

Chapter L

Willingness to Communicate

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BACKGROUND

The willingness to communicate (WTC) scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985) measures a respondent's tendency to approach or avoid initiating communication. The scale is based on Burgoon's (1976) unwillingness to communicate scale, except the construct is worded in positive terms and assumes the respondent is self-aware of his/her own approach/avoidance tendencies.

The WTC scale is a 20-item probability-estimate scale (McCroskey, 1992). Eight of the items are fillers, and the remaining 12 are scored to yield a total score and three subscores based on types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, friends), and four subscores based on communication context (public, meeting, group, dyad). Users indicate the percentage of times they would choose to communicate in each type of situation, from 0 (never) to 100 (always).

A representative sample of receiver/context items is key to establishing a meaningful norm because people may be more willing to communicate with some kinds of receivers and within some kinds of contexts than others.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Studies have found that the scale is highly reliable. The internal reliability of the instrument's total score ranges from .86 to .95, with a modal estimate of .92 (McCroskey, 1992). Reliability estimates for the subscores are somewhat lower and more variable than those for the total scale. Content and construct validity of the WTC have been supported.

COMMENTS

The WTC has been used in conjunction with other instruments such as the personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, Fayer, & Richmond, 1985), self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) (Burroughs & Marie, 1990), and the verbal activity scale (VAS) (McCroskey, 1977). Further, McCroskey and Baer (1985) examined the relationship between the WTC and several such constructs. The results indicated a correlation between the VAS and WTC of .41, and one between the PRCA-24 and the

WTC of -.52. The results of this research further support the WTC's construct validity.

The instrument has been used in a variety of studies, including studies on students who are willing to communicate in the classroom (Chan, 1988), and individuals' willingness to communicate with authority figures (Combs, 1990).

LOCATION

The WTC Scale may be completed online at <http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/WTC.htm>. Instructions for scoring are included.

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KEY TERMS

Communication Context: Where communication takes place (a public setting; a meeting; a group; or a dyad).

Types of Receivers: With whom a person communicates (strangers, acquaintances, friends).

Willingness to Communicate: A respondent's tendency to approach or avoid initiating communication.

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