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Beyond Tongue-Tied: Examining Communication Apprehension

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Beyond Tongue-Tied: Examining Communication Apprehension

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August 24, 2021

Abstract

From jobs to relationships, public speaking to internal thoughts, communication is a foundation of society and development. Though communication comes so naturally to so many, many others struggle just to get a single word out. This study takes a look into the fear or anxiety of communication that people face and how that fear can impact their lives.

Communication apprehension (CA) is the fear and anxiety surrounding communication. We will explore how communication apprehension can drastically affect a person's life on all fronts by examining CA history, CA methods of research, types of CA, and more. Many people, virtually everyone, have experienced communication apprehension and may not even know it. The goal of this project is to raise awareness for those who may have experienced/still experience fear or anxiety around communicating as well as offer ways to cope with these intrusive feelings.

Acknowledgments

Throughout my time at Murray State University, I have had so many people in my corner constantly uplifting and cheering me on.

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Marla Poyner, for your constant encouragement and guidance throughout the completion of my Bachelor of Integrated Studies degree. I honestly could not have successfully navigated this program without you.

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Finally, to my husband, Dylan: I give to you my *deepest* gratitude. You have been there for me every step of the way. From the crazy idea of finishing my degree to writing this paper during my final semester. Whenever I felt like throwing myself into the Mississippi River because my brain was turning to mush, you were there to keep me sane. I thank you endlessly. I love you.

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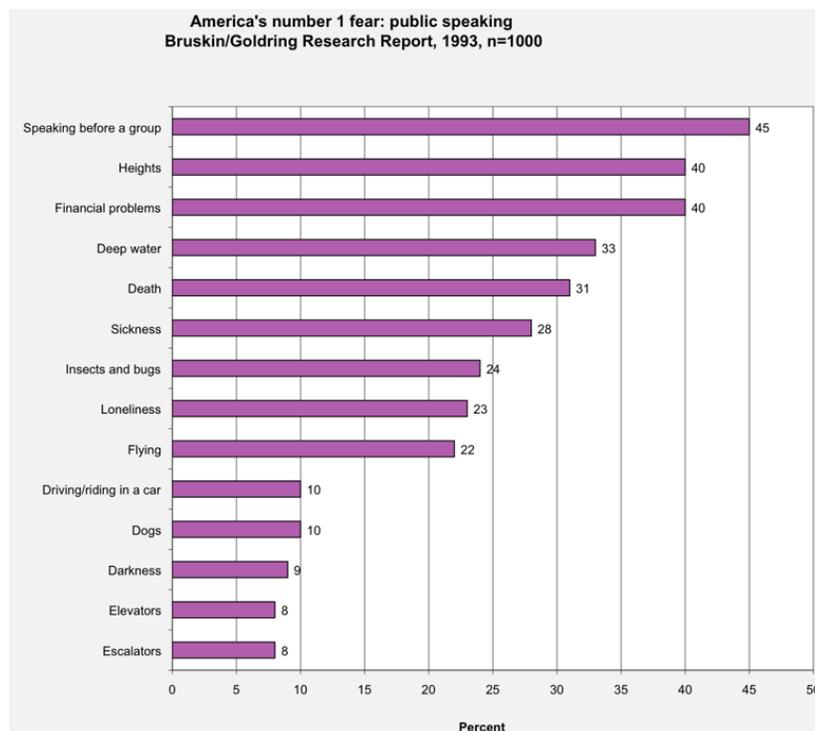
Introduction

Communication is the cornerstone of humanity. Without it, nothing that we know today would exist. When you think of communication, the first channel that may come to mind is verbal. However, the methods and channels of expressing one's ideas/feelings/etc. are not limited to actual verbal speech. From ancient cave drawings and written scrolls to social media, sign language, and giant billboards plastered alongside highways, it is apparent that communication is more than verbal. So, what is it? V. Richmond, J. Wrench, and J. McCroskey wrote the book *Scared Speechless: Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, & Effectiveness* in 2018, and within the first chapter, the authors defined human communication. Richmond et al stated that "Human communication is the process by which a person (or persons) stimulates meaning in the mind of another person (or persons) through the use of verbal and/or nonverbal messages." Communication can transcend language and cultural barriers through alternate portrayals of conveying information. These portrayals can be as simple as a facial expression or a hand gesture. Richmond et al suggested that 63% or more of communication is through nonverbal means. (Richmond et al, 2018, pg. 2, 17)

Everything that we do as humans is to communicate with others and ourselves. Without any form of communication, the world simply would not function. Try to envision it, a world without the ability to communicate. A life with no thoughts to be able to talk to yourself, no waving to say hello to others far away, no texting to check on your family across the world. It's impossible to even begin to imagine, especially in this era. Modern society relies so heavily on communication, primarily phone and online, for all of its careers, businesses, households, news, and personal relationships. With social media and continuous technological advancements, it is

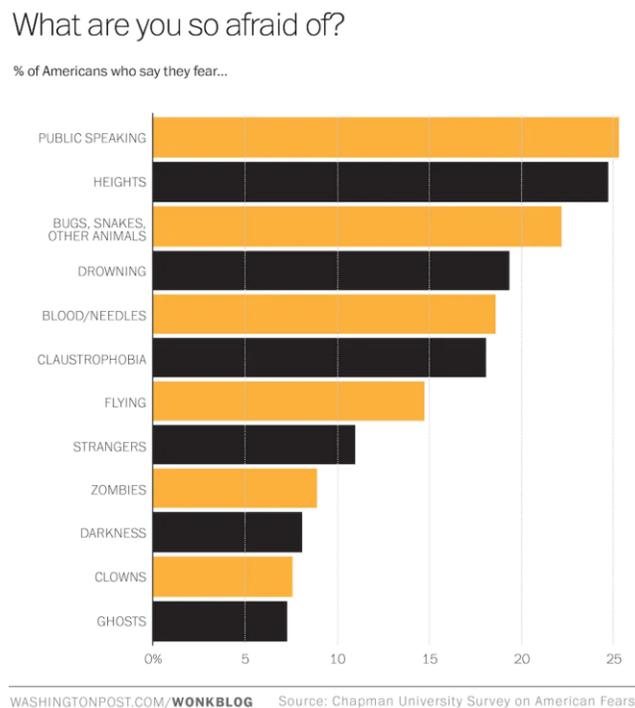
easier to communicate with people than ever before. It is as fast as the click of a button and is so simple that a toddler can do it with minimal help from an adult.

In a world that relies so heavily on constant and rapid communication, what happens to those who are afraid of communicating? Sometimes with communication, fear and anxiety can closely follow for many people. These feelings of fear and anxiety are only heightened by the pressure that the world puts on constant and rapid communication. Garber wrote the online article *America's number One FEAR: Public speaking - that 1993 Bruskin-Goldring survey* in 2011. Garber mentions research done by Bruskin/Goldring in 1993 that polled the top fourteen fears of North American adults. This study was done close to thirty years ago and yet the findings are still relevant to research today. The results of this survey showed many common fears like bugs, deep water, heights, and sickness. However, the number one reported fear was speaking in front of a group. The table below (Figure 1*) shows the total results recorded.



*Figure 1. (Garber 2011)

These findings are very interesting for communication research because it shows just how daunting communication felt for a majority of people in 1993. Those statistics haven't changed much since then - with the omission of COVID & COVID-related fears that peaked in 2020. A more recent article written in 2014 by Ingraham, *America's top fears: Public speaking, heights and bugs*, Chapman University conducted their yearly survey of Americans to find out their top fears. Chapman University's findings can be seen below as well (Figure 2*). Their results were still similar to those that were found by Bruskin/Goldring in 1993. Speaking is a task that many people do multiple times a day but when that seemingly simple task is turned into something a bit more formal, like speaking in front of a group, this can cause large amounts of stress for many people. (Garber, 2011) (Ingraham, 2014)



*Figure 2. (Ingraham 2014)

Even over the last thirty years since the Bruskin/Goldring survey, the shift in global communication is so recognizable yet the fears of many Americans have stayed consistent. Even though communication is easier to access than ever, that doesn't mean that it's easier for a person to communicate. The fear and anxiety that can be associated with it still exist. Where once international calling cards were bought from stores to talk to someone across the globe, now there's an app on your phone for that and it takes about five minutes from installation to usage. Instead of writing letters to loved ones or old pals, you can just send them a text, an email, or a Facebook message at any time of day and anywhere there is cell service. For people who generally avoid communication, these advancements have only made it harder for them to adapt.

When people are put into these stressful communication situations how do they overcome their fears? How do their fear and anxiety affect the way that they go about their day-to-day life? Some people suffer from speech issues or cultural barriers, while others are just flat-out afraid. While speaking in front of a crowd is easy for one person, for another it can be totally and completely debilitating.

There are also trait, contextual, audience-based, and situational aspects to communication apprehension that will be examined later in this paper. These examples will show that CA may not be as foreign of a concept as people think. It is important to note that communication is a skill that some people are just better at than others but like all skills, the ability to communicate can be improved with proper practice and honestly, confidence. Those two things are easier said than done. This project will take a closer look at what it means to be fearful or anxious about communicating; specifically, what it means to experience communication apprehension, also referred to as CA, how it can affect all parts of a person's life, and how a person may be able to work through it.

A Condensed History of Communication

How people communicate and how people can communicate efficiently are things that communication scholars have studied since ancient times. There is no way to pinpoint the exact moment when topics involving communication and human studies became of interest to early scholars. Communication plays a vital role in human affairs with some of the earliest written studies about the relationship between the two can be dated back to Ancient Greece, according to Encyclopedia.com (n.d.). This site goes on to talk about famous literary figures like Aristotle and Plato. Their contribution to preliminary studies of communication was groundbreaking at the time - “preliminary” being loosely used as there is no definitive date or evidence of in-depth communication-related research before their studies. (Encyclopedia.com n.d.)

It is safe to assume that there was research done before Aristotle and Plato’s, but that research is not documented or has not been discovered yet. These two were early cultivators of communication theory, as well as very influential in the communication and literature space. Though Aristotle and Plato did not work together in their research, their two perspectives have been very useful for communication development and studies. Aristotle and Plato individually conducted research experiments regarding the communication process as a whole to understand the way that people give and receive information. Their findings have helped to shape the way that communication is taught and thought of today.

While the study of communication has developed into a broad spectrum with a wide range of topics, over the last century there has been a significant increase in research regarding communication. Constant developments in technology, specifically in media; and climbing

interest in how those advancements have impacted the world's way of transmitting and receiving information have led to an influx in communication-related exploration.

According to Encyclopedia.com (n.d.), the evolution of media has led to more intrigue regarding the way that communication can and has impacted human affairs. The shift from written communication to radio/TV to digital media has been rapid in development, especially over the last century. This evolution has piqued the interest of researchers and led them to pursue more studies into communication and its effects on people. One branch of communication that has been discovered throughout these in-depth studies is communication apprehension (CA.) Many communication experts and scholars have looked into what drives a person's fear or anxiety when communicating but until 1970, they did not have an actual term for it.

(Encyclopedia.com n.d.)

Communication apprehension was defined by James C. McCroskey nearly fifty years ago. The original definition has been tweaked a few times throughout McCroskey's groundbreaking research, as well as with the help of other influential communication scholars. As McCroskey dug further into CA research, he decided to revise the original definition to accommodate a broader spectrum. According to McCroskey in *The communication apprehension perspective*, written in 1984 and published in *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication*, he chose to modify his original 1970 definition of CA, which was "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication." In 1984 he changed the definition to "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." This revised definition is more inclusive to all forms of communication, implying current and potential anxiety-inducing communicative situations also.

McCroskey not only defined Communication apprehension but he was the pioneer in research involving it. His mission of CA advocacy and awareness spanned decades. (McCroskey, 1984)

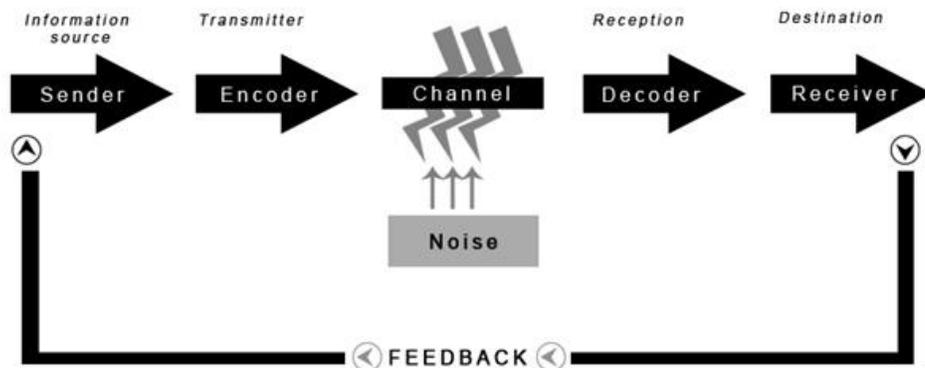
The Human Communication Process

Before we dive into communication apprehension, we must first understand the human communication process itself. According to Richmond et al (2018), the human communication process is made of seven key parts. The parts are as follows:

- Source: the person (or persons) from which the message originates. The source usually: chooses the meaning of the message, encodes the message so that it can be understood by the receiver, and then sends the message.
- Message: any verbal or nonverbal action or words that can bring forth meaning with the receiver. Regardless of what the source meant when they sent the message, it is up to the interpretation of the receiver to decipher the meaning.
- Channel: how the message is transmitted to the receiver from the source. This can mean through sound waves, light waves, smell or even touch. In human communication, the three major channels are verbal, nonverbal, and mediated. Mediated meaning through another form of communication like newspapers, social media, the news, etc. Sometimes there is noise in the channel of communication, which can disrupt the communication process.
- Receiver: the person or persons who receive the message. The receiver has three purposes in communication. They are to: receive the message, decode the message, and respond to the message.

- Encoding: the process of translating an idea into a message that can be understood by the receiver. This process includes three parts: making the message, adapting the message to fit the mind of the receiver, and transmitting the message.
- Decoding: the way that the receiver interprets the encoded message from the source. This is a four-part process consisting of receiving the message, determining (interpreting) the meaning of the message, evaluating the message, and forming a response to the message.
- Feedback: the receiver's message back to the source. This ends and opens the door to continue the loop of the communication process. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 4, 8-11)

According to Richmond et al, one of the first models of human communication was made by Shannon and Weaver, known as the Shannon-Weaver model, which can be seen below in figure 3*. Though there are alternate models of human communication made by others, the Shannon-Weaver model remains to be consistently used throughout communication research.



SHANNON-WEAVER'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

**Figure 3 - Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication*

(communicationtheory.org, 2004)

For this model to work, there must be actual communication on both sides, verbally or nonverbally. This is where communication apprehension comes into play. The fear and anxiety

that many feels surrounding any form of communication can make it hard for this process to work. Whether the source or the receiver or both, suffer from CA makes a huge difference in the reliability and efficiency of the human communication process.

Communication Misconceptions

Communication researchers Richmond et al (2018) analyze common misconceptions surrounding communication in their book *Scared speechless: Communication apprehension, avoidance, & effectiveness*. These misconceptions are ideas that many people believe but are simply not true. Richmond et al suggest that these misconceptions are led to miscommunications and ineffective communication when believed. The authors also believe that misconceptions can create a device when an individual is trying to learn about communication. The ten misconceptions that Richmond et al focus on are:

1. “Meanings are in the Words Themselves”: the authors state that receivers of communication are left to interpret meaning from a source’s message. Receivers sometimes take the words too literally or in the wrong context. Richmond et al state that “language is symbolic” and it is up to the receiver to give a word meaning. Meaning can change across cultures, friend groups, situations, etc., so that must be considered when processing communication.
2. “Interpersonal Communication is the Same as Intimate Communication”: Richmond et al suggest that people in our culture tend to believe that intimate and interpersonal communication are the same. However, the authors state that interpersonal communication is the common form of communication used in our culture. An example of this could be speaking to a clerk at the grocery store, a coworker, or a neighbor in

passing. Intimate communication on the other hand is a close, personal, private conversation, it also does not have to be held with someone a person is “intimate” with, according to Richmond et al.

3. “Communication is a Solely Verbal Process”: as previously stated, communication is not only verbal. This idea is reiterated by Richmond et al. The authors believe that communication is dual-natured, consisting of verbal and nonverbal communication. Both forms of communication are useful for encoding and decoding a message in the communication process.
4. “Telling is Communicating”: Richmond et al suggest that simply telling a person something is not the same as communicating. Communication must be adapted to fit the receiver and the source must then give feedback upon response. People who believe that telling is communicating discard the importance of the receiver in the communication process, according to the authors. They lastly state that “telling is only part of communicating,” rather than communicating itself.
5. “Communication will Solve All Our Problems”: the authors state that many people believe that communicating will resolve every conflict in the world, but that’s not the case. Sometimes, no communication is the most effective message, while other times it can be detrimental. The same goes for too much communication, according to Richmond et al. The authors share that communication should be seen as a catalyst that can help to solve problems or create them.
6. “Communication is Always A Good Thing”: Richmond et al state that a vast majority of the general public would say that communication is always a good thing. However, the authors offer the fact that communication can sometimes induce conflict. Communication

is meant to be a tool and with any tool, has the potential to be misused, according to Richmond et al

7. “The More Communication, the Better”: the authors state that the quantity of communication is not as important as the quality, contrary to popular belief. Our culture tends to put talkative people at the forefront of competence even when what they are saying is not of quality, according to Richmond et al.
8. “Communication Can Break Down”: this misconception is often used as an excuse for poor or ineffective communication, according to Richmond et al. Communication itself is not something that can break down like a computer would, therefore it cannot be blamed for the inefficiency of the sender or receiver in the communication process.
9. “Communication is a Natural Human Ability”: Richmond et al state that no one is a natural-born communicator. Everyone’s skills are learned and honed based on our culture and environment. The authors suggest that most people are born with the ability to learn communication but becoming an effective communicator is up to the individual.
10. Lastly, “Communication Competence Equals Communication Effectiveness”: the authors believe that just because a person is knowledgeable in an area does not mean they are effective communicators. The example given of this is a professor who knows their subject inside and out but bores his students every class when teaching. Richmond et al state that being competent and being a good communicator is not always parallel. It takes skill to be a good communicator, not just knowledge. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 14-21)

Acknowledging the many common misconceptions surrounding communication allows for an open mind when it comes to learning about communication. An open mind will allow for a

better understanding of all areas of communication, especially communication apprehension. (Richmond et al 2018)

The Father of Communication Apprehension

As previously mentioned, James C. McCroskey was the person who coined the term “communication apprehension” and gave it a solid definition. That definition, which was revised, is still used today by researchers when studying CA. McCroskey has often been regarded as the “Father of Communication Apprehension” by Richmond et al (2018), along with other scholars due to his lifelong commitment to CA research and teachings. Though he led and contributed to hundreds of works throughout the topic of communication, one of his primary focuses was on further understanding communication apprehension and the effects that it can have on people. As well as finding coping mechanisms for those who are afflicted with those feelings of fear and anxiety. This research was something that McCroskey was very passionate about. (Richmond et al, 2018)

According to McCroskey’s autobiographical website, jamesmccroskey.com (2007), McCroskey dedicated his adult professional life to “programmatic research.” This devotion cannot go unnoticed because, at the last update of his site in 2007, he had published over two hundred and twenty articles, fifty books/revisions, and over thirty instructional books relating to communication. Somewhere between all of his writing, he was also frequently asked to speak at conventions, to appear in interviews, to edit other scholars’ works, and was an instructor at various schools from 1957-1997. McCroskey wore many hats throughout his career. Beyond his career, McCroskey’s personal life was saturated with communication on all fronts, even at home. His wife, Virginia P. Richmond, is also a communication scholar who often wrote alongside

McCroskey. Some of their individual and collaborative works are cited throughout this project. Also, one of his daughters, Lynda L. McCroskey, is a professor of Communication Studies. (jamesmccroskey.com/briefbio.htm, 2007)

Though McCroskey contributed to many topics in communication, communication apprehension and its research were a bit closer to his heart. I had the chance to learn about communication apprehension through a special topics COM course at Murray State during the summer of 2020. My professor was Dr. Tillson. She is well versed in CA and communication studies in general. She had the opportunity to work under McCroskey while in college doing communication research at West Virginia State University. She was able to learn from one of the top experts in her respective field and was able to hear personal stories from McCroskey. During Dr. Tillson's time there, McCroskey shared with her the main reason why he became interested in research regarding a person's fear and their ability to communicate. When I was initiating communication apprehension research for this project, I contacted Dr. Tillson for sources and she shared that story with me. Now I will pass it on to you!

While McCroskey was teaching an undergrad public speaking course, he had one student who was very anxious and afraid of speaking in front of their class. This wasn't anything new to McCroskey, who had been a communications professor for a couple of years before this particular semester. It was common for students to be somewhat nervous about public speaking. Most college students do have some sort of general nervousness when it comes to the public speaking course that is required at most colleges. However, this student was different. This student was debilitated with fear when they thought about speaking in front of the class. The student reached out to McCroskey and told him their concerns. However, McCroskey told them that omitting a public speaking assignment in a public speaking course was not an option for any

student. It would defeat the purpose of the class itself. The student then decided to attempt to take their own life.

While the student did not succeed in their attempt, this event completely opened McCroskey's eyes to how serious and paralyzing a person's fear/anxiety of communication can be. As someone who studied communication his entire adult life and was generally comfortable at communicating, it was compelling to McCroskey that a person could be so fearful of communicating that they would attempt suicide to avoid it. How could someone become so afraid - to the point of taking their own life?

McCroskey's Methodology

James McCroskey was heavily involved in all things about communication. His research has spanned over multiple decades with over three hundred different forms of media regarding his findings. According to McCroskey in Chapter One of *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication* (1984), the original concept of communication apprehension was constructed in 1970. Though the idea of CA has undergone a few shifts since its original publication, the core remains the same: the anxiety/fear associated with communicating. This may seem like a generalization but McCroskey and other scholars have found that communication apprehension can present itself in many different ways and can affect each person differently.

In preliminary research of CA, McCroskey focused on the oral aspect of communication. Situations like stage fright and reticence, or shyness, were the main focal points during this time. According to McCroskey (1984) in the same chapter cited in the paragraph above, Daly & Miller wrote about anxiety in writing in 1975. It was not specifically characterized as communication

apprehension at the time because the term did not exist until later that year when McCroskey formulated it. To measure one's anxiety in writing, Daly & Miller devised the Written Apprehension Test (WAT). This test led to the development of other similar tests to survey apprehension in other areas. These surveys inspired McCroskey to implement his form of testing for more broad apprehension. (McCroskey, 1984)

As shown in the *Communication Research Measures* section of McCroskey's autobiographical website, jamesmccroskey.com, McCroskey has credited on thirty-four different communications-related surveys, and of those, fifteen are used to measure fear, apprehension, flexibility, among other qualities, in one's ability to communicate. These fifteen questionnaires have been fundamental to communication apprehension research and have been used in a wide variety of ways over the last five decades with multiple of the surveys popping up in much of the research that I have found regarding CA. Each measurement sheds light on a different part of communication apprehension and they are listed with a brief description below. Though a lot of the questions are similar, the key differences lie in the way that the question or statement is phrased. The replacement of one word changes the survey completely. I have included actual photos of the questions/statements used on the most commonly used measurement techniques; these photos are screenshots from the James McCroskey website. The McCroskey CA related methods are as follows:

- Touch Apprehension Scale: This survey was developed in 2004 by McCroskey and his wife, V.P. Richmond, and published in their book *Nonverbal behavior in interpersonal relations, 5th edition*. This scale works to measure a person's unease when it comes to physical touch. According to McCroskey's introduction before the scale, touch apprehension is something that can vary from culture to culture, as well as from

environment to environment. It has been found that in American Culture, touch is one of the most used nonverbal communication habits. While in other cultures, touch may be strictly avoided or even considered a negative offense. Being able to know and understand these differences are crucial to international and intercultural communication, especially in a business space. This report works to understand these differences and to note when an individual feels the most touch avoidant.

- Self Report of Immediacy Behaviors (SRIB): This report is the shortened version of the Nonverbal Immediacy Scale and was developed in 1998 by McCroskey and V.P. Richmond and published in their book *Nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships, 3rd edition*. The difference between the SRIB and its original report is that it allows for self-reporting, which is ultimately easier when gathering data because it allows for less time to be spent during one-on-one surveying. However, researchers have also found that the long-form, which is one-on-one surveying, has been more valid and reliable than this short form. Immediacy Behaviors are communications that portray likeness towards another person or persons. This report works to understand an individual's behaviors when communicating with others and how other people's communication behaviors affect an individual.
- SocioCommunication Orientation Scale (SCO): This scale was originally made in 1990 by McCroskey and V. P. Richmond and published in *Psychological Reports, 67*, pages 449-450, section "Reliability and separation of factors on the assertiveness-responsiveness scale." Then revised in 1996 by the pair and published in their book *Fundamentals of human communication: An interpersonal perspective*. This questionnaire operates to examine a person's assertiveness and responsiveness in

communication by having a person report their personality traits. As found with most “Self Report” surveys, the validity of these surveys can sway based on how honest a person is when completing a questionnaire. The results of this help determine a person’s assertiveness and responsiveness scores to understand their cognitive flexibility when communicating.

- Person Report of Interethnic Communication Apprehension (PRECA): This survey was created in 1997 by McCroskey and J.W. Neuliep and published in *Communication Research Reports*, 14, pages 385-398, section “The development of intercultural and interethnic communication apprehension scale, in hopes to measure how a person addresses their communication apprehension in an interethnic context. The questions included in this survey all pertain to an individual's comfort level when put into communicative situations with different ethnic/racial groups, as seen in figure 4*. This report is commonly used throughout CA research.

- _____ 1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different ethnic/racial groups.
- _____ 2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different ethnic/racial groups.
- _____ 3. I like to get involved in group discussion with others who are from different ethnic/racial groups.
- _____ 4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different ethnic/racial groups makes me tense and nervous.
- _____ 5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different ethnic/racial groups.
- _____ 6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different ethnic/racial group, I get nervous.
- _____ 7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different ethnic/racial group.
- _____ 8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with a person from a different ethnic/racial group.
- _____ 9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different ethnic/racial group.
- _____ 10. While conversing with a person from a different ethnic/racial group, I feel very relaxed.
- _____ 11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different ethnic/racial group.
- _____ 12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different ethnic/racial groups with confidence.
- _____ 13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from other ethnic/racial groups.
- _____ 14. Communicating with people from different ethnic/racial groups makes me feel uncomfortable.

*Figure 4 (jamesmccroskey.com/measures/ 2007)

- Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA): This form was created by McCroskey and J.W. Neulip in 1997 and published in *Communication Research Reports*, 14, pages 385-398, section “The development of intercultural and interethnic communication apprehension scale. The form itself is very similar to the PRECA listed above. The only difference is that the PRICA examines intercultural CA rather than interethnic. Most of the questions are the same but with different verbiage, which is directed towards intercultural communication, as seen in figure 5*. This form has been mentioned multiple times throughout my research.

_____ 1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.

_____ 2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 3. I like to get involved in group discussion with others who are from different cultures.

_____ 4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous.

_____ 5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.

_____ 6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I get nervous.

_____ 7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.

_____ 8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with person from a different culture.

_____ 9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.

_____ 10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.

_____ 11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.

_____ 12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.

_____ 13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me fee uncomfortable.

*Figure 5 (jamesmccroskey.com/measures/ 2007)

- Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24): Developed in 1982 by McCroskey and published in *An introduction to rhetorical communication, 4th edition*, the PRCA-24 allows an individual to self-report their ease or fear when communicating in different situations. There were earlier versions of this report (PRCA, PRCA10, PRCA-24B, etc.) but it was found that the PRCA-24 did the best job of evaluating a person's overall communication apprehension levels due to its ability to evaluate a person in multiple areas. The statements that must be answered for this can be noted in figure 6*. This survey scores an individual in four crucial areas of communication: group discussion, interpersonal, meetings, and public speaking. Each of these scores are added together to obtain a total PRCA-24 score and to determine an individual's general CA in most situations. The usage of this particular report has been cited in multiple journals, articles, and books from my source materials for this project. I have found this method used the most throughout my research,

_____ 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 a meeting.

_____ 8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.

_____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.

_____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.

_____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.

_____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.

_____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, 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. While conversing with a new acquaintance, 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 very tense and rigid 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 face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

_____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

*Figure 6 (jamesmccroskey.com/measures/ 2007)

- Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA): This report was created in 1970 by McCroskey and published in *Speech Monographs*, 37, pages 269-277, section “Measures of communication bound anxiety.” The PRPSA works to determine an individual’s communication apprehension, specifically surrounding public speaking. This report is not commonly used anymore because it was replaced by the previously mentioned PRCA-24. McCroskey found that the PRPSA is a good way to determine public speaking anxiety but, “it is an inadequate measure of the broader communication apprehension construct.” This scale, as seen below in figure 7*, is the first one that McCroskey developed in his communication apprehension work, which is why it was heavily focused on public speaking.

- _____ 1. While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.
- _____ 2. I feel tense when I see the words “speech” and “public speech” on a course outline when studying.
- _____ 3. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- _____ 4. Right after giving a speech I feel that I have had a pleasant experience.
- _____ 5. I get anxious when I think about a speech coming up.
- _____ 6. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- _____ 7. Although I am nervous just before starting a speech, I soon settle down after starting and feel calm and comfortable.
- _____ 8. I look forward to giving a speech.
- _____ 9. When the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class, I can feel myself getting tense.
- _____ 10. My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.
- _____ 11. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- _____ 12. I enjoy preparing for a speech.
- _____ 13. I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say.
- _____ 14. I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic that I don’t know.
- _____ 15. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- _____ 16. I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while giving a speech.
- _____ 17. My mind is clear when giving a speech.
- _____ 18. I do not dread giving a speech.
- _____ 19. I perspire just before starting a speech.
- _____ 20. My heart beats very fast just as I start a speech.
- _____ 21. I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the room just before my speech starts.
- _____ 22. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
- _____ 23. Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me very tense and anxious.
- _____ 24. While giving a speech, I know I can control my feelings of tension and stress.
- _____ 25. I breathe faster just before starting a speech.
- _____ 26. I feel comfortable and relaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.
- _____ 27. I do poorer on speeches because I am anxious.
- _____ 28. I feel anxious when the teacher announces the date of a speaking assignment.
- _____ 29. When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.
- _____ 30. During an important speech I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me.
- _____ 31. I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.
- _____ 32. My heart beats very fast while I present a speech.
- _____ 33. I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.
- _____ 34. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

*Figure 7 (jamesmccroskey.com/measures/2007)

- Willingness to Communicate (WTC): This questionnaire was originally developed in 1987 by McCroskey and V.P. Richmond and published in *Personality and interpersonal communication*, pages 119-131. It was later revised by McCroskey in 1992 and published in *Communication Quarterly*, 40, pages 16-25, section “Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale.” This survey works to determine a person’s most basic alignments towards communication and their willingness to initiate communication, as seen in the statements listed in figure 8*. The results from certain answers create context-type sub-scores in the categories of group discussion, meetings, interpersonal, and public speaking. They also create receiver-type sub-scores in the areas of strangers, acquaintances, and friends. In the end, the sum of the scores will compute a total WTC score. Similar to the PRCA-24, this WTC questionnaire has been cited in multiple works that I have researched.

_____ 1. Talk with a service station attendant.
_____ 2. Talk with a physician.
_____ 3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
_____ 4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
_____ 5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.
_____ 6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
_____ 7. Talk with a police officer.
_____ 8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
_____ 9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
_____ 10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
_____ 11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
_____ 12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
_____ 13. Talk with a secretary.
_____ 14. Present a talk to a group of friends.
_____ 15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
_____ 16. Talk with a garbage collector.
_____ 17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
_____ 18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend).
_____ 19. Talk in a small group of friends.
_____ 20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

*Figure 8 (jamescmccroskey.com/measures/ 2007)

- Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Self Report (NIS-S): Created in 2003 by McCroskey, V.P. Richmond, and A.D. Johnson and published in *Communication Quarterly*, 51, pages 502-515, section “Development of the Nonverbal Immediacy Scale (NIS): Measures of the self-and other-perceived nonverbal immediacy,” NIS-S measures nonverbal immediacy in situations. Results from this report have yielded significant statistical and social differences between male and female respondents. Though these results have not been fully determined, reports show that females are often more nonverbally immediate than males and that females think that they should be more immediate than males think they should be.
- SocioCommunicative Style Scale (SCS): This scale was developed by McCroskey and V.P. Richmond in 1990, published in *Psychological Reports*, 67, pages 449-450, section “Reliability and separation of factors on the assertiveness-responsiveness scale.” Then revised by the pair in 1996 in their book *Fundamentals of human communication: An interpersonal perspective*. This scale is comparable to the SSO because it uses pretty much the same outline. The difference in the SCS is that this scale allows an individual to report their perception of another communicator’s assertiveness and responsiveness behaviors. While most of the surveys that have been mentioned pertain to a person’s feelings and behaviors, this scale allows for a person to observe another communicator and rate them in their cognitive flexibility.
- Introversion Scale: Developed by McCroskey in the 1970s, this measurement references items recommended by J. H. Eysenck’s *Readings in extraversion-introversion* volumes I & II (1970 & 1971). This scale uses questions that are specifically directed towards apprehension in communication. Though it does measure one’s CA, it also works to

measure a person's introversion separately. McCroskey found that while introversion and CA may go hand in hand, they are not absolute parallels - it differs from person to person. McCroskey has found that the results from the Introversion Scale correlate with results from his PRCA-24 report. The scale offers a score range from extraverted (low introversion) to highly introverted.

- Shyness Scale (SS): This self-report was created by McCroskey & V. P. Richmond in 1982 in the *Central States Speech Journal*, 33, pages 458-468, section "Communication apprehension and shyness: Conceptual and operational distinctions." This scale may also be referred to as the McCroskey Shyness Scale. This measurement works to separate psychological shyness from communication apprehension. McCroskey found that shyness and CA are two separate constructs and therefore should not be confused for each other, which is often done in the field of Psychology and with Psychology specific scales. McCroskey also noted that while Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is centered around initiating communication, shyness relates to reduced talking during communication. Researchers have also found that this scale has very high validity due to its distinct measurement statements and scoring.
- Fear of Physician (FOP): This survey was developed by McCroskey, V.P. Virginia, S. R. Smith, and A.M. Heisel in 1998, originally published *Communication Research Reports*, 15, pages 344-353, in their section "The impact of communication and fear of talking with a physician and perceived medical outcomes." The FOP scale is an extension of an anxiety measurement scale by Spielberger in 1966. Their scale works to measure how fearful or anxious a person is when communicating with their physician. It was believed by McCroskey, V.P. Virginia, S. R. Smith, and A.M. Heisel that the way a person

communicates with their physician plays a large part in the way that the physician communicates back with them.

- Talkaholic Scale: This scale was developed in 1993 by McCroskey and V.P. Richmond and published in *Communication Research Reports*, 11, pages 39-52, section “Identifying compulsive communicators: The talkaholic scale.” It was then revised in 1995 by the pair and published in *Communication Quarterly*, 43, pages 39-52, section “Correlates of compulsive communication: Quantitative and qualitative characteristics.” The measurement works to compulsive communication. This is when a person is highly compelled to talk and has difficulty not talking when around others, also referred to as “talkaholics” or someone who “talks too much.” Contrary to the negative description that being a “talkaholic” implies, researchers have found that the more a person talks, the more positively they are seen by others. Researchers noted that compulsive communicators may be seen as competent, as a leader, and generally perceived in a positive light by the receivers of their communication.
- Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC): This measurement was created in 1988 by McCroskey and L.L. McCroskey in 1988 and published in *Communication Research Reports*, 5, pages 108-113, section “Self-report as an approach to measuring communication competence.” This scale works to obtain information about self-perceived communication competence, not actual communication competence. This questionnaire allows the subject to define what communication competence is to them and rate how well they believe they are at communicating. Researchers have found that the actual measurement of a person’s communication competence may be related to self-perceived communication competence, it is not the same thing and should not be treated

as such. This scale measures a person's perceived competence in seven different categories: public, meeting, group, dyad, stranger, acquaintance, and friend. These sub scores are then added together in certain to gather a person's SPCC scale score.

(jamesmccroskey.com/measures/, 2007)

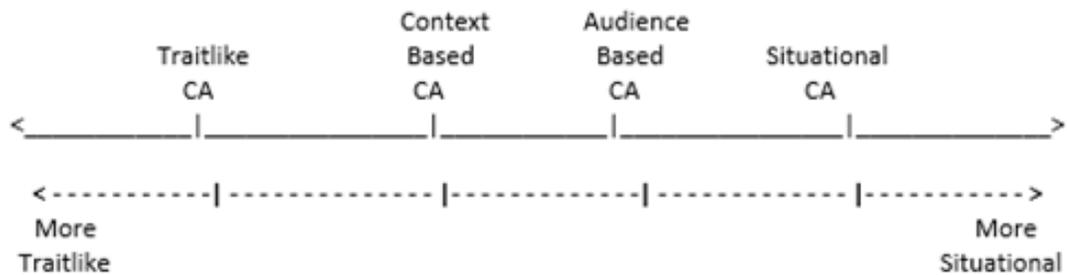
These fifteen measurements have been some of the most essential ways for researchers to study and gather information regarding communication and communication apprehension. Many of them are used multiple times throughout the materials I have found regarding communication apprehension, with the most notable measurements being previously mentioned. McCroskey's website has been a substantial help in CA research by listing all of his works, as well as the methodologies for his findings.

Types of Communication Apprehension

As with most areas of any field, communication apprehension is not a one size fits all approach. There are layers to CA. Each individual is different when it comes to their fear or anxiety around communicating. Some people may only feel anxious when speaking in a crowd or when they go to the grocery store. Others may constantly feel some level of fear or anxiety. This is because communication apprehension researchers have found that CA is a spectrum. On this spectrum, "20% of the population falls in each extreme category," according to Richmond et al (2018). Most of this section will be based on Richmond et al's book, previously cited. Richmond et al stated that communication apprehension is known as a four-point continuum, "starting at one end of the continuum and moving to the other four points," as seen below with figure 9*. The four points are:

1. Communication apprehension as a trait (traitlike CA);

2. Communication apprehension in a generalized context (context-based CA);
3. Communication apprehension with a given audience across situations (audience-based CA); and
4. Communication apprehension with a given individual or group in a given situation (situational CA). (Richmond et al 2018, page 45)



**Figure 9 (Richmond et al 2018, page 45)*

Traitlike Communication Apprehension

At the left end of the continuum is traitlike communication apprehension. The term “trait” in this instance may lead some people to believe that communication apprehension is something that cannot be changed, like genetic traits. However, CA does not fall under the same strict distinction that a person’s actual traits (eye color, height, etc.) do. The use of the word trait in this instance is not as strict as genetics. As explained by Richmond et al (2018) in *Scared Speechless: Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, & Effectiveness*, a person’s behavior concerning communication apprehension is considered to be “traitlike.” In the same way, that personality traits can vary over time, so can one’s feelings of communication apprehension - with long-term efforts from the individual or treatment. Richmond et al state, “traitlike CA is viewed as a relatively enduring personality-type orientation given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts.”

Research suggests that this form of CA is highly dependent on an individual's childhood, according to Richmond et al. For kids who already incline communication apprehension, their environment plays a major role in their communicative comfortability and development. Inconsistent reinforcement of communication from authority figures can lead to mixed feelings about communication. An example of inconsistent reinforcement given by Richmond et al states, “little Johnny is allowed to talk during the TV news one night at the dinner table, the next night he is punished for it, two nights later he is allowed to talk again.” This leaves a child unable to predict the outcome of their communication and leads them to avoid communication. This learned behavior can progress into teen and adult years, leaving a person with traitlike communication apprehension.

Richmond et al suggest that most of the early research in communication apprehension was focused solely on traitlike CA in adults, while more recent studies have explored younger ages. They came to this conclusion because, throughout the usage of multiple surveys and methods (some listed above), the participants' answers remained similar over an extended period. The participants who experience traitlike communication apprehension seemed to have a “general predisposition, a traitlike personality-orientation.” This predisposition led researchers to believe that this version of communication apprehension has very little expectations to change over time without any sort of mediation. Richmond et al also suggest that McCroskey’s Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) is the most effective way to measure traitlike CA.

Overall, individuals who have traitlike communication apprehension are less likely to change in their fear or anxiety level without the help of intervention or major individual efforts.

Traitlike CA will endure regardless of time elapsed, the receiver of communication, or the circumstance. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 45- 46, 50, 52-53)

Contextual Communication Apprehension

Moving towards the middle of the continuum is context-based communication apprehension, also known as contextual CA. Contextual CA is the feeling of apprehension that may be felt in various generalized situations. Though this type of communication apprehension is centered around feelings of fear or anxiety in certain contexts, it also means that CA may not be felt in others. According to Richmond et al (2018) in *Scared Speechless: Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, & Effectiveness*, contextual CA's most common form is, "the fear of public speaking or stage fright." The survey that is usually used to score contextual CA is the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) because the most common form of contextual CA is public speaking in some capacity. Contextual communication apprehension may be one of the most recognizable forms of communication apprehension because of its generalized context of public speaking or stage fight. According to Richmond et al, researchers have found that contextual communication apprehension is "normal" to a certain degree, especially surrounding public speaking.

Although contextual and traitlike communication apprehension has not been found to have any particular relationship, according to Richmond et al (2018), it is believed by researchers that individuals who have a high degree of traitlike CA will also experience contextual CA. This is because individuals who have traitlike communication apprehension often suffer from a generalized fear or anxiety around communicating, no matter the situation. Richmond et al continue to state that it is even believed that 80% of the population experiences contextual

communication apprehension, with over 70% of that being directed towards public speaking specifically.

Generally, regardless of the receiver or time, contextual CA corresponds with one single sort of communication. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 47-48, 50)

Audience-Based Communication Apprehension

As the continuum continues to shift towards the right, audience-based communication apprehension can be found. This type of communication apprehension is different from other types because it is very specific. Audience-based CA is directed towards a certain person or persons, according to Richmond et al (2018) in *Scared Speechless: Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, & Effectiveness*. Once again, this type of CA differs from person to person. Some may only be afraid of communicating when speaking with their boss, their parents, or anyone else in a person's life, while others are completely unphased.

According to Richmond et al, audience-based communication apprehension is not personality-based like traitlike CA. Even though this type of communication apprehension is generally enduring, it can be changed over time much easier than traitlike communication apprehension. This is because audience-based CA is, "a response to situational constraints generated by the other person or group." The situational impediment is more prominent in this type of CA, rather than personality-induced traitlike CA. However, audience-based communication apprehension has had less research done than other types so it is difficult for researchers to draw a hard line between what is not correlated and what is. Richmond et al believe that almost 95% of the population has experienced this type of communication apprehension at some point in their lives.

Comprehensively, audience-based CA is linked to the receiver or receivers of communication, despite the context of the communication or how many times a person has communicated with the receiver(s). (Richmond et al 2018, pages 48-50)

Situational Communication Apprehension

The farthest right on the CA continuum is situational communication apprehension, sometimes referred to as state communication apprehension. According to Richmond et al (2018) in *Scared Speechless: Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, & Effectiveness* situational CA is, “a transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people.” This means that situational CA is only felt in one situation - in one instance. Situational communication apprehension is not an enduring form of communication apprehension, which is why it is at the right end of the CA continuum opposite of traitlike CA. Richmond et al believed that this orientation of communication apprehension has been found to be unpredictable and inconsistent. Scenarios, where this situational CA can be found, maybe when a teacher tells an individual they suspect them of cheating on an exam, when an individual is testifying in court when someone is told they have five minutes to prepare for a presentation, or other similar examples, according to Richmond et al.

Richmond et al suggested that there are seven primary causes of situational communication apprehension: “novelty, formality, subordinate status, conspicuousness, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, and degree of attention from others.” Each of these causes can bring moderate to high levels of uncertainty, fear, and/or worry to any given person, even someone who may feel like they are not communicatively apprehensive. The wide casting net of

situational CA means that many people, if not everyone, have experienced one of these situations in the past. Richmond et al explain each of these causes a bit more in-depth:

- Novelty: When a person is put into a novel situation, they are not able to anticipate what is going to happen next. The uncertainty and unpredictability of these situations can cause a person to feel fearful, nervous, and/or anxious.
- Formality: Situations that are considered formal, can be anxiety-inducing because they stray from the norm. An individual may feel increased pressure to communicate effectively and appropriately for the event. Miscommunication could lead to embarrassment for the communicator, which can cause an increase in anxiety.
- Subordinate Status: When a person has the authority or “high status”, over someone else, an individual may feel apprehensive when communicating with that person.
- Conspicuousness: When a person feels like they have been singled out or are being noticed, they may feel like their presence is magnified and not in a good way. Anxiety levels may increase when a person feels conspicuous.
- Unfamiliarity: Feeling unfamiliar with one’s surroundings can lead to stress. The example given for this is specific towards unfamiliarity with other cultures. When an individual travels to a foreign culture, they may feel uneasy because they are not used to their surroundings. This can raise anxiety and nervousness.
- Dissimilarity: Similar to unfamiliarity, dissimilarity increases apprehension for some people. When a person feels like they have nothing in common with another, they may have more difficulty communicating with them.

- Excessive Attention: Though many people enjoy the spotlight, for others that level of attention can be frightening. The idea of being the center of attention for some individuals can be a large motivator of anxiety or fear. Much like conspicuousness, excessive attention can make a person feel singled out.

(Richmond et al 2018, page 54)

In the simplest of terms, situational communication apprehension is when an individual is put on the spot in any given singular circumstance. This is a one-time thing and is not generally found to be enduring. The fluctuation in this type of communication apprehension makes situational communication apprehension the broadest of all four points on the CA continuum. Situational communication apprehension can affect anyone, regardless of their ability or comfortability in communicating. Richmond et al state that, “virtually 100% of us experience this form of communication apprehension at one time or another.”

Finally, situational communication apprehension occurs in one specific instance with a given receiver in a certain context. It is not a consistent form of communication apprehension. Whether a person has been able to put their feelings into an exact term, like CA, they have most likely felt some level of apprehension when imposed on in a communicative setting. (Richmond et al 2018, page 50, 54-55)

Communication Apprehension Studies

There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of studies done regarding communication apprehension. Weeding through many of them and choosing the most appropriate ones to analyze was no easy task. These studies use methodologies previously mentioned for measuring communication apprehension in multiple different categories of life. From all of my research, I

have found that most studied sections of communication apprehension tend to focus on students and CA, workplace/employer CA, relationship CA, and the relationship between CA and age and sex. Each of these points of study has yielded different results due to the nature of the participants being surveyed.

Students and Communication Apprehension

College students have played a large part in communication apprehension research. This is because many CA researchers are/were professors at universities across the country, sometimes even across the globe. Access to college-aged communication students allows professors to conduct studies with their students as the primary participants. This turns out to be both beneficial for the students with the usage of hands-on and relatable learning, as well as beneficial for the professor as they can advance their own CA research all in one spot. Professors are also able to conduct repeat surveys on certain students as they progress through their respective university programs to track results over some time.

As previously stated, one college student was the reason why McCroskey began his communication apprehension research all those years ago. He wanted to find out the internal workings of CA and find ways to help students cope with these feelings. Beyond McCroskey's research, there have been hundreds of other professors/researchers who have done in-depth examinations into CA and how it can affect students since his initial study. A more recent evaluation took a closer look at communication apprehension through the lens of two hundred and sixty-three students from Indiana State University. This study has been referenced in many articles/journals since 2013 so it only made sense for me to give it some spotlight.

In Blume et al's (2013) article *Communication Apprehension: A Barrier to Students' Leadership, Adaptability, and Multicultural Appreciation*, published in *The Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Brian Blume, Timothy Baldwin, and Katherine Ryan detail their experience after surveying a large pool of junior and senior college students with McCroskey's PRCA-24 survey. The authors offered four different hypotheses, all relating to a student's ability to successfully navigate the many layers of college communication. Blume et al's hypotheses are as follows:

1. Individual levels of CA will be negatively related to leadership initiatives.
2. Individual levels of CA will be negatively related to multicultural appreciation.
3. Individual levels of CA will be negatively related to adaptability in a changing environment.
4. Individual levels of CA will be negatively related to academic performance.

(Blume et al 2013, pages 16-162)

The results of their experiment yielded pretty fair results for their hypotheses, with only one being proven incorrect. Regarding the first hypothesis, Blume et al found that they were correct in speculating that high levels of CA would negatively correlate with leadership initiative. Their research suggested that when a student has high levels of communication apprehension, they experience less desire to hold leadership positions in activities they participate in. It was also believed that they are less likely to help motivate others, coordinate groups or activities, or serve as a representative for an organization.

Similarly, with the second hypothesis, the authors were correct in presuming that a student's CA would be negatively correlated with multicultural participation. Blume et al found that a person who suffers from communication apprehension would be far less likely to

participate in multicultural events. A communication apprehensive person may also opt-out of conversations involving or about other cultures, or even choose not to be in the presence of other cultures. These levels of anxiety can negatively affect a person's openness, tolerance, and interest in diverse people, according to Blume et al.

Blume et al found that the third time's a charm because their third hypothesis was correct as well. The results of their survey showed that communication apprehension can, and does, negatively affect a student's adaptability in a changing environment. The negative correlation between the two can affect a student by making it difficult, or even impossible, for them to adjust to unfamiliar environments or sudden changes. Situations like starting college, moving, making new friends, or just being away from home are hard for any person but for someone with CA, these things can cause high levels of anxiety that may even become crippling to them.

Lastly, Blume et al found that their last hypothesis was incorrect. They found that there was no negative correlation between academic performance and communication apprehension. Blume et al originally hypothesized this because they thought that someone with CA may not participate in a class or ask questions. With the results of the survey, the authors then speculated that because communication apprehension may manifest in other ways that won't be recognized as easily as low grades. Blume et al suggested that academic performance is managed closely by multiple people so if an intervention was needed, it would be more easily accessible in comparison to other factions of a student's life. (Blume et al 2013, pages 164-168)

Another largely cited study throughout my CA research was an excerpt from Amsbary and McCroskey (n.d) in their journal *Communication Traits and Social Phobia*, published in *Human Communication*, A publication of the Pacific and Asian Communication Association. This journal does not have a date but it was published in/or after 1995 because the authors cited a

1995 article in their work. Amsbary and McCroskey wanted to survey the potential relationship between communication traits and social phobia. Their study included one hundred and eighty-seven (187) college students across various majors. Amsbary and McCroskey posed seven hypotheses, but of those only, the first was relevant to communication apprehension research:

1. The components of social phobia are positively correlated with communication apprehension.
2. The components of social phobia are negatively correlated with willingness to communicate.
3. The components of social phobia are positively correlated with behavioral shyness.
4. The components of social phobia are negatively correlated with self-perceived communication competence.
5. The components of social phobia are negatively correlated with compulsive communication.
6. The components of social phobia are negatively correlated with assertiveness.
7. The components of social phobia are negatively correlated with responsiveness.

(Amsbary & McCroskey n.d., page 487)

The methods used in this study were Liebowitz's Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS), McCroskey's PRCA-24, McCroskey's Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC), McCroskey and Richmond's McCroskey Shyness Scale (MSS), McCroskey's Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC), McCroskey and Richmond's Talkaholic Scale (TS), and Richmond and McCroskey's Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (ARM) – a long form

of the SCS and SCO scales mentioned previously. Of the seven hypotheses, the first one is specifically related to communication apprehension so that will be further discussed.

The result of Amsbary and McCroskey's study showed that there were strong positive correlations between a student's communication apprehension levels and their social phobia. This finding made their first hypothesis correct. They found that students who have high levels of CA tend to avoid social situations due to anxiety surrounding communication, which results in a moderate to a high level of social phobia. A substantial positive correlation between the two was found primarily using the PRCA-24 survey. (Amsbary & McCroskey n.d., page 489-490)

Both of these journals show that students are likely to suffer from communication apprehension in some capacity. Furthermore, these journals suggest that students who do have high levels of CA are usually less likely to hold leadership positions, participate in multicultural affairs, and adapt well to new surroundings. High communication apprehensive students are more likely to suffer from social phobia and less willing to be in social situations.

These behaviors can hinder a student in college from my own experience. High CA students are more likely to miss out on events or gatherings where they may have been able to meet new people and build comfort. Large student events that a university usually puts on are meant to build community but for someone afraid of communicating, these events are overwhelming. Therefore, they miss out on that sense of belonging so they end up feeling more distant and become even less likely to participate in the future.

The Workplace and Communication Apprehension

Though college students are the most accessible candidates for survey participation, a majority of the journals/articles/other materials that I have read regarding communication

apprehension focus on the workplace. I have not been able to discern why that is but I would guess that for every CA-related material that is centered around students, there are three focused on the workplace. This may be because the workplace is a starting ground for most adults. If an adult can work, they are expected to, but what happens when a person with high CA is put into a communicative workplace? Many of these studies concentrate on a person with communication apprehension's happiness in the workplace and their relationships with coworkers.

There are two workplace studies regarding communication apprehension that I found to be the most compelling and helpful to understanding CA for employees. The first journal is the *Person/Job Fit Model of Communication Apprehension in Organizations* by D.L. Harville (1992), published in *Management Communication Quarterly*. Harville wanted to recognize communication apprehension in employees to see how CA may affect work performance and mental health. This study of six hundred and one (601) participants spanned over three years and was measured by McCroskey's PRCA form and a Career Planning Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire. The three proposed hypotheses are as follows:

1. A negative relationship exists between CA and communication requirements of the jobs.
2. A positive relationship exists between job level held and the communication requirements of the jobs.
3. Only employees both with low CA and in jobs with high communication requirements should be satisfied. (Harville 1992, pages 4-6)

Harville molded the first hypothesis around research done by McCroskey. His research suggested that people who have level highs of CA usually chose to, expect to, and do maintain jobs with lower communication requirements. His hypothesis was proven correct because he found that employees who suffer from increased CA levels tend to proceed with jobs that have

low communication obligations. With these results, Harville suggests that individuals with communication apprehension are not confident in their communication competence. These employees were not considered for multiple promotions because of their lack of communication. They weren't able to form those critical coworker/supervisor relationships.

Harville also found that there was a remarkable negative correlation between an employee's position level and its communication requirements, making his second hypothesis incorrect. His study showed that higher-level jobs have lower communication needs but it was more difficult for employees with CA to obtain those positions. An employee who has none to low-level communication apprehension was found to be promoted and designated to leadership positions. On the other hand, high-level CA employees were often overlooked for promotions and leadership recognition even if they had the same/similar experience as non-CA coworkers, according to Harville's study.

Lastly, Harville found that his third hypothesis was correct. The participants showed that communication requirements and job satisfaction had a positive correlation in this study. Employees who were the most satisfied were those with low levels of communication apprehension and placed in positions that demand more communication skills. Harville noted that employees with low CA were not afraid to voice their opinions in the workplace. Opposite to those were employees with high CA. Highly communication apprehensive employees were found to not be well equipped for job positions that require more communication. Those employees may even have increased mental health issues and poor job performance if put into positions with rigorous communication requirements. (Harville 1992, pages 4-13)

Harville's study has been cited many times in other workplace-focused communication apprehension materials. Harville reiterated the importance of communication apprehension

advocacy, especially in the workplace. Since this is still a fairly new study, many people are not aware of the implications of CA. Implications like low job satisfaction, decreased mental health, poor work performance, and lack of recognition in their workplace.

The second prominent workplace and communication apprehension study to analyze is *When enough is too much: Communication apprehension and employee information experiences* which was conducted in 2004 by H. Bartoo and P.M. Sias and published in *Communication Quarterly*. This study was focused on the relationship between the supervisor/employee and communication apprehension experience in relaying information. They chose this because according to Bartoo and Sias it has been demonstrated that, “the better-informed people are, the less uncertain they are, the more satisfied they are with their jobs, and the greater their perceived performance.” Bartoo and Sias surveyed ninety-two participants across eight different workplaces, utilizing both male and female supervisors and employees. The pair presented two hypotheses and one research question; they are as follows:

Hypotheses

1. A supervisor’s CA is negatively related to the number of information employees report receiving from him/her.
2. Employees’ CA is negatively related to the amount of information they report from their supervisors.

Research Question

1. How are supervisor CA and employee CA related to the information load employees report from their supervisors? (Bartoo & Sias 2004, pages 15-18)

To find the results to the two hypotheses and one research question, Bartoo and Sias used four different methods on the participants. They used three variations of McCroskey's PRCA forms as well as an ICA Communication Audit which was developed by Goldhaber and Rogers.

The outcome of this study found that participants reported that supervisors with high levels of communication apprehension were not able to efficiently transmit job/organization-related information to their employees. This finding reassures Bartoo and Sias' first hypothesis, making it correct. With this hypothesis, they determined that employees tend to not adequately receive important information from communication apprehensive supervisors. Supervisors with high CA had much discomfort and generally avoided speaking to subordinates. The consequence of this can be lowered job performance from their employees and strained coworker relationships.

This study also revealed that employees' communication apprehension levels were not related to the amount of information they reported to their supervisors. This result made Bartoo and Sias' second hypothesis incorrect, much to their surprise. According to Bartoo and Sias, there have been conflicting reports of results from other similar studies so, at the time of this publication, the second hypothesis was found inclusive. If these results are to be believed, Bartoo and Sias suggest that it is possible for high CA employees to effectively relay information to those in supervisor positions. They also offered an alternative for their conclusion. Bartoo and Sias stated that an employee's communication apprehension may not affect the quantity of the information they relay, but it may affect the quality. They implied that further research would need to be done to solidify that idea though.

Lastly, for the research question regarding the informational load, the participants indicated that employees with high communication apprehension levels were more likely to

report information overload. This overload was consistent, regardless of the actual load or amount of information conveyed to an employee from a supervisor. Whether a supervisor conveyed one sentence or a whole presentation to an employee, a high CA employee may feel overwhelmed. Bartoo and Sias also stated that information overload can have multiple negative impacts on an employee. An overloaded employee may see the effects of this with a decrease in the quality of their job performance and an increase in anxiety/discomfort. (Bartoo and Sias 2004, pages 15-24)

Bartoo and Sias' study shed a light on the effects of supervisor and employee communication apprehension. They determined that even though employees with CA may be able to communicate with supervisors, supervisors with CA usually don't have the same circumstance. It was also determined that employees with CA experience information overload when receiving communication from supervisors. The authors deduced that most, if not all, of the effects of communication apprehension, are negative. This was found to be no different in the workplace. Their results not only answered their two hypotheses and single research question but opened the door for further research in the same spectrum.

Relationships and Communication Apprehension

Since most studies regarding communication apprehension are centered around students and the workplace, it was a bit more difficult to find research regarding CA and its effects on personal relationships, specifically romantic relationships. However, there is one intriguing journal that I am going to discuss. In 2000, M. Loveless, W. G. Powers, and W. Jordan published their study, *Dating Partner Communication Apprehension, Self-Disclosure, and the First Big Fight*, in the *Human Communication* journal.

Loveless et al's (2000) journal focused on the effects of a relationship's First Big Fight (FBF) in terms of communication apprehension and self-disclosure. Communication apprehension is also referred to as Dating Partner Communication Apprehension (DPCA) throughout this journal. The authors state that the First Big Fight is, "A relationship milestone conceivable encompassing aspects of turning points, critical events, and conflict..." The FBF is a situation that is pretty much "make or break" for the couple, it either leads to forward movement or termination of the relationship. Loveless et al refer to couples that move forward in their relationship as "survivors," and couples that decide to end their relationship as "non-survivors."

For this study, an experiment was conducted with ninety-three participants: thirty-three male and sixty female, all of which are individually in a relationship. The survey method used was created by Loveless et al. The self-report consisted of two forms, given out at random. Form A requested for participants to focus on their current relationship and identify details from their First Big Fight. Form B requested for participants to recall a former relationship that experienced an FBF but was not ended because of it. At the end of both forms was an extra thirteen-question form regarding DPCA. The authors used these forms to attempt to prove or disprove three hypotheses. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. Non-survivors will reconstruct significantly higher levels of DPCA before the FBF than will survivors.
2. Survivors will reconstruct significantly lower levels of DPCA following the FBF than non-survivors.
3. The change in DPCA across the period before and following the FBF will be significantly different for survivors than for non-survivors. (Loveless et al 2000, page 235)

Loveless et al found no notable differences between the non-survivors and survivors results regarding the amount of Dating Partner Communication Apprehension. This outcome does not support the first hypothesis, making that hypothesis incorrect. The authors indicated that this result could be positive because it suggests that DPCA may not be a contributing factor to the outcome of a couples' First Big Fight. Even though DPCA and general CA usually contribute to negative situations or feelings, Loveless et al stated that DPCA and CA are not pre-determining factors to the "potential life of a dating relationship."

As for the second hypothesis, Loveless et al found that non-survivors of the First Big Fight had significantly higher levels of DPCA than survivors, therefore supporting that hypothesis. The authors believed that the participants' results suggest that the DPCA felt by one or both parties of a relationship either during or immediately after the FBF are very important to the life of that relationship as seen in the result of the third hypothesis.

Lastly, Loveless et al's experiment yielded results that showed higher levels of reported DPCA change from non-survivors than survivors do, regarding after the FBF. These findings support the authors' third hypothesis. The reported difference was very significant between survivors and non-survivors. Survivors showed no change in their DPCA following the First Big Fight while non-survivors reported dramatically higher levels of DPCA. To further support this hypothesis, the authors concluded that survivors of the FBF often tend to confront relationship problems head-on to continue their relationship. Loveless et al believe this may be because the FBF causes couples to either communicate clearly or dissipate.

Overall, the authors found that Dating Partner Communication Apprehension and general communication apprehension were not contributing factors to the continuation or termination of a relationship following the First Big Fight. Though Loveless et al suggested that DPCA in the

early stages of a relationship lead to other problems, DPCA did not affect a relationships' FBF directly. However, the authors did note that when one partner did not handle the FBF well, the DPCA of the other partner may rise significantly - a common occurrence in ceased relationships. Loveless et al's study also encouraged further research to be done regarding the correlations between relationships and CA. (Loveless et al 2000, pages 233-238)

Age and Sex Effects on Communication Apprehension

Comparably to relationship studies and communication apprehension, another faction of CA that has not been studied in depth is age and sex. Age and sex can make a huge difference in almost every area of life, is communication apprehension the exception? This study is focused on age and sex differences which may affect interpersonal influence and willingness to communicate with others. Though this study did use seven hundred and forty-one (741) students as the participants, the study was not focused on the idea of students themselves. Instead, it was centered on how the participant's age and sex may affect their ability to make personal connections or communicate within a group of peers.

Age and Sex Differences in Willingness to Communicate, Communication Apprehension, and Self-Perceived Competence was written by L. A. Donovan and P.D. MacIntyre published in Communication Research Reports in 2004. Donovan and MacIntyre conducted an experiment using ninety (90) male and one hundred and seventy-seven (177) female junior high school students; eighty-five (85) male and one hundred and six (106) female high school students; and lastly, sixty-eight (68) male and two hundred and fifteen (215) female college students. The authors proposed three hypotheses as two research questions all surrounding the idea of CA effects on age and sex, they are as follows:

Hypotheses

1. Males will increase in WTC from junior high to school, to university, while females will decrease in WTC across these three age groups.
2. Communication apprehension will decrease in males but increase in females across the three age groups.
3. Perceived communication competence will increase in males with age and show a corresponding decrease among females.

Research Questions

1. Does the degree of correlation between self-perceived competence and communication apprehension differ between males and females at various ages?
2. To what degree do communication apprehension and self-perceived competence predict WTC in the age and sex groups in this study? (Donovan and MacIntyre 2004, pages 421-422)

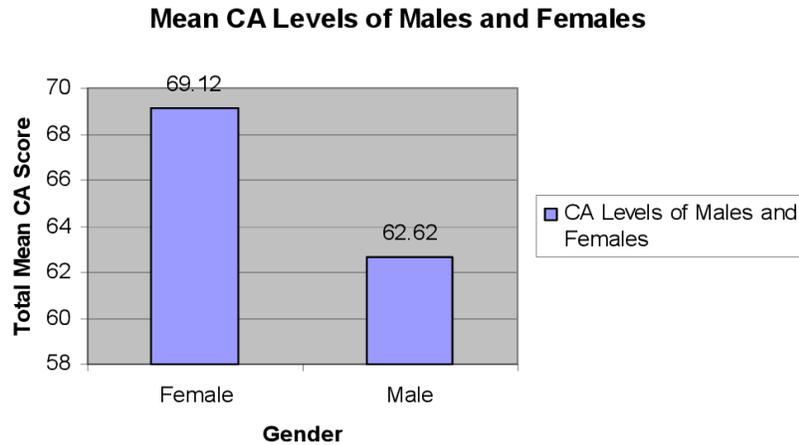
To find the results, Donovan and MacIntyre used three different methods in group-administered settings for the participants. The authors used McCroskey's Willingness To Communicate Scale (WTC), McCroskey's Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC), and McCroskey and Richmond's Communication Apprehension Scale, also known as the PRCA-24.

Much to Donovan and MacIntyre's surprise, all three of their hypotheses were supported by the results of the study - at least partially. Hypothesis one was found to be moderately supported. The survey revealed that junior high males did have slightly lower WTC scores than their female counterparts. Even so, this finding did not yield significant enough results to set their first hypothesis in stone.

Regarding the second and third hypotheses, those were also partially supported by the participants' scores. The results showed no sex differences between junior and high school students concerning self-perceived competence or levels of communication apprehension, disproving part of the second and third hypotheses. However, Donovan and MacIntyre found that university students are where the results began to differ a bit. The authors found that female university students reported higher levels of CA and/or lower self-perceived competence than male university students, which lends some leverage to those hypotheses.

As for the research questions, Donovan and MacIntyre were able to formulate answers from the results. For the first question, the authors found that there was no major difference between females and males across any of the tested age groups. Upon further discussion of the second research question, Donovan and MacIntyre concluded that “WTC and its antecedents is not straightforward and may vary with age and sex.” The authors state that age was the largest variable in the differences found throughout their study. (Donovan and MacIntyre 2004, pages 420-426)

Further supporting Donovan and MacIntyre’s third hypothesis is a figure from J. Frantz, A. Marlow, and J. Wathen’s 2005 journal, *Communication Apprehension and its Relationship to Gender and College Year*. Though I am not going to fully comb through this journal, I wanted to include this figure 10* to show the difference between female and male communication apprehension levels at the college level, as surveyed by using the PRCA-24. (Frantz et al 2005)



**Figure 10 (Frantz et al 2005)*

Overall, each of these sections sheds a bit of light on the multiple ways in which communication can affect a person. From being a student to an employee, or a person maintaining a romantic relationship, communication apprehension can be present regardless of age or sex, as previously discussed. Depending on an individual's level of CA, their life may be more or less affected than others.

As shown by Blume et al's and Amsbary and McCroskey's study regarding students and CA, the likelihood of a student suffering from communication apprehension in some capacity is very likely. For the relationship between the workplace and CA, Harville and Bartoo and Sias concluded that this area of communication is especially important. Harville stated that CA can and does affect a moderate-high level CA employee by possibly decreasing their mental health, performance, and recognition in the workplace.

Similarly, Bartoo and Sias found that communication apprehension can have negative effects on the workplace, regardless of job position. CA may affect information received and even lead to information overload. In terms of relationships, Loveless et al shared that their

results, which were a bit more positive than the previous ones regarding students and the workplace.

Loveless et al found that Domestic Partner Communication Apprehension (DPCA) and CA did not generally affect relationships until after the First Big Fight (FBF). Post-FBF, DPCA levels may rise and lead to termination but when the couple has a good reaction to the FBF, those elevated levels of CA were not found to be present. Loveless et al stated that their findings were relatively more positive than expected.

Lastly, regarding communication apprehension about age and sex, both Donovan and MacIntyre and Frantz et al had somewhat varying results from their studies. Donovan and MacIntyre noted that all three of their hypotheses were only found to be partially supported by their findings and that there would need to be much more research done in this space. The only significant difference found was at the college level, with females becoming more communication apprehensive and males becoming less after high school. This was further supported by research by Frantz et al and shown in figure 10.

Coping With and (*maybe*) Overcoming Communication Apprehension

The broad nature of communication apprehension allows it to take shape throughout most facets of life. Though communication can be very debilitating for a person who suffers from high levels of CA, that doesn't mean they have to always feel that way. According to the materials I have studied for this project, I have not found any evidence that would indicate communication apprehension being considered a permanent impairment. The closest thing to permanency concerning CA is traitlike communication apprehension but even that has the potential to change, according to Richmond et al (2018). This little bit of potential to change may be the hope that

someone needs to completely shift their relationship to communication. So even if a person wants to change, how do they learn to cope with and sometimes even overcome communication apprehension? (Richmond et al 2018, page 46)

Though most of the research surrounding communication apprehension focuses on the apprehension itself, there has been limited discussion on how a person can reduce their apprehension. The material which lays out treatments for CA the most effective is found in Richmond et al (2018) book, which has been previously cited numerous times. Richmond et al were able to comprehensively compile CA research and explain their findings of overcoming communication apprehension. For this, the authors offered five treatment approaches: systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, skills training, visualization, and psychopharmacology. The following sections will be a deeper analysis of these treatment options from the lens of Richmond et al's beliefs. (Richmond et al 2018, page 130)

Systematic Desensitization

According to Richmond et al (2018), one option for the treatment of communication apprehension is Systematic Desensitization (SD). SD was developed in 1956 and has been commonly used since to aid in broad and general forms of communication apprehension by using two main methods: deep muscular relaxation and deep relaxation. The typical SD program includes multiple one-hour sessions over a few days or weeks.

Richmond et al stated that each session starts with learning/experiencing deep muscular relaxation and deep relaxation while imagining anxiety-provoking situations. For deep muscular relaxation, a person is taught how to configure and massage their body to induce muscular relaxation using a recorded tape. For deep relaxation, a person follows a recorded tape only.

Once the person is in that state of relaxation, they are asked to envision anxiety-inducing scenarios. These imagined situations begin as fairly low anxiety-provoking and slowly work their way up as a person becomes more relaxed while doing deep muscular massages. Once an individual can imagine being in an anxiety-inducing situation for at least one minute with no tension, they can move on to the next. If they are not able to complete the minute without tension, they have to restart. The tension is monitored by a separate party. This cycle continues until the session is complete. At least four to six subsequent sessions of systematic desensitization are recommended for continuing reinforcement. Once a person has completed multiple sessions and feels confident in their communication they may cease treatment, according to Richmond et al.

Further research has reiterated systematic desensitization as an “extremely effective method for helping people overcome communication apprehension,” according to Richmond et al. The authors suggested that around 90% of individuals who receive SD treatment are found to reduce their levels of CA. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 130-134)

Cognitive Restructuring

Evolving from a practice known as “rational-emotive therapy” in 1976, cognitive restructuring has been a lasting treatment method for many psychological issues, including communication apprehension, according to Richmond et al (2018). Rational-emotive therapy and cognitive restructuring both work to identify and get rid of a person’s irrational communication beliefs. Cognitive restructuring goes even further by replacing irrational beliefs with positive beliefs, as stated by Richmond et al.

Similar to systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring often requires multiple one-hour sessions spread over a short course of time. In these sessions, a person will learn about cognitive restructuring and what the goal is at the end of it. They will also work to identify a few “specific negative self-statements or thoughts that increase apprehension,” according to Richmond et al. After that, a person will be instructed to rewrite those negative thoughts or self-statements into positive ones. They are also encouraged to continue rewiring their brains to use positive thinking surrounding communication after the session. As stated before, the authors believe that subsequent sessions are needed to ensure successful restructuring. Once a person feels confident in their cognitive restructuring, sessions may end and only start again if needed.

According to Richmond et al, since systematic desensitization and cognitive restructuring are very similar, some professionals choose to implement both treatments. Usually, this method is only used for clients with quite high levels of communication apprehension. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 136-138)

Skills Training

Skills training is a bit less formalized than the previous two treatments. The usage of skill training on a communicative apprehension person could include a wide variety of techniques, according to Richmond et al (2018). The treatments in this field can vary from practicing the speech in a college-required course to mandatory training given by a job. However, the authors believe that studies show communication courses in high school and/or college are generally ineffective at reducing a person’s apprehension. Beyond research indicating that communication courses in high school and/or college are generally ineffective, the authors believe that these courses can sometimes even increase communication apprehension in certain individuals.

Richmond et al state that “for any treatment program to be successful the recipient of the treatment must want to improve and be committed...” If the person with CA is unwilling to participate in the treatment they will not get better. The authors believe this is a contributing factor to students reporting communication course ineffectiveness and sometimes increased communication apprehension.

Richmond et al state that skills training can be a very effective treatment for communication apprehension if the person’s reason for CA revolves around lack of communication skills. If a person doesn’t lack communication skills and still feels apprehensive, skills training may not be the best approach for them, according to the authors. For those who do feel like they lack communication skills, skill training may be a good treatment option to consider. Effective skills training usually consists of identifying where a person is deficient, making attainable goals to improve that area, observing someone efficient in that area, practicing behavior in a safe, controlled setting to build skills in the deficient area, and lastly, practicing those skills in a natural environment, according to Richmond et al. The completion of each of these components will hopefully lead to increased communication skills and reduced communication apprehension. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 139-142)

Visualization

The use of visualization has proven to be a productive way to treat communication apprehension, according to Richmond et al (2018). Visualization has been utilized since 1973 to aid in lessening communication apprehension and to enhance communication performance. The authors state that visualization is, “a procedure that encourages people to think positively about public speaking by taking them through a carefully crafted script.”

For visualization to be effective, the apprehensive person has to be willing to imagine an anxiety-inducing situation in a more positive way. The example that Richmond et al give is for a person to imagine the day of an important presentation but instead of being gloomy, it is full of energy. The person is to imagine themselves being confident and finishing a very successful presentation. At the end of the visualization, the person then pats themselves on the back and congratulates themselves for the good job they did. The person must picture their success at the end of the exercise. This process may be repeated as many times as needed.

Richmond et al state that visualization has been successful in creating a person's confidence around communication, especially in the area of public speaking. Though the process can take longer when imagining different situations, the premise remains the same: visualize success. (Richmond et al 2018, pages 142-144)

Psychopharmacology

Lastly, Richmond et al (2018) suggest that psychopharmacology may be a viable treatment option for a high communication apprehension person if they have exhausted all other recommended options. The authors specifically state that the use of prescription medications should be reserved for individuals whose communication apprehension is negatively impacting their life, regardless of previous attempts to treat their CA.

The use of prescription medications is common among adults, especially for anxiety surrounding public speaking. The authors do not recommend this method of treatment unless it is the only option because there can be many negative side effects of prescription drug usage. Richmond et al state that they are not medical professionals and therefore they cannot speak to psychopharmacology in depth. The authors can include it in possible treatment options for

communication apprehension because prescription medications are used to treat anxiety disorders like CA. (Richmond et al 2018, page 144)

Conclusion

Overall, communication apprehension is a legitimate source of fear and/or anxiety throughout most people, even if they don't know it. Though communication may seem like a trait that everyone naturally has, that idea has been proven to be one of the many misconceptions about communication. Communication is very much a skill. As such, communication is easier for some than for others. The process of human communication must be honed and practiced. One does not (usually) become confident and secure in their ability to communicate overnight. However, a person does not have to be defined by communication apprehension. This is the idea that James McCroskey worked to advocate for through his research.

There are multiple methods that a person may use to evaluate their level of CA, thanks to McCroskey and his research partners. The most commonly used methods are PRCA-24, WTC, PRPSA, PRECA, and PRICA. Each of these reports allows for individuals to gauge their communication apprehension on their own, rather than in an interview setting. These methods, as well as many others, have been and are still used throughout most studies revolving around CA, willingness to communicate, and other related areas of communication.

Communication apprehension has also been found to be a continuum. The CA continuum contains four distinct points: traitlike, contextual, audience-based, and situational CA. Each of these points represents different forms of communication apprehension. Though they are different, they all relate to the general fear or anxiety surrounding communication. Each person who has high levels of CA can suffer from one or all four versions of communication

apprehension. The way that communication apprehension affects each person may vary from one-time situations, continuous anxiety-produced scenarios, certain audiences, etc.

The continuum of communication apprehension does not delve into more specific situations, like the ones that researchers focus on. Most of the studies regarding communication apprehension tend to examine students with CA, the workplace and CA, relationships and CA, and the way that age and sex affect CA. Students have been found to suffer higher levels of communication apprehension than other age groups. The workplace has been noted as one of the most anxiety-inducing situations for employees or supervisors with high levels of CA. Relationships have been found to not be as directly affected by CA as other areas of a person's life. Lastly, age and sex do have some sort of correlation with CA but more studies need to be done.

Lastly, for people who suffer from communication apprehension, there is light at the end of the tunnel. There are multiple ways for them to be treated. Most commonly these individuals participate in systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, skills training, visualization, and pharmacology. Each of these methods of treatment has been proven effective as long as the participant is willing to be diligent and continue to work on lowering their communication apprehension.

Communication apprehension may have started as a personal endeavor for one professor but it has evolved into a multi-cultural study that has been conducted around the world. Research has been done by hundreds of communication experts, resulting in thousands of materials regarding CA. Each of these materials contributes to the ever-changing world of communication, especially communication apprehension. Researchers continue to study CA to understand and help people who suffer from high levels of communication apprehension.

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