1993; Phillips, 1991; Tunstall, 1994).

MacDonald and Wilkening (1994) found that adults influence children regardless of intention and/or lack of communication skills. They assert that parents need to be coached or assisted in assessing their child's developmental level, as well as their child's communication needs, and they noted that a reciprocal relationship between parents and children aids in the child's development.

Types of Communication Within The Family Environment

Family communication environments are characterized by the set of norms that dictate a compromise between the facilitation or hindrance of a child's autonomy and the level of warmth and openness of parent-child interaction (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). According to Fitzpatrick et al. (1996), a family's communicative environment can be characterized along two dimensions. The first dimension is *conformity orientation*. This concept consists of a parent's use of power to persuade or force a child to agree or conform. The second dimension is *conversation orientation*. This is the degree to which parents encourage communication and openness in the family.

Categorizing families as high or low based on the two dimensions results in four different styles of communication patterns within the family (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990, cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). The first type, *consensual*, is characterized by families who rate high on both of the aforementioned dimensions. Consensual families facilitate openness and encourage children to express themselves. However, a definite hierarchy exists within the family that is uniformly agreed upon. This hierarchy is exemplified by the parents being at the top of the ladder in power, the children at the bottom. Parents have the final say in all matters and children are forbidden to challenge established beliefs, ideas, and rules within the household. The second type, *pluralistic*, also encourages communication and expression of ideas, but does not exert pressure on a child to comply with parental ideas. Parents in pluralistic families encourage individualism in their children and facilitate the child's endeavors. In contrast with the two preceding family types, communication is less prevalent in the remaining two types. *Protective* families emphasize a child's conformity, but do not engage in parent-child interaction. To appear harmonious, these families also discourage conflict. The fourth and final family style of communication is labeled *laissez-faire*. These families, although individualistic in nature, do not engage in active communication, nor do they pursue parent-child interaction (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996).

The original Family Communication Pattern Instrument (FCP) was intended to measure parental power as part of a political socialization study (Ritchie, 1991). Eventually, the originators, Chaffee, McLeod, and Wackman (1966, cited in Ritchie, 1991) turned in a new direction, and the FCP became a two-

dimension scale based upon concept-orientation and socio-orientation. Concept-orientation measures the family norms that facilitate a supportive, open flow of information, while socio-orientation measures family norms which facilitate a more restricted flow of information, and relies more on parental dominance (Ritchie, 1988; Ritchie, 1991; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Although the FCP is a widely used instrument, particularly in the area of mass communication, researchers have questioned its validity and reliability. The FCP is predictive of attitudes towards conformity or parental authority and of the attitudes favoring an open flow of communication and information (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). However, the FCP assumes that family members are agree about communication norms (Austin, 1993; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). This idea became problematic as scholars posed the conception that parents and children maintain separate and contrary perceptions about the reality of family communication. Due to low correlations between parent and child perceptions of the measurements, a revised version of the FCP (RFCP) was developed (Austin, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Wamboldt, 1990). The RFCP (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) changed the concept- and socio-orientation dimensions to conversation-orientation and conformity-orientation (Dixson, 1994). Although the FCP's socio-concept dimension was described as synonymous with relational harmony, studies revealed that this dimension was associated with aggressive behavior outside the family (McLeoud, Atkins, & Chaffee, 1972, cited in Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The RFCP reformulates this notion and states that harmony and lack of tension are actually exemplified by concept-orientation, or conversation-orientation (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990).

Previous research supports the idea that those families which communicate openly, and which have an environment conducive to the expression and freedom of ideas, produce children with characteristics that are necessary to become a responsible communicator. Children from these families are found to be higher in the non-delinquent group of children because these children are higher in self-control (Baumrind, 1966). Children whose parents encourage give and take in conversation and allow the child more autonomy also exhibit positive, happy, friendly behaviors (Baumrind, 1966). These children learn independence and socialization and language skills, and achieve more academic success in their lives. They develop problem-solving skills and develop a knowledge of persuasion or influence over peers or groups. These children are motivated, are seen as leaders, and are less passive (Baumrind, 1966). Families which communicate openly and allow freedom of expression are categorized as pluralistic.

Conversely, those parents who restrict autonomy and assert more power over their children tend to rear: children higher in aggression, defiance, and often discontentment, children who display resistance towards teachers and other sources of authority, children with a strong desire to control others, but without the positive skills to do so, children with an inhibition of nonverbal achievement, often as well as verbal skills, and, children who are considered unpopular as they are more socially withdrawn (Baumrind, 1966; Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). Moreover, those children who have no model of conversational skill, coupled with a lack of authority in their lives, exhibit more social withdrawal and are less apt to communicate freely (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). The

aforementioned children could fall within the family communication patterns of either protective or consensual.

Finally, Fitzpatrick et al. (1996) studied the effects of the family communication environment on social outcomes for children (in middle childhood). They found that, based on their gender and age, children labeled laissez-faire had the highest levels of social withdrawal (particularly girls). They also noted that laissez-faire families lack communicative skills.

Garrison (1979) states that, based on previous research, CA appears to worsen from grade to grade in elementary school. Wheelless (1971, cited in McCroskey et al., 1981) found that a significant increase in speech fright occurred from the third grade to the sixth grade. Based on that study, McCroskey et al. (1981) found that children in grades kindergarten through three report lower CA than children in fourth through the twelfth grade. They also found that the most substantial change occurred in kindergarten during the first exposure to the school environment. That study also noted that not only the school environment, but the teacher's report of CA plays a role in the development of CA.

Based upon the preceding research, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1: Participants reporting a pluralistic family communication pattern will have lower CA scores than participants reporting a consensual, protective, or laissez-faire family communication pattern.

H2: Participants reporting a consensual family communication pattern will have lower CA scores than participants reporting a protective or laissez-faire family communication pattern.

H3: Participants reporting a laissez-faire family communication pattern will have lower CA scores than participants reporting a protective family communication pattern.

H4: As grade level increases, CA levels for participants reporting pluralistic and consensual family communication patterns will stabilize or decrease, while CA levels for participants reporting laissez-faire and protective family communication patterns will increase.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Subjects

Several intact classrooms of students from the Tulsa, Oklahoma, Public School system and Oklahoma State University participated in the study. Fifty-two percent of the participants were female. Participants included 43 third graders, 16 fifth graders, 35 seventh graders, 57 ninth graders, and 77 college students (n = 228). The public school classrooms were selected on the basis of teachers' willingness to participate and parental consent. Parents of the elementary and junior high students were notified regarding the research project and returned signed consent forms to allow their child's participation. Participation was strictly voluntary, and all responses were anonymous.

Instrumentation

The Revised Family Communication Pattern Index (RFCP, Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990; see Appendix A) was used to measure communication patterns within the family environment. The RFCP consists of 26 statements in a Likert-scale format ranging from one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree). Fifteen of the items assess the conversation-orientation, and 11 statements assess the conformity-orientation dimension. The four patterns of family communication types were derived by dividing the sample along the median on both the concept-orientation and socio-orientation scales. Subjects who scored high on conversation-orientation and low on conformity-orientation are labeled *pluralistic*. Those who scored high on conversation-orientation and high on

conformity-orientation are labeled *consensual*. Subjects reporting low conversation-orientation and high conformity-orientation were labeled *protective*. Finally, subjects who score low on conversation-orientation and low on conformity-orientation were labeled *laissez-faire*.

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24, McCroskey, 1982; see Appendix B) was administered to measure participants' level of CA. The PRCA-24 is a widely-used instrument for measuring the amount of fear or anxiety an individual exhibits during communication (Daly & Friedrich, 1981; McCroskey et al., 1985). The PRCA-24 has "evolved as the dominant instrument employed by both researchers and practitioners for measuring trait-like communication apprehension" (McCroskey et al., 1985, p. 165). The PRCA-24 consists of 24 five-point Likert-type statements that measure CA in four contexts: groups, meetings, dyadic encounters, and public speaking. The Likert-type scale is a scale where one is associated with "strongly agree" and five is associated with "strongly disagree." Within each of the four categories (groups, meetings, dyadic encounters, and public speaking), three items are positively-worded and three are negatively-worded to avoid response bias. Responses to negatively-worded items were reversed, so higher scores indicated higher CA.

Two formulas are utilized to analyze responses to the PRCA-24. One formula provides an overall CA score that determines whether the individual is low, moderate, or high in CA. The other formula aids in scoring an individual's CA in a specific situation (group, meeting, dyadic, public). The PRCA-24 has traditionally yielded exceptional construct validity, as well as high reliability

(Daly & Friedrich, 1981; McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, & Falcione, 1977, cited in Bourhis et al., 1993).

Procedures

Public School Sample

The researcher administered the RFCP to the public school students in the classroom setting. Although teachers were present as their students completed their questionnaires, they were briefed as little as possible about the nature of the study. The researcher collected the RFCP questionnaire from the subjects, and then administered the PRCA-24. Both the teachers and the researcher explained directions and answered questions. Both measurements used in this study were straightforward and easy to answer. The administration of the instruments was counter-balanced so that half of the participants in each grade received the RFCP first, and half received the PRCA-24 first. Attached to the instruments was a short paragraph which asked for the following demographic information: sex; number of siblings; birth order (first born, second, etc.); number of parent (s) or guardian (s) in the home; and grade. A pilot study indicated that children as young as first graders could fully comprehend and answer all questions.

University Sample

The university sample consisted of students from Oklahoma State University enrolled in an introductory speech course. They were briefly informed of the purpose of the study, and signed a consent form. The administration of the instruments was counter-balanced so that half of the participants received the RFCP first, and half received the PRCA-24 first. Again, a short list of

demographic questions was attached. These included sex, number of siblings, birth order, and number and type of parents (or guardians) in the home. For type of parent (s) or guardian (s), the choice of answers were "Mom and Dad", "Mom only", "Dad only", "parents and grandparents", or "other."

Data Analysis

The first three hypotheses were analyzed by a univariate analysis of variance with planned contrasts. Appropriate coefficients were assigned to the specific independent four family communication patterns (see Table 1). A four (family communication patterns) by five (grade level) analysis of variance was used to address hypothesis 4 (see Figure 1).

CHAPTER IV

Results

On the RFCP, 121 participants scored below the median (2.60) on the conversation-orientation, and 112 fell below the median (2.91) on the conformity-orientation dimension. As a result, 46 participants were classified as consensual, 61 were classified as pluralistic, 70 were classified as protective, and 51 were classified as laissez-faire. (Reliabilities for overall CA were .92; the reliability for conversation-orientation was .88; the reliability for conformity-orientation was .78.) The results were originally calculated based on each of the four dimensions of the PRCA-24 (groups, meeting, dyadic encounters, and public speaking) and the overall CA score. However, there was no distinguishing difference between each of the four dimensions and the overall score. Because the dimensions were so highly-correlated with the overall CA score, the overall CA score was used as the lone dependent variable (rather than listing all of the dimensions separately).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that **participants reporting a pluralistic family communication pattern would have lower CA scores than participants reporting a consensual, protective, or laissez-faire family communication pattern.** This hypothesis was confirmed; $t(224) = -3.30, p = .001$ (see Table 1). The results for this hypothesis support Bourhis et al.'s (1993) finding that parents who encourage interaction and instill effective communication in their children report lower CA. Participants who reported this type of family communication pattern scored high on conversation-orientation and low on conformity-orientation.

Hypothesis 2 predicted **participants reporting a consensual family communication pattern would have lower CA scores than participants reporting a protective, or laissez-faire family communication pattern.** This hypothesis was disconfirmed; $t(224) = -1.34, p = .18$ (see Table 1). Subjects who reported a consensual family communication pattern scored high on both conversation-orientation and conformity-orientation.

Hypothesis 3, which predicted that **participants reporting a laissez-faire family communication pattern would have lower CA scores than participants reporting a protective family communication pattern,** was disconfirmed; $t(224) = -.67, p = .50$ (see Table 1). Participants who reported a laissez-faire family communication pattern scored low on both conversation-orientation and conformity-orientation. Those participants who reported a protective family communication pattern scored low on conversation-orientation, and high on conformity-orientation.

Finally, hypothesis 4 predicted that **as grade level increases, CA levels for participants reporting pluralistic and consensual family communication patterns will stabilize or decrease, while CA levels for participants reporting laissez-faire and protective family communication patterns will increase.** This hypothesis was disconfirmed: $F(12, 208) = 1.00, p = .44$ (see Figure 1). No significant increase in the CA score was reported for subjects reporting a laissez-faire or protective family communication pattern. Also, the mean CA levels for participants reporting pluralistic and consensual family communication patterns did not significantly decrease or even stabilize as predicted.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Implications

This study examined the effects of family communication patterns on the communication apprehension levels of elementary school, junior high school, middle school, and college students. Results indicated that, across grade levels, participants reporting a pluralistic family communication pattern reported lower levels of communication apprehension than participants reporting consensual, protective, and laissez-faire family communication patterns. A pluralistic family communication pattern fosters an open flow of interaction in an atmosphere than de-emphasizes the pressure to conform with authority figures (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Fitzpatrick et al., 1996; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). This finding supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2, derived from the assumption that families high in conversation-orientation (consensual pattern) would do a better job suppressing CA than families low in conversation-orientation (laissez-faire and protective patterns), even though the consensual pattern involves relatively high pressure for conformity, was disconfirmed. Consequently, even though conversation-orientation ($r = .22$) is a better predictor of CA than conformity-orientation ($r = .12$), a high conversation-orientation within the family may not be sufficient to deter the development of CA; the open communication pattern must occur in a relatively egalitarian context. One key element of family communication patterns high in conformity-orientation is the emphasis on approval and

acquiescence. Children raised in such an environment may develop a reticence about expressing themselves, especially when they are uncertain about how their ideas will be received.

Given the results regarding Hypothesis 2, it is not surprising that Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Families with laissez-faire and protective communication patterns both lack a model of conversational skill for children to emulate, a shortcoming that the nonconformist nature of the laissez-faire cannot overcome.

Hypothesis four, which predicted a family communication pattern by grade level interaction, was also not confirmed. Previous research indicates levels of CA increase with age; that is, if a child develops CA at a young age, that CA will increase as they become older (Garrison, 1979; McCroskey et al., 1981).

The nonsignificant finding in the present study might be attributed to the fact that different individuals represented each grade level for each family communication pattern. Thus, the fact that CA levels did not follow predicted patterns may indicate that the groups simply were not comparable. Small cell sizes may provide an alternate explanation for nonsignificant results. Eleven of the twenty cells in the analysis contained fewer than ten participants. These small cell sizes clearly inhibited the power of the statistical test.

Contributions

This study contributes to the present state of knowledge by demonstrating that healthy family communication is an importance source in the development of conversational skill and social competence, which, in turn, deter the development of CA. These finding are consistent with previous research that

shows that reinforcement and modeling of effective role models can inhibit the development of CA (Bourhis et al., 1993; Daly & McCroskey, 1984; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977). Parents who endorse a pluralistic communication pattern encourage children to participate in conversations, think for themselves, and learn problem-solving strategies. Children who are rewarded and/or praised for their participation in these activities continue this pattern in hopes of perpetuating this response (Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey & Randolph, 1977).

Limitations

Several features of this study may limit its internal and external validity. First, both teachers' and parents' approval was required before participants could respond to the surveys. It is possible that the students/children of teachers and parents who were granted that permission differed in some way from those whose teachers and parents who did not. For instance, some parents may have been uncomfortable about letting their children respond to questions about their home environment. Some of the RFCP items may have been perceived as invasive or threatening. It is important to point out, however, that each family communication pattern was amply represented in the study.

Another limitation involves the ability of the third and fifth graders to respond to the Likert-type items. In particular, they had some trouble distinguishing between the "agree" and "strongly agree" options on the scale. The use of McCroskey's Measurement of Elementary Communication Apprehension (MECA) may have diminished the first problem. This instrument uses smiling and frowning faces as responses that enable children to make

distinctions between these options. Also, some children had problems understanding some of the items, and negatively-worded items appeared to generate some confusion. Each of these problems were alleviated to a large extent by the researcher and respective teachers, who assisted those in need.

Directions for Future Research

Future research on this topic should address the effects of demographic variables such as birth order, number of siblings, gender, and the number and type of parental units on the development of CA. McCroskey and Randolph (1977) state that as the number of children in a family increases, interaction with each child decreases. As a result, children born later engage in less interaction with their parents, and opportunities for modeling may decline. Examining the relationship between single parent households or households comprised of more than two generations and the development of CA may be beneficial.

Secondly, longitudinal studies could provide a more valid test of how (or whether) CA changes over time. Hypothesis four in the present study was based on the questionable assumption that the groups were equivalent across grade levels. Thus, even had a significant change occurred, it would have required careful interpretation. A longitudinal study would entail the measurement of CA levels of individual children as they matured. In addition, critical events in children's school, social, and family life could be documented.

Conclusion

The present research furthers the understanding of the causes of a major affliction--communication apprehension. It established the importance of two

relevant features of the home environment--high conversation-orientation and low conformity-orientation--for preventing the development of CA. Given the detrimental effects CA can have on a person's social competence, the results of this study have the potential to help parents raise children who can function optimally in a variety of social settings.

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APPENDIX A

**Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument
(RFCP)
Children's Version**

For each statement or sentence, please circle the answer that fits you best (or the answer you agree with the most).

1. In our family we talk about things like religion or the way the world is, even though we sometimes disagree about our ideas.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

2. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should get to talk when we make family decisions."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

3. My parents often ask my opinion when our family is talking about something.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

4. My parents tell me to ask as many questions as I need to if I don't understand their ideas or beliefs.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

5. My parents often say something like "You should always listen to everyone's side of the story."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

6. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

7. I can tell my parents almost anything.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

8. In our family, we often talk about our feelings and emotions.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

9. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about whatever we want to talk about.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

10. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we don't agree.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

11. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

12. My parents like for me to express my feelings.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

13. My parents usually talk about their feelings.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

14. Our family talks together about things we have done during the day.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

15. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

16. My parents often say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

17. My parents often say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

18. My parents often say things like "A child should not argue with adults."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

19. My parents often say something like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

20. My parents often say something like "You should not argue with people so you don't make them mad."

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

21. My parents expect me to obey them if something is really important to them no matter what.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

22. In our home, whatever my parents say is final.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

23. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

24. My parents sometimes get upset if my ideas are different than their ideas.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

25. If there is something my parents don't like for me to do and I do it anyway, they do not want to know about it.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

26. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

**Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument
(RFCP)
University Student Sample**

This instrument is composed of 26 statements concerning your childhood family communication environment. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you

(A) Strongly Agree (B) Agree (C) Are Undecided (D) Disagree or (E) Strongly Disagree

There are no right or wrong answers. Answer quickly; record your first impression.

1. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others. ____
2. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions." ____
3. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something. ____
4. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs. ____
5. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue." ____
6. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things. ____
7. I can tell my parents almost anything. ____
8. In our family, we often talk about our feelings and emotions. ____
9. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular. ____
10. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree. ____
11. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me. ____
12. My parents encourage me to express my feelings. ____
13. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions. ____
14. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day. ____
15. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future. ____

16. My parents often say something like "You'll know better when you grow up." _____
17. My parents often say something like "My ideas are right and you should not question them." _____
18. My parents often say something like "A child should not argue with adults."

19. My parents often say something like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about." _____
20. My parents often say something like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad." _____
21. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question. _____
22. In our home, my parents usually have the last word. _____
23. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss. _____
24. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs. _____
25. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it. _____
26. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules. _____

APPENDIX B

**Personal Report of Communication Apprehension
(PRCA-24)
Children's Version**

For each statement or sentence, please circle the answer that fits you best (or the answer you agree with the most).

1. I do not like to participate in group discussions.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

2. Most of the time, I am comfortable when I am participating in a group discussion.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

3. I am tense and nervous when I am participating in group discussions.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

4. I like to get involved in group discussions.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

5. When I am in a group discussion with new people, it makes me tense and nervous.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

6. I am calm and relaxed when I am participating in group discussions.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

7. Most of the time, I am nervous when I have to participate in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed when I am participating in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

9. I am calm and relaxed when I am called on to give my opinion in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

10. I am afraid to talk a lot in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

11. It usually makes me uncomfortable when I talk in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

12. I am relaxed when I have to answer questions in class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

13. When I have to talk with someone I have just met, I feel very nervous.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

14. I am not afraid to speak up in conversations.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

15. Most of the time, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

16. Most of the time, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

17. When I talk to a person I have just met, I feel very relaxed.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

19. I am not afraid of giving a speech or talking in front of the class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

20. Some parts of my body feel tense and queasy when I am speaking in front of the class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

21. I feel relaxed when I am giving a speech or speaking in front of the class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

22. My thoughts get confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

23. I like to give a speech or speak in front of the class.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

24. When I give a speech, I get so nervous I forget things I really already know.

I STRONGLY agree I agree I'm not sure I disagree I STRONGLY disagree

**Personal Report of Communication Apprehension
(PRCA-24)
University Sample**

This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement (numbers five through 28) applies to you by marking whether you

(A) Strongly Agree (B) Agree (C) Are Undecided (D) Disagree or (E) Strongly Disagree

There are no right or wrong answers. Answer quickly; record your first impression.

1. I dislike participating in group discussions. _____
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions. _____
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions. _____
4. I like to get involved in group discussions. _____
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. _____
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions. _____
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in class. _____
8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in class. _____
9. I am calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in class.

10. I am afraid to express myself in class. _____
11. It usually makes me uncomfortable when I talk in class. _____
12. I am relaxed when answering questions in class. _____
13. When I have to talk with someone I have just met, I feel very nervous. _____
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations. _____
15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations. _____
16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations. _____
17. When I talk to a person I have just met, I feel very relaxed. _____
18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations. _____

19. I have no fear of giving a speech. _____
20. Certain parts of my body feel tense and queasy while giving a speech. _____
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech. _____
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.

23. I feel very confident when I know I have to give a speech. _____
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know. _____

TABLE 1

One-Way ANOVAS with Planned Contrasts

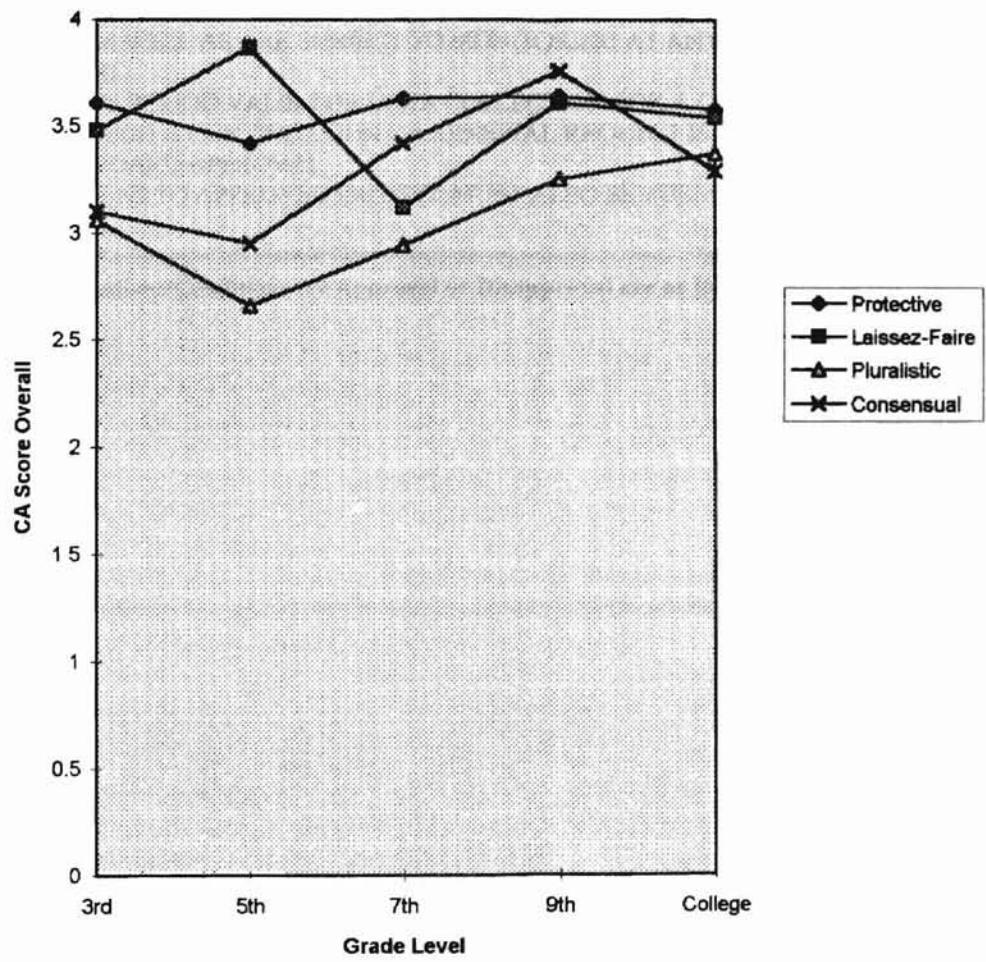
Table 1

Mean CA Scores Across Family Communication Patterns

RFCP	Coefficients			Mean	Standard Deviation	N
	H1	H2	H3			
Pluralistic	3	2	0	3.17	.77	61
Consensual	-1	2	0	3.40	.67	46
Laissez-Faire	-1	-1	+1	3.60	.65	70
Protective	-1	-1	-1	3.52	.62	51

FIGURE 1

Figure 1



OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 09-24-97

IRB#: AS-98-009

Proposal Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Principal Investigator(s): David C. Schrader, Terrisa D. Elwood

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited (Special Population)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

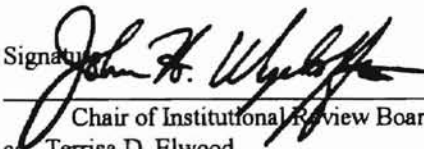
ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature


Chair of Institutional Review Board
cc. Terrisa D. Elwood

Date: October 7, 1997

VITA

Terrisa D. Elwood

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS
ON COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION LEVELS

Major Field: Speech Communication

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