

Diyako Rahmani

# Minorities' Communication Apprehension and Conflict

An Investigation of Kurds in Iran and  
Malays in Singapore



JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN HUMANITIES 331

Diyako Rahmani

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An Investigation of Kurds in Iran and Malays in Singapore

Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellisen tiedekunnan suostumuksella  
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston vanhassa juhlasalissa S212  
lokakuun 13. päivänä 2017 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of  
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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2017

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Cover picture by Dmitri Popov (unsplash.com)

Permanent link to this publication: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7191-5>

URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7191-5

ISBN 978-951-39-7191-5 (PDF)

ISSN 1459-4331

ISBN 978-951-39-7190-8 (nid.)

ISSN 1459-4323

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Jyväskylä University Printing House, Jyväskylä 2017

## ABSTRACT

Rahmani, Diyako

Minorities' communication apprehension and conflict: An investigation of Kurds in Iran and Malays in Singapore

Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2017, 58 p. (+ original publications)

(Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities

ISSN 1459-4323; 331 (print) ISSN 1459-4331; 331(PDF))

ISBN 978-951-39-7190-8 (print)

ISBN 978-951-39-7191-5 (PDF)

Diss.

This research project investigates the relationship between communication apprehension and conflict in the intergroup context of minority and majority relationships. Previous studies of communication apprehension have extensively examined its characteristics in the intercultural context of mostly the USA and Eastern Asians cultures. However, the minority-majority intergroup relationship represents distinctive yet understudied characteristics related to socioeconomic status of the groups, which potentially influence their intergroup conflicts. Furthermore, previous communication research called for more in-depth investigation of the various regions. In the light of such considerations, the present project examines the characteristics of minority groups' communication apprehension and the relationship between minority communication apprehension and intergroup conflict. The empirical papers of this project investigate communication apprehension of minority groups of Kurds in Iran and the Malays in Singapore. Both groups have recorded lower socioeconomic profiles compared to their respective majority groups of Persians and Chinese. The findings showed Kurds registered a relatively lower communication apprehension, but Singaporean Malays are more apprehensive compared to Singaporean Chinese. Two theoretical papers of the study examine the nature of apprehension and anxiety in intergroup communication, and they seek theoretical explanations for intergroup anxiety, especially in minority-majority relationships, and the role of anxiety in intergroup conflicts. This research project emphasizes the role of culture in formation of communication dispositions and offers insight into promoting intergroup communication and resolving intergroup conflict.

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, Intergroup Conflict, Kurdistan, Singapore, Minority groups

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## FORWARD

Doing my Ph.D., I faced the biggest challenges of my life. Although the challenges have been extremely fruitful in terms of adding different aspects to my personal and academic lives, it was impossible to face them without the priceless help and support I have received from different people.

First, I wish to deeply thank my parents. They literally devoted all their lives, every second of it, to provide their three children with the highest quality of education, and more than that they helped their children understand the value of learning in becoming better people who contribute to both themselves and their societies. سوپاس دایه، سوپاس بابیه

I also wish to thank my first supervisor, Professor Stephen Croucher who has been not only a supervisor but also a close friend. He opened my eyes to academia, taught me how to read, write and publish, and simply formed my academic personality. The honest comments, supports and encouragements I got from my second supervisor, Senior Lecturer Marko Siitonen were truly uplifting whenever the path looked gloomy and dark.

Two wonderful reviewers agreed to read my dissertation, Associate Professor Todd Sandel, and Professor Emeritus Jerry Allen. Their instructive comments helped me to improve the quality of the text. I must especially Dr. Sandel for agreeing to come all the way from Macau to serve as the opponent at my doctoral defense. I am also so grateful to Senior Researcher Turo Uskali and Professor Epp Lauk for reading and grading my thesis.

The Department of Language and Communication Studies (DLCS) was greatly supportive and generous in providing me with scholarships, funding and other forms of emotional and financial support. My deepest appreciation goes to the Professor Epp Lauk, former Head of the Communication Department, and Senior Lecturer Anne Pitkänen-Huhta, current Head of DLCS, for their support. I would also like to thank Sari Mäkikangas for facilitating our organizational work life within the department.

During my four years of Ph.D. I had an amazing social experience along with some of the nicest people I have ever met. I wish to thank all my friends and colleagues in the communication discipline. I'd particularly like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my fantastic roommates, Cheng and Flora who became inseparable companions during this journey. They helped to make our friendship both warm and rewarding. Melodine and Grethi - thanks for your positive energy and your kind remarks. Thanks go to a long list of Iranian students at the University of Jyväskylä for their support and friendship. You have been my family here.

I had the most heartwarming encouragements and positive energy from my other family members. My lovely sisters, Diana and Wena, your strong personalities and irrepressible wills have always been a strong motivating force in my life. I love you both and wish you all the best.

At last but not the least, my appreciation goes to my love, Shabnam. Aside for the endless support I got from you, you taught me about life more than anyone else. You are my closest and best friend. Thanks for being in my life and making it shinier and happier. خوشم دموئی

Diyako Rahmani  
Jyväskylä, 18.09.2017



## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- I. **Rahmani, D.** (2017). Apprehension and anxiety in communication. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Oxford encyclopedia of Intergroup communication* (pp. 1-20). Oxford, UK: Oxford UP.  
doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.414
- II. **Rahmani, D.**, & Croucher, S. M. (2017). Minority groups and communication apprehension: An investigation of Kurdistan. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 43.
- III. Croucher, S. M., **Rahmani, D.**, Hample, D., & Sakkinen, K. (2016). Communication apprehension, self-perceived communication competence, and willingness to communicate in Singapore. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 40.
- IV. **Rahmani, D.** (2017). Intergroup conflict, WTC and CA: An analysis of minority and majority groups. In B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, P. Wilson, & S. M. Croucher (Eds.), *Approaches to conflict: Theoretical, interpersonal, and discursive dynamics*, (pp. 175-192). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and motivation for the study

Intergroup communication between minority and majority groups is of great importance. Most societies include different groups, which are culturally recognizable from the mainstream majority groups in different terms such as ethnicity, faith, sex, etc. A healthy and constructive relationship between these groups has different sociopolitical significances. From an egalitarian perspective, minority voices should be given an equal ground to be expressed (McDevitt, Kiousis, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2003). As a fundamental principle of social justice, and as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone within society should be able to freely express their ideas and beliefs (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, n.d.). Although a greater amount of communication will not always result in better mutual intergroup understanding, a lack of intergroup communication between minority and majority groups will certainly elevate intergroup delusion and misunderstanding. Thus, from a social point of view, it is crucial to provide groups with chances to communicate about their differences and disagreements. According to Terror Management Theory (TMT), sources of resentment and conflict are, along with ideological disparity, a lack of knowledge about outgroups (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). Failure in communication, and miscommunication are among the reasons for insecurity in intergroup communication, especially in inter-ethnic conflict situations, which persuades groups to approach conflict and refuse conflict settlement (Lake & Rothchild, 1996).

One important aspect of enhancing intergroup communication is to recognize and remedy the obstacles that prevent such a process. Different forms of psychological anxiety can discourage people to enter into, or maintain, communication. One such obstacle is Communication Apprehension (CA), which is defined as the fear people have as a result of a real or anticipated communication (McCroskey, 1982). The CA concept is negatively correlated with Willingness To Communicate (WTC) and Self-Perceived Communication

Competence (SPCC) (Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003). Whereas, WTC is individuals' readiness to initiate communication with other (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) SPCC is defined as individuals' belief in their ability to adequately perform communication activities (McCroskey & MCCroskey, 1988). Closely related to CA is Intercultural Communication Apprehension (ICA) defined as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people from different groups, especially different cultural or ethnic groups" (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997, p.147). Generally, it is believed people who have higher levels of CA are more likely to avoid communication with those possessing different and contradictory opinions.

In the context of minority and majority relationships, the anxiety that prevents effective communication can be related to differences in social, political, and economic positions of the groups. Such differences can be represented by the socioeconomic status (SES) of the groups, which is represented through different educational, occupational, and economic measurements of the groups' status (Education and socioeconomic status., n.d.). A lower SES can be a result of immigration, less access to educational and medical opportunities, and less functional skills (Smith, Wolf, & Wagner, 2010; Thomas, 2013). Minority groups are more likely to be at a lower SES; for example, racial minority groups such as African-Americans in the USA are reported to have a lower life expectancy due to lower SES (Williams, 1999). Groups with lower SES have less access to educational opportunities due to the overwhelming costs of education and social exclusion (Smith et al., 2010). The consequences of deprivation from receiving proper education could be manifested in communicational deficiency and incompetency, especially while meeting outgroup members.

An investigation into the role of SES in the formation and transformation of communicational traits, especially CA is a theoretical and societal necessity. The benefits of the information from such an investigation could be multifaceted. If *effective communication* (Gudykunst, 1995) is considered as a response to intercultural misunderstandings, then a comprehensive communication theory that facilitates *effective communication* should be a goal for the field of communication. Such knowledge cannot be sufficiently comprehensive without taking into consideration the different psychological and societal aspects of the barriers of human communication. The concept of CA is an example of a barrier and a cultural study of CA needs to take the SES of different group into consideration.

Along with the theoretical and empirical benefits of the project, the personal encouragement I had was a vital motivation to begin and accomplish this research. My cultural background as a member of an ethnic and religious minority, and my interactions with the majority group members throughout my life taught me about the significance of communication among different cultures and backgrounds. Personally, I believe most of the problems that our world, and the Middle East in particular, is experiencing have roots in the inability to communicate effectively. My experiences of life and work in the

Middle East have shown me in a world characterized by rapid and real time means of communication, online infrastructures, and endless streams of shared human knowledge, that many people are still afraid of accepting, communicating, and interacting with the “others”. I was, and am, motivated to know more about the obstacles stopping and challenging our human communication system, and preventing us from knowing more about and accepting others. Especially, with our world becoming more and more culturally diverse, and people getting the opportunity to utter their different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and sexual affiliations, it is of great importance to learn about the dynamics of minority-majority communication.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The main goal of this project was to investigate the CA of the minority groups and the concept’s relationship with minority-majority intergroup conflict. To this end, the project proposes different research questions and hypotheses at different stages in the research. These questions and hypotheses tackle the general goal of this project, which is to examine the dynamics of CA in minority and majority group relationships. To investigate the nature of communication apprehension in an intergroup context, this study proposes the following questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of communication apprehension of minority groups?
- 2) What is the relationship of minority communication apprehension and intergroup conflict?

To answer these questions, each publication in this thesis proposes specific questions. The first paper, examines the nature of apprehension and anxiety in intergroup communication looking for theoretical explanations for intergroup anxiety in general, and particularly in minority-majority relationships.

The second paper, a cultural study of Kurdish CA in Iran, looks to answer 1) *to what extent does age affect communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?* and 2) *what is the relationship between the educational level achieved and communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?* and to examine if 1) *Kurds in Iran will rate highly on communication apprehension;* and 2) *women in Iranian Kurdistan will report higher communication apprehension than men.*

The third paper studies CA and its relationship with WTC and SPCC among the Malay people in Singapore and hypothesizes: 1a) *Chinese Singaporeans report lower CA levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore;* 1b) *Chinese Singaporeans report higher WTC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore;* 1c) *Chinese Singaporeans report higher SPCC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore,* and asks: 1) *what is the position of Singapore on the continuum of communication apprehension scores?* 2) *what is the position of Singapore on the continuum of*

*willingness to communicate scores? And 3) what is the position of Singapore on the continuum of self-perceived communication competence scores?*

The last paper focuses on the role of anxiety and WTC on intergroup conflict and answers the following research questions: 1) *what are the theoretical bases explaining the effect of CA on intergroup conflict*, and 2) *what are the theoretical bases to explain the effect of WTC on intergroup conflict?*

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Intercultural Communication Theories**

In 1989, Gudykunst and Nishida asserted that intercultural encounters lack the implications of different cultural approaches to communication theory. Theoretical pluralism and methodological diversity are key elements in the establishment of a profound and comprehensive theory of intercultural communication. Theoretical pluralism implies the investigation of the research topics using more than one theoretical lens hoping for greater research flexibility and coherence (Midgley, 2011). Methodological diversity can also increase the understanding of interactions of intercultural research components (Kaplan, 2001). The measurements and concepts of intercultural communication need to be tested in various cultural contexts and using different samples, representing demographic variations within societies and groups. Partly, the lack of theoretical development, as Gudykunst and Nishida (1989) claim, is related to the geographical limitations of cultural studies. Most of the research in intercultural communication is done in or around North America, East Asia and Europe. The U.S. and Eurocentrism in intercultural communication research could affect the existing perceptions of communication processes in intercultural and cross-cultural settings, thus more in depth cultural studies of less-investigated groups are fundamental to the field's future (Kim, 2002). The concept of CA as a communication construct is a good example in this regard. The concept is mostly measured using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension 24 (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, 1982), which is a 24 point Likert type scale developed in the USA and tested among American subjects. Since, its development, PRCA-24 has been the main source of self-assessed information about the construct of CA. A study of the validity of PRCA-24 did caution researchers about the generalizability of this scale in other cultures and in cross-cultural contexts (Levine & McCroskey, 1990). It is also noticeable that most of the research in different areas of intercultural communication such as CA is focused on student samples (Rahmani & Croucher, 2017).



Theories in the young field of intercultural communication have both subjective and objective backgrounds and are generated from three main sources: 1) applying interpersonal communication theories, 2) applying interpersonal communication theories in other disciplines, and 3) developing new theories based on extensive research (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). The meta-theoretical framework of the objective paradigm includes an unbiased, explanatory, predictive, and causal study of an observable reality or human beings who are bound by identifiable external and internal attributes (Croucher, 2016). On the other side, the subjective/interpretive paradigm tries to understand and demystifies the realities, which are constructed socially and based on interpretations, through thick and subjective descriptions of the phenomena around the human beings who can make conscious choices (Croucher, 2016). Although these paradigms seem to be contradictory, they can be referred to as two ends of a continuum, in which intercultural communication theories are placed closer to one end (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). This is because the description of each paradigm is extreme; for example, it is unlikely a theoretical framework assumes the human being to be absolutely confined by external and internal drivers (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). Thus, a picture of the communicational process being drawn using both objective and subjective theoretical approaches, can intake both the cultural similarities and personal self-concept of that process. A theoretical example of such an approach is Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face negotiation theory is fed by an objective approach to cross/intercultural similarities/difference of face saving strategies, yet it is based on the observations of North American and Chinese cultures (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989).

The theoretical focus of the present research is on cross/intercultural advancement of CA theory in minority-majority group relationships. Obviously, such a study, along with its intercultural tendencies will also fall in the domain of intergroup communication. The field of intergroup communication is predominantly socio-psychological oriented (Reid, 2012). Thus, most of the theories in this project are closer to the objective and social scientific end of the described continuum. The following comprises descriptions of the theories used in this project.

### **2.1.1 Social identity theory (SIT)**

Explaining intergroup interactions among group members, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) uses three main assumptions: 1) individuals define their identities based on their interactions with the groups, 2) individuals' evaluation of their role in a group forms a foundation for the valence of their social identity related to that group, and 3) individuals' evaluation of their in-group is influenced by out-group members (Tajfel, 1978). A recent version of the theory is Self-categorization theory (Huddy, 2001), which brings the focus to both intragroup and interpersonal relationships, identification, and behaviors of group members (Espinoza & Garza, 1985).

The main principle of SIT is that individuals make ingroup-outgroup distinctions in favor of their ingroup to sustain self-concept, and establish and maintain a favorable social identity (Mastro, 2003), especially when there is an obvious intergroup social distinction such as sex, ethnicity, and faith (Turner, 1975). The distinction is also made based on 1) ingroups' most positively evaluated values, or 2) outgroups' negative identifiers or those specific identifications that make them more different from the ingroup. The consequences of such distinctions are ingroup favoritism and outgroup stereotyping (Mastro, 2003; Turner, 1982). As intergroup apprehension necessitates intergroup distinction, and both favoritism and stereotyping could lead to intergroup conflict, SIT's explanation of such intergroup dynamics provides a better perception of the relationship between CA (as one form of anxiety) and conflict at intergroup level.

### **2.1.2 Terror management theory**

According to Terror Management Theory (TMT) the awareness of death among human beings leads to a consistent and unconscious anxiety resulting from the discrepancy between the physiological requirements of human beings to survive and the cognitive awareness of our inevitable death (Greenberg et al., 1997). To manage this anxiety, according to TMT, people develop a cultural worldview that provides groups/individuals' lives and a world with meaning, increases their self-esteem, and functions as anxiety-buffering elements (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012). Individuals/groups will react negatively to any factor that undermines their faith in those worldviews (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012). According to TMT, when individuals' worldview is challenged, based on the perception of the legitimation of ingroup's worldview compared to outgroup's worldview, the group uses the reactions of derogation, assimilation, accommodation, or annihilation (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012). Thus, TMT presents a theoretical explanation of how intergroup anxiety produces conflict, and it contributes to the scope of the last study of this thesis.

### **2.1.3 Social Resistance Framework**

According to Social Resistance Framework (SRF), to represent their dissatisfaction with power relationships and to show social resistance, non-dominant minority members are encouraged by the societal power relationships to actively participate in unhealthy and dangerous activities, such as smoking, alcohol and drug consumption, sexual risk behaviors, and unsafe driving-related behaviors (Factor, Kawachi, & Williams, 2011). Indeed, SRF can provide the required theoretical grounds to explain the previous finding that had showed intergroup conflict between minority and majority groups could produce oppositional identities and cultural frames of reference (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Also, SRF explains the formation of such oppositional identities and different perceptions of safety values among non-dominant minority

groups, which are principally in conflict with majority groups (Scott, 1990; Turner, 1986).

Based on SRF, minority groups socially resist when they are detached due to perceived religious, socioeconomic, ethnic, age, and gender discrimination and to develop and maintain their collective minority identity in opposition to the dominant majority identity (Factor et al., 2011). According to SRF, the intentions to behave in a manner that differs from that of the majority group members and establish a unique minority identity encourages the minorities to become involved in dangerous behaviors. They do so to reduce their stress, and express their dissatisfaction, because their behavior is practiced in a space outside of the control zone of the dominant group and it demarks the boundaries of the dominant group's power (Factor et al., 2011; Gluckman, 1963). The SRF provides an explanation for why minority groups may approach conflict in their relationship with majorities, and it specifically focuses on the role of group vitality and anxiety in such relationships, thus it is included in the last study of this thesis.

#### **2.1.4 Uncertainty reduction theory**

As one of the most studied theories in cross/intercultural communication, Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) predicts and explains the interrelations of communication uncertainty, the amount of communication, nonverbal communication, information seeking, intimacy level, reciprocity, and similarity and liking (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). Originally, URT posited 7 axioms and 21 theorems, according to which, the basic purpose of interaction is to reduce the amount of uncertainty individuals have prior to interaction through different verbal and non-verbal passive, active, and interactive strategies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). During the passive strategies individuals unobtrusively observe others' verbal and non-verbal behaviors, while in active strategies individuals actively and consciously seek, gather and frame information about outgroups but communication parties are not directly engaged. Using strategies such as self-disclosure, question asking, and question/disclosure intimacy entail interactive engagement of communication parties. Meeting people from different cultural backgrounds, entails different levels of strangeness/familiarity, and consequently uncertainty in both cognitive and behavioral levels. The URT was chosen to be reviewed in the first study of this thesis, as it is the main theory explaining the nature of uncertainty and anxiety in human communication.

#### **2.1.5 Anxiety/uncertainty management theory**

Closely related to URT is the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory (AUM), which explains the interrelations of uncertainty, anxiety, mindfulness, and communication effectiveness (Gudykunst, 1995). The specific focus of AUM on communication anxiety provides a solid ground to explain anxiety's function in human communication. While URT assumes communication is meant to reduce

communication uncertainty, AUM posits that during communication, parties manage their uncertainty and anxiety between a minimum and maximum threshold, hoping for effective communication. A higher level of uncertainty and anxiety, above the maximum threshold, makes parties too anxious to communicate and a lower-than-threshold level demotivates them (Gudykunst, 1995). Two important concepts of AUM are mindfulness and effective communication. Mindfulness is a quality of communication, during which the participants are actively and consciously aware of their cultural differences. The more similar the intended and received meanings are, the more effective the communication is. Another important concept of AUM is “strangerness”. Strangers are the people who are physically close to each other but conceptually apart, and communication takes place among people with a certain level of strangerness. The level of strangerness increases as the conceptual difference between the participants grows (Neuliep, 2012). The final version of AUM has 47 axioms to illuminate the relationships among uncertainty and anxiety management with superficial groups of causes such as self and self-concept, motivation to interact with strangers, reaction to strangers, social categorization of strangers, situational process, and connection with strangers (Stephan, Stephan & Gudykunst, 1999).

#### 2.1.6 Integrated threat theory

The Integrated Threat theory (ITT) explains and predicts the interrelations of intergroup prejudice, conflict and anxiety and posits that when individuals believe their social group, identity, value and beliefs are threatened, they develop prejudice as a defensive reaction (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Similar to AUM, ITT deals with intergroup anxiety, but measuring anxiety, along with uncertainty it also takes other forms of anxiety into consideration. Moreover, while AUM differentiates anxiety and uncertainty as correlated yet separated constructs and focuses on a greater range of antecedents, ITT focuses on prejudice and asserts anxiety has detrimental effects and leading to stereotyping, and polarized emotions and evaluations. ITT defines four classes of intergroup prejudice: *Realistic threat* is the result of economic, physical, and political threat that an individual feels from outgroup members; the differences in values, beliefs, and norms of groups cause *symbolic threats*; when the perceived outgroup threat is attributed to the behavior of a typical member of the outgroup, a case of *negative stereotyping* happens; and *intergroup anxiety* is the fear people have while interacting with an outgroup member (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). The ITT perceives intergroup anxiety as a different construct as it functions at the interpersonal level while other antecedents perceive threat at the group level (Croucher, 2013). The contribution of ITT to theorizing the role of anxiety in human communication and the correlation of anxiety with the important intergroup factors such as threat and stereotyping makes it necessary to be included in a study explaining the dynamics of anxiety in human communication.

## 2.2 Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is defined as the “broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated [oral] communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p.78). The CA concept can be measured as both trait and contextual across four contexts: dyadic, meetings, public, and small groups. Trait CA is the amount of anxiety someone has across different contexts, while contextual CA measures the anxiety during communication in dyadic, small groups, meeting and public settings (McCroskey, 1977). The relationship between trait and contextual CA can take different forms. Levine and McCroskey studied three rival measurement models of CA using the PRCA-24, the most common measurement scale of CA: a linear unidimensional model, a Guttman simplex model and second-order factor structure (Levine & McCroskey, 1990). The study revealed a second-order factor model in which total (trait) CA is an accumulative score of 4 subscales of contextual CA best fits their enormous data (Levine & McCroskey, 1990). Other studies have confirmed the same results (Russ, 2012).

To develop a comprehensive CA theory, explain communication predispositions, and study CA at cross/intercultural level, CA needs to be studied in both trait and context dimensions (Kim, Tasaki, Kim & Lee, 2007; Sue, Ino & Sue, 1983). One reason is that the perception of CA contexts could be different cross-culturally (Pederson, Tkachuk & Allen, 2008; Pribyl, Keaten, Sakamoto & Koshikawa, 1998; Vinson & Roberts, 1994). Along with trait CA, many studies have applied a contextual approach to investigate CA (Edwards & Walker, 2007; Honeycutt, Choi, & DeBerry, 2009; Jung, 2013; Russ, 2012).

Communibiological and situational and approaches are the two main approaches to study CA. The focus of the communibiological approach is the neurobiological foundations of communication anxiety, while a situational approach mostly deals with the environmental factors and pays attention to role of culture, social learning, and situation on formation and dynamics of CA (Beatty & McCroskey, 1998; Heisel, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1999; Kelly & Keaten, 2000). However, CA is mostly studied from the viewpoint of the situational approach and an extensive body of research has explored CA, especially through comparing USA and non-USA participants in cross-cultural analyses (Croucher, 2013; Neuliep, Chadour, & McCroskey, 2003). Culturally CA has been perceived in the forms of the trait and state CA. Trait CA is the dispositional amount of apprehension individuals feels during anticipated or actual communication, while state CA refers to apprehension in different communicational contexts such as dyadic, small groups, meeting and public (Rahmani & Croucher, 2017). Audience apprehension is a form of anxiety independent from the communication contexts, referring to the apprehension prompted by specific audience characteristics such as novelty of speaking situation, speakers’ status in relation to audience, speaker’s conspicuousness,

speaker and audience dissimilarity, and prior history of anxiety in public speaking (Witt, et al., 2006).

As one of the most studied communication constructs, CA has been studied in relation to many other constructs. Previous studies showed individuals with a high level of CA are less likely to be skillful in communication (Allen & Bourhis, 1996) and CA is negatively correlated with WTC and SPCC (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Mansson & Myers, 2009; McCroskey, Burroughs, Daun, & Richmond, 1990; Teven, Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2010). The relationship between the demographic variables such as sex, age, and level of education with CA has been studied and show that USA female participants have a slightly higher level of CA than their male counterparts (Baus & Welch, 2008; Canary & Hause, 1993; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond, 1982), yet Lin and Rancer (2003) reported males to be more apprehensive. Sex-related differences in CA can be ascribed to cultural biases resulting from social roles (Allen, O'Mara, & Andriste, 1986) and psychological stereotypes of the genders (Greenblatt, Hasenauer, & Freimuth, 1980). There is less information available about this possible difference in other cultures. The relationship between age and CA also has contradictory results in different studies with some showing a negative relationship between age and CA (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004), others a positive relationship (Watson, Monroe, & Atterstrom, 1989; Watson, Monroe, Fayer, & Aloise, 1988) and even no relationship (Dwyer, 1998). Investigation of the relationship of education and CA showed the educational environment and the amount of perceived educational and behavioral error correction during grade school can affect the level of CA in the latter part of individuals' lives (Daly & Friedrich, 1981). Another study also indicated lower CA levels among individuals with higher education and higher CA levels among individuals with lower education (Kasemkosin & Rimkeeratikul, 2012). Minority groups's CA can be affected by different factors such as linguistic differences (Chesebro et al., 1992; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and religious variations (Croucher, 2013). The lower levels of SES of the minority groups can be due to immigration (Prevo et al., 2014), less access to educational and medical opportunities, and less functional skills (Smith et al., 2010; Thomas, 2013) and make minority groups more anxious.



### **3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

#### **3.1 Framework and Methods**

While, this project mainly used quantitative methods, a theoretical study of the investigated constructs to define the necessary concepts and develop the final model for the project is also included. Deciding on the methodological approach for each paper was based on the nature of the study and the questions posed. Quantitative research is an appropriate approach for research aimed at a deep and detailed understanding of a specific sample or group. Moreover, the result from such research can be generalized to the larger population (Swanson & Holton, 2005).

##### **3.1.1 Quantitative methodology**

A quantitative method was applied to study the data collected from the minority groups in Iran and Singapore. This paradigm of research makes it possible to generalize finding from samples to populations when the proper sampling methods are used. Quantitative method is based on (quasi) experimental, correlational, and descriptive study of proposed hypotheses and research questions derived from theories in the domain of a research topic (Swanson & Holton, 2005). Surveys are one of the main forms of doing quantitative research. Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015) propose that surveys are a proper way of doing research if the study needs new data from people who are good at providing data about the research topic. Among the different methods of surveying the respondent, this project used self-reports. Previous CA studies have concluded self-measurement to be a valid, functional, and useful way of evaluating communicative choices, especially when the researcher is concerned with the subjects' perceptions of their communicative traits and/or behaviors (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). When choosing the proper scales for this research, it was taken into consideration that the 1) scales are in line with the theoretical framework of the research, 2) they were

structurally tested and validated before, and 3) practically collecting data using the scales is feasible. Feasibility of data collection generally is referred to as the possibility of finding proper contacts to collect data, presenting the scale in the proper linguistic form, and the possibility of having access to random people from the target population. Upon data collection, analysis was done using different statistical tests such as correlation analysis, independent samples *t*-tests and linear regression. Correlation analysis investigates the relationship between variables to explore if change in the amount of one variable is related to change in the amount of other variable(s). It is calculated using standardization of the multiplication of deviations of one variable by the corresponding deviation in the other variable(s) through the following formula where  $r$  represents the correlations index,  $x_i$  and  $y_i$ , stand for the variables,  $s_x$  stands for standard deviation, and  $N$  represents the quantity of the sample (Field, 2009).

$$r = \frac{cov_{xy}}{s_x s_y} = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{(N - 1)s_x s_y}$$

Independent samples *t*-tests examine the significance of the difference between the means of a variable in two samples with no shared participants (Field, 2009). A *t*-test is calculated using the following formula, where  $\bar{X}_i$  is the mean for a sample,  $s_i$  is the amount of standard error for a sample and  $N_i$  is the number of the participants for a sample.

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{s_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{N_2}\right)}}$$

To predict an outcome variable from other predictor variable(s) regression analysis is used. Prediction using one predictor is called simple regression while multiple predictors produce a multiple regression (Field, 2009). Linear regression provides the best line that summarizes the general trend of the data set. Taking  $X_i$  as an independent variable to predict the variable of  $Y_i$ ,  $b_0$  as the intercept of the model,  $b_1$  as the regression coefficient, and  $\varepsilon_i$  as the model's residual simple linear regression model is produced using the following model

$$Y_i = (b_0 + b_1 X_i) + \varepsilon_i$$

### 3.2 Data

The quantitative papers in the project are focused on minority groups in Iran and Singapore. These minorities differ in their level of social and political



freedom and economic development. Iranian Kurds are a highly collectivistic ethnic and religious minority in a country strictly identified with its religious identity with little tolerance for divergent ethnic tendencies. Malays in Singapore are mostly a collectivistic immigrant population who are reported to suffer from unstable social and economic situations in a country characterized by rapid economic growth and huge ethnic diversity (Mutalib, 2005). The data in both countries was collected using the following measures.

### **3.2.1 Instruments**

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) is a 24-item Likert type scale measuring trait-like communication apprehension in four contexts: dyadic, meeting, small group, and public (McCroskey, 1982). It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. The scale is reliable, with alpha reliabilities ranging from .80 to .95 (Croucher, 2013; Hsu, 2007).

The Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale is a 20-item scale which measures one's willingness to initiate communication among acquaintances, friends, and strangers. The scale items range from (0) never to (100) always. McCroskey (1992) asserted that while the scale has seven dimensions, it could be scored as unidimensional. Previous alpha reliabilities have ranged from .81 to .89 (Mansson & Myers, 2009).

The Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) scale is a 12-item scale, measuring individuals' perceptions of their own communicative competence among acquaintances, friends, and strangers (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The scale items range from (0) not at all competent to (100) completely competent. While there are three types of receivers, and four contexts for competence (public, meeting, group, and dyad), often the combined score is only reported. Previous reliabilities have ranged from .81 to .93 (Hsu, 2007).

### **3.2.2 Kurdistan**

Kurdistan is the homeland of the Kurds. A group of 25 – 30 million people living in a vast area divided between Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Kurds are facing special sociopolitical issues in each of these countries. In Iran, various social, historical, religious, and linguistic differences distinguish Kurds from other ethnic groups. Linguistically, the Kurdish language is different than the neighboring Persian, Arabic, and Turkish languages. As a member of the Indio-European language family, Kurdish is considered to be a Western Iranian language similar to Farsi (Persian) but different than Arabic and Turkish (Kreyenbroek, 1992). In the context of faith, Kurdistan is a diverse society. Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims with a minority Shiite community living in Southern Iranian Kurdistan (Dahlman, 2002). However, non-Kurdish Iranians are mostly Shiite, and Shiite is the official faith of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, 2016). Historically, after the first break-

up of Kurdistan in the 16th century and until World War I, Kurds could continue their autonomous political and social lives within the borders of the Persian and Ottoman Empires in the form of local dynasties (McDowall, 2004).

The status of women in Kurdish society is an example of the cultural difference between the Kurds and the rest of Iranian society. Described as being more liberal, Kurdish women have been reported to become important public figures and rulers (van Bruinessen, 1993). According to van Bruinessen, having a Kurdish woman in the position of commanding and ruling has been generally accepted, as it is depicted in Kurdish folklores and described in the records of commentary law during the Ottoman Empire's ruling over southern, western, and northern Kurdistan. This matriarchal influence is rare among Middle Eastern cultures.

Kurds in Iran are a minority with low levels of SES. Economically, Kurdistan in Iran is underdeveloped and marginalized and it suffers from an unemployment rate higher than the rest of the country (Groohi, Rossignol, Barrero, & Alaghebandan, 2006; Yildiz & Tayşi, 2007). Political and military conflicts have also worsened the condition for the Kurds. Due to various cultural differences between the Kurds and majority groups, not only in Iran, but also in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, among which Kurdistan is divided, Kurds have been regarded as a danger to territorial integrity and sovereignty of those countries.

The Kurdish sample consisted of 157 people ( $n = 157$ ). Participants ranged in age from 17 to 612 ( $M = 34.27$ ,  $SD = 9.55$ ). Men accounted for 57.8% ( $n = 89$ ) of the sample, and women for 41.9% ( $n = 65$ ), and 1 (.6%) person did not report their sex. The sample's educational background was diverse: 6.5% ( $n = 10$ ) reported having completed up to grade 9, 16.8% ( $n = 26$ ) had a high school diploma, 45.8% ( $n = 71$ ) an undergraduate degree, 20.6% ( $n = 32$ ) a graduate degree, and 10.3% ( $n = 16$ ) did not report their highest completed education.

### 3.2.3 Singapore

The Singapore data was collected among the Malay minority group. Singapore is a culturally diverse country. Due to the economic needs for a foreign work force, there are workers from different nationalities, mostly Malay, Indonesian, and Indian serving in different sectors of Singapore's economy. As of 2013, the foreign work force made up 300,000 people of 1.3 million workers in Singapore (Croucher, Zeng, Rahmani, & Cui, 2017 in press). For the last 3 decades the population growth rate of foreigners in Singapore has been 7 time faster the Singaporean population (Weiss, 2011). Therefore, with the huge increase in the number of foreigners in Singapore, the burden on the job market and infrastructure has increased (Hui & Hashimi, 2007). Along with competition over resources, the immigrant population in Singapore is facing a cultural competition because of the negative opinion many native Singaporeans hold against foreigners (Weiss, 2011).

Malays in Singapore generally have lower SES while ethnic Chinese are the political, economic, and socially dominant group in Singapore (Rubdy &

McKay, 2013; Stephan Ortmann, 2009). There is a big gap in the average income of the minority group of foreign workers and the domestic population of Singapore. For example, ethnic Malays' income is 60% less than ethnic Chinese (Weiss, 2011). In terms of education, Malays receive less higher education admission compared to both ethnic Chinese and Indian populations (Mutalib, 2005). They also experience higher divorce rates, larger numbers of single parent households, and larger family sizes (Mutalib, 2005). Such disadvantages among Malays have resulted in negative stereotyping, resentment, and prejudice against Malays and their marginalization (Lyons & Ford, 2009). Despite governmental efforts to integrate minority groups, long-standing differences between the groups often lead to a lack of communication, which is not spoken about openly in Singapore (Lyons & Ford, 2009).

The sample from Singapore included 314 individuals ( $n = 314$ ). Men accounted for 48.7% ( $n = 153$ ) of the sample and women for 51.3% ( $n = 161$ ). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60 ( $M = 28.14$ ,  $SD = 7.17$ ). Of the participants, 209 were ethnic-Chinese born in Singapore (66.6%), and 105 were Malay (33.4%). The information about educational background of the participants was not relevant to this study.

## **4 PUBLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This project aimed at studying minority groups' CA and the relationship between CA and intergroup conflict. Based on this general idea, and during a three-year period, four studies were designed, prepared, and published to answer the questions raised regarding the different aspects of this relationship. These studies investigated the nature of communication apprehension in intergroup and intercultural contexts, dealt with communication apprehension of two minority groups, Kurds in Iran and Malays in Singapore, and presented a theoretical discussion on the interactions of CA and intergroup conflict, which led to a theoretical model of this interaction calling for further studies in this area. A summary of each study is presented below.

### **4.1 Apprehension and anxiety in communication (Oxford University Book Chapter)**

Keywords: Intergroup Anxiety, Intergroup Contact, Intercultural Communication Apprehension, Uncertainty, Prejudice, Conflict

The first publication (I – see List of Original Publications on p.6) of this project is a theoretical discussion of the nature of communication apprehension (CA). As the main idea of this project is to investigate minority groups' CA, this element is specifically concentrated on CA in an intergroup context and begins with a broader idea of anxiety. Defining anxiety, the article discusses the psychological and social effects of high anxiety. Generally, it finds anxiety to be a negative element and an obstacle to communication, which has cognitive and social consequences. Anxiety in communication has different forms such as CA, and intercultural communication apprehension (ICA), which is the apprehension individuals feel due to a real or imagined intercultural communication. All ICA is positively correlated with uncertainty and

ethnocentrism, and negatively correlated with intercultural willingness to communicate.

As a form of anxiety, intergroup anxiety is restlessness and negative feelings caused by communicating with a member of an outgroup. As a result of fear of being disapproved, embarrassed, and/or rejected across different racial, ethnic, religious, and social groups' interactions, intergroup anxiety has negative consequences such as disability in social interactions, weak cognitive performance, and even life consequences. Theoretically, intergroup anxiety is influenced by the previous experiences one has had with members of other groups, one's knowledge of other groups, and the situation in which one interacts with other groups. Intergroup anxiety has various consequences such as 1) negative psychological consequences, 2) negative behavioral consequences, 3) negative evaluations by outgroup members, and/or 4) negative evaluations by ingroup members.

The article also reviews the influential model of intergroup anxiety by Stephan and Stephan (1985). This model discusses both the antecedents and consequences of intergroup anxiety. Based on this model, prior intergroup relations, intergroup cognition, and situational factors can increase or decrease the amount of intergroup anxiety. Prior intergroup relations include both the amount and the quality of previous contacts with the outgroup. Prior intergroup cognition includes different forms of intergroup knowledge and considerations. The situational factors that affect communication anxiety include type of structure, type of interdependence, group composition, and relative status of the group. Intergroup anxiety also has behavioral and cognitive consequences and affective outcomes. The behavioral consequences include avoidance, and amplified normative responses. Cognitively, intergroup anxiety results in information-processing biases, motivational biases, and self-awareness outcomes. The affective consequences include amplified emotional and evaluative reactions.

Along with the investigating the nature of intergroup anxiety, the article uses existing communication theories to explain this phenomenon. Specifically, it uses uncertainty reduction theory (URT), anxiety/uncertainty management theory (AUM), and integrated threat theory (ITT). Uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) defines anxiety as a result of uncertainty and asserts that to maintain communication parties should decrease their uncertainty and consequently their anxiety. URT predicts and explains the interrelations of communication uncertainty, amount of communication, nonverbal communication, information seeking, intimacy level, reciprocity, similarity, and liking. Originally URT posited 7 axioms and 21 theorems, according to which, the basic purpose of interaction is to reduce the amount of uncertainty individuals have prior to interaction through different verbal and non-verbal passive, active, and interactive strategies.

Anxiety/uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1995) focuses on anxiety and believes that to have *effective communication* the level of intergroup anxiety should be managed between a minimum and a maximum threshold.

While URT assumes communication is meant to reduce communication uncertainty, AUM posits that during communication, parties manage their uncertainty and anxiety between a minimum and maximum threshold, hoping for effective communication. A higher amount of uncertainty and anxiety, above the maximum threshold, makes parties too anxious to communicate and a lower-than-threshold amount demotivates communication parties (Gudykunst, 1995). Two important concepts of AUM are *mindfulness* and *effective communication*. Mindfulness is a quality of communication, during which the participants are actively and consciously aware of their cultural differences. The more similar the intended and received meanings are, the more effective is the communication. Another important concept of AUM is “strangeness”. Strangers are the people who are physically close, yet conceptually apart and communication takes place among people with a certain level of strangeness. The level of strangeness increases as the conceptual difference between the participants grows (Neuliep, 2012).

Integrated threat theory (ITT) explains and predicts the interrelations of intergroup prejudice, conflict, and anxiety and posits that when individuals believe their social group, identity, value, and beliefs are threatened they develop prejudice as a defensive reaction (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Similar to AUM, ITT deals with intergroup anxiety, but measuring anxiety, it takes other forms of anxiety into consideration, along with uncertainty. Moreover, while AUM differentiates anxiety and uncertainty as correlated yet separated constructs, and focuses on a greater range of antecedents, ITT focuses on prejudice and asserts anxiety has detrimental effects and leads to stereotyping, and polarized emotions and evaluations. ITT defines four classes of intergroup prejudice: *Realistic threat* is the result of economic, physical, and political threat that an individual feels from outgroup members; the differences in values, beliefs, and norms of groups cause *symbolic threats*; when the perceived outgroup threat is attributed to the behavior of a typical member of the outgroup, a case of *negative stereotyping* happens; and *intergroup anxiety* which is the fear people have while interacting with an outgroup member (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). The ITT perceives intergroup anxiety as a different construct as it functions at the interpersonal level while other antecedents perceive threat at the group level (Croucher, 2013).

The article also establishes a strong link between intergroup anxiety and intergroup conflict. Based on its theoretical discussion, the paper concludes that different factors such as ethnocentrism, prejudice, and discrimination can increase the amount of anxiety in intergroup contexts. These factors are related to individuals’ feelings of threat due to one or some of the following: intergroup conflict, unequal group status, ingroup identification, knowledge of outgroup, and intergroup contact. Thus, the paper concludes that conflict is an antecedent of intergroup anxiety. However, a greater amount of intergroup anxiety can also lead to intergroup conflict, especially when the less powerful groups are worried about the future of their group (group vitality) and take the risk of engagement in an intergroup conflict even though they are competitively less



powerful than the majority group. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a bidirectional relationship between intergroup anxiety and intergroup conflict. Intergroup conflict increase the amount of intergroup anxiety, and a sufficiently large amount of intergroup anxiety can lead to intergroup conflict.

To settle intergroup conflicts, the article proposes individuals should establish more high quality intergroup contacts and change the way they make distinctions among various groups. The strategy of improving intergroup contact includes helping members of the groups have constructive contact, which allows them to acquire an in-depth knowledge of each other, improve their positive feelings and image of outgroup, and gain a cooperative view. Cross-cultural friendships and intergroup disclosure can enhance the quality of intergroup contacts.

This article is an important element of this thesis. It establishes the theoretical basis and justifications for studying the CA of minority groups. Out of its theoretical discussion, the paper concludes that asymmetrical power relationships between the groups can affect the amount of anxiety in intergroup relationship. Future studies of the minority-majority intergroup relations can investigate the difference in the amount of CA, as a special form of anxiety. Also, the paper deals with the relationship between intergroup anxiety and intergroup conflict. This relationship needs further investigation to examine the dynamics of the relationship and the different involved factors.

## **4.2 Minority groups and communication apprehension: An investigation of Kurdistan**

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, Socioeconomic status, Kurdistan, Culture, Regression

This second publication of this study (II – see List of Original Publications on p.6) explores communication apprehension (CA) among the Iranian Kurdish minority group. Choosing a Kurdish sample for this study was very important, because CA studies are mostly limited to a handful of cultures and countries in North America and East Asia. It is crucial to test the theoretical bases of CA in other cultures and geographical regions. One important region in that sense is the Middle East, where there is not a lot of information available about communication behaviors and characteristics. Due to political, cultural, and economic significance of the Middle East, it is important to know more about this region.

Also, the information about the communication characteristics of minority groups is limited and the research in this area needs more development. Different factors such as linguistic differences, religious variations, and lower socio-economic status (SES) can affect CA levels of minority groups. Kurds are one of the biggest minority groups in that region and are generally of lower

SES. The area where Kurds live – Kurdistan - spreads along the borders of four countries Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria and has witnessed many sociopolitical challenges in its long history. This challenging history has led to the development of an identity that distinguishes this people from the majority Persian, Turkish, and Arab peoples in these four countries. Kurds, an ethnic group of 25-30 million people, are considered to be the largest stateless nation. They are linguistically different than their Arab, Persian and Turkish neighbors and the Kurds in Iran have a faith different to the mainstream group. Politically, Kurds throughout Kurdistan have tried to establish an independent Kurdish country, which mostly has resulted in a complicated political condition and serious military clashes with the central governments. Also, culturally, Kurds are considered to be different than their majority groups in their own parts of Kurdistan. One significant aspect of Kurdish culture is the role of women in the community. Although Kurdish society, just like most of the Middle Eastern cultures is a patriarchal society and there is high power distance between the sexes, Kurdish women are described to be more liberal, and reported to be important public figures.

The paper measures CA in both trait and states levels. It asserts that the cross-cultural comparison of CA necessitates reporting trait CA of a sample, yet the contextual investigations of CA are of importance because the perception of these contexts could be different cross-culturally. On the intragroup level, a contextual investigation of a cultural group is necessary to explain a group's communicative predispositions. The paper also studies CA in relation to the demographic variables such as age, sex, and education. Previous studies of the relationship of CA with sex and age showed mixed results. Although the previous studies mostly showed higher levels of CA among women, these findings have been challenged (Lin & Rancer, 2003). Generally, a relationship between age and CA has been rejected, but some studies have reported an increase in CA as people age (Watson et al., 1988; Watson, Monroe, & Atterstrom, 1989). The relationship between education and CA has resulted in contradictory results. The paper proposes that any result from the relationship between education and CA should be taken with caution, because it is difficult to separate the effect of age from that of education on CA because predominantly, as people get more educated they also become older. The paper proposed the following research questions and hypotheses:

- H1:* Kurds in Iran will rate highly on communication apprehension.
- H2:* Women in Iranian Kurdistan will report higher communication apprehension than men.
- RQ1:* To what extent does age affect communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?
- RQ2:* What is the relationship between educational level achieved and communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?



To examine these questions and hypothesis, a sample of 157 self-administered surveys was collected. The data was collected in Bikan (Iran), which is historically a center for Kurdish nationalism. The participants of this study had a variety of ages, education, and social backgrounds. The diverse sample in this paper is significant, particularly since previous studies have predominantly relied on student samples. To measure CA, the study used the PRCA-24 developed by McCroskey (1982) that measures CA across four contexts: dyadic, meeting, group, and public. Total CA is calculated by adding up the values of these four contexts.

To find where Kurdistan is located on the continuum of CA, the trait CA score of the Kurdish sample was compared to the trait CA score of previous studies of USA samples. In total, 20 studies were retrieved that used the PRCA-24 as the scale of measurement. Compared to these samples, Kurdistan had a low CA score. To confirm H2 and answer both the research questions, four separate linear regressions were constructed. In each regression, a context of CA (small group, public, meeting, and dyadic) served as the criterion variable. The following variables were predictor variables in all of the regressions: sex, age, and highest educational level achieved. Simple regression is a way of predicting values of one variable from another and it provides the information about how much of a dependent variable can be predicted based on an independent variable (Field, 2009). The result of the regression tests showed females had significantly higher dyadic CA and public CA. The difference between men and women in meeting CA was not significant. Age was not a significant element in the prediction of CA. People with higher education (BA and higher) had significantly lower dyadic, meeting, and public CA. The regression model for group CA was not significant.

Despite the prediction in H1, Kurds in Iran rated as less apprehensive on the CA continuum. A combination of different explanations was presented to tackle this finding. Although the Middle East is generally considered to be a collectivistic region, some groups such as the Kurds in Iran are becoming more individualistic; for example, Sanandaj, the center of the Kurdistan province in Iran, is one of the most individualist cities in the country. Along with that, faith can also be a profound explanation. Islam, the dominant faith of the Kurdish people, brings people together on daily, weekly and annual bases. It also facilitates the communication process, raises individuals' communication skills, and finally reduces CA. Other studies of CA in Middle East have found relatively lower levels of CA compared to other nations. Tribal links and the structure of Kurdish community can also be another reason that helps people with having higher intragroup contacts and reducing their CA.

Higher levels of CA among Kurdish women could be related to the patriarchal structure of Kurdish community the prevents women from accessing public positions, restricts their level of communicational contacts, leaves them with less communication skills and causes them to have higher level of CA, especially dyadic and public CA. The lack of a significant relationship between CA and age is constant with previous studies.

Interestingly, while age showed no relationship with CA, it seems that higher education decreases the level of CA among the holder of a BA degree or higher. A higher degree of education provides students with more social encounters, and the confidence to communicate with more knowledge and expertise.

As the first study of CA among Kurds, this paper is an emphasis on the importance of exploring other less-studied cultures to develop a comprehensive CA theory. The low level of CA among the Kurds, a minority group with low SES, is an example of the complexity of such a theory, and it is consistent with Levine and McCroskey's (1990) caution for cross-cultural generalizability of CA findings. This paper deals with the role of sex, age, and education in CA. Based on the finding of the paper, it seems that more attention should be paid to intersex CA especially in cultures such as in the Middle East, which prescribe more distance between men and women in social relations and structures.

The result of the study should be analyzed with caution due to 1) translation of the scale, 2) the fact that data was from only one city in Iran, (3) the limited number of the subjects, 4) the need for a comparison with the majority group of Persian people, and 5) the effect of higher possibility self-criticism among the women in the relationship of sex and CA. At the same time, the role of education attainment should be noted. Close to two-thirds (66%) of the participants had a university education. As the study showed that a higher level of education is correlated with a lower level of CA, skewness in data could have affected the results.

The paper proposes some areas for future studies: studying CA in a more diverse demographic population, a minority-majority cross/intercultural study of CA, and a social-desirability investigation of the PRCA-24. The study also calls for more investigation of the different aspects of Kurdish culture in Iran and in the other parts of Kurdistan.

#### **4.3 Communication apprehension, self-perceived communication competence, and willingness to communicate in Singapore**

Keywords: Communication apprehension, Self-perceived communication competence, Willingness to communicate, Singapore

The third publication of this study (III – see List of Original Publications on p.6) of this project is a cross-cultural investigation of the communication apprehension (CA) of majority and minority groups in Singapore along with their trait willingness to communicate (WTC) and self-perceived communication competence (SPCC). This study is linked to the previous study, not only because the sample population is an ethnic minority group but also because the faith of most Malays is Muslim (like the Kurds) The previous study on CA in Kurdistan proposed that the socio-economic status (SES) level of people can affect the level of CA. This study of Malays in Singapore could

provide a better understanding of SES and CA as the existing literature supported the claim that the SES level of Malays is lower than the majority ethnic-Chinese (Lyons & Ford, 2009). The SES is represented through educational, occupational, and economic measurements of the groups' status (Education and socioeconomic status., n.d.). Malays are marginalized in Singapore and have higher unemployment rates than Chinese. Malays experience higher divorce rates, larger numbers of single parent households, and fewer students in higher education levels (Mutalib, 2005). Such social problems reinforce a variety of negative stereotypes toward Malays. On the other side, the ethnic-Chinese form the majority group in Singapore, and they dominate professional and managerial occupations (Lyons & Ford, 2009).

Along with CA, this study deals with the most frequent co-structures of CA, namely WTC and SPCC. Similar to CA, most of the WTC and SPCC research has been done in the USA and East Asia. To have a better understanding of the cultural characteristics of the other parts of the world and establish a comprehensive communication theory, it is important to study a variety of other nations and cultures. It is also important to study the communication behaviors of various social groups such ethnic, sex, and religious minorities, and people with the physical and mental disabilities.

Singapore was chosen for this study for the following three reasons: First, Singapore is an ethnically diverse nation with an ethnic-Chinese majority and many minority groups. This diversity provides for group-level comparisons. Second, research shows levels of CA, SPCC, and WTC differ based on an individual's status within society. Thus, it is an advantage to explore these traits in Singapore, as it has a dominant majority and minority groups. Third, Singapore is politically and culturally different from USA, European, and Southeast Asian national cultures, which make up the bulk of cultures studied in CA, WTC, and SPCC research. Exploring these three concepts in Singapore expands the existing understanding of communication, and further answers how and why people do communicate. Therefore, the current study assesses the overall position of Singapore on the CA, WTC, and SPCC continuums.

The study examines and answers the following hypotheses and research questions

- RQ1:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of communication apprehension (CA) scores?
- RQ2:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of willingness to communicate (WTC) scores?
- RQ3:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) scores?
- H1a:* Chinese Singaporeans report lower CA levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.
- H1b:* Chinese Singaporeans report higher WTC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.

*H1c: Chinese Singaporeans report higher SPCC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.*

The sample for this study included 314 individuals from a variety of age, sex, and ethnic backgrounds. Similar to the previous paper, the PRCA-24 was used to measure CA. WTC was measured using the Willingness to Communicate scale (McCroskey, 1992), and SPCC was measured by the Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The PRCA-24 measures CA across four contexts of dyadic, meeting, group, and public. Total amount of CA is calculated by adding up the amount of these four contexts. Both the WTC and SPCC measures can be scored as unidimensional.

To answer the research questions the CA, WTC and SPCC scores for both the minority Malays people and the majority ethnic-Chinese were compared to the available corresponding scores from the neighboring cultures acquired in previous studies. These studies included measurements in Singapore, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Philippines. To examine the hypotheses in the study, three independent samples *t*-tests were conducted. Independent samples *t*-tests examine significant difference between means of two groups with no shared participants (Field, 2009). The results of the test showed Chinese Singaporeans scored significantly lower on the contexts of dyadic and public CA, and higher on WTC. No significant difference was observed in the amount of SPCC of minority and majority groups.

The results showed that Malays have the highest levels of CA in comparison to other respondents in the region while ethnic-Chinese born in Singapore have the lowest CA levels in the region. This can partially be related to *immigrant effect*, which means individuals born into a group with less economic, political, or social power (such as immigrants) are likely to develop less communicative competence. This paper reasoned that the groups with lower SES are more likely to have higher levels of CA and less WTC. The study also found that when the decision to communicate is set, individuals perceive themselves to be competent to communicate regardless of the party they are communicating with. That is why despite the lack of significant differences in SPCC, the minority group has higher CA and WTC. This means Malays find themselves to be as competent as ethnic-Chinese in communication, but due to certain factors such as lower SES they have less WTC and higher CA, which prevents them from beginning communication.

A comparison of the data from this sample with other available data showed Singapore has a lower amount of WTC and SPCC. Aside from the Malays' WTC score, the other scores are representative of this region when compared to USA and/or European scores. The majority of the WTC and SPCC scores in Singapore are in line with previous "Asian" trait research, which posited Asian cultures such as China, which are perceived to be more collectivistic, show higher CA, lower WTC, and lower SPCC in comparison to their more individualistic European and USA counterparts. This can be related to the fact that due to the push toward being harmonious with the ingroup,

holding social duties and being obedient, people in collectivistic cultures are more likely to be sensitive about peers' evaluation of them than people in individualistic cultures.

A major finding of this study was the need to ask for more comprehensive measurements for communication traits that are not solely developed based on Western samples and populations. Most of the studies on communication traits of non-Western samples do not report their confirmatory factor analysis and only rely on reliability indicators, such as Cronbach's alpha. The results of the current study bring earlier results into question, and suggests the need to statistically re-examine the idea of CA in its local cultural context. This study also calls for further studies on the relationship between cultural identity and communication traits. Moreover, further studies on these communication traits should explore ingroup differences in CA, SPCC, and WTC.

#### **4.4 Intergroup conflict, WTC and CA: An analysis of minority and majority groups (Rowman and Littlefield Book Chapter)**

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, Willingness to Communicate, Intergroup conflict, Minority-Majority Communication,

The fourth publication of this study (IV – see List of Original Publications on p.6) concerns intergroup conflict, willingness to communicate (WTC), and communication apprehension (CA) in the minority-majority communication context. These two traits were chosen for this study because they are the most studied communication traits, and at the same time, they are related to different aspects of intergroup conflicts. For example, WTC research on second language learners includes a significant amount of the studies on conflicts that language learners face in cross/intercultural settings. The scope of the current project and its focus on CA, along with the importance of anxiety in its broad sense for intergroup conflicts justifies choosing CA as one of the variables in this study.

The study begins with an introduction about the nature of majority-minority intergroup conflicts in different contexts using relevant intergroup communication theories to study the dynamics of (inter)group identity formation, maintenance, and interaction. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT) and integrative theory of intergroups (ITT) theorized the formation and evaluation of group identity. According to SIT, when the subordinate group perceives ingroup favoritism of the dominant group as illegitimate, the status quo of the relationship between groups is challenged. Concomitant to the challenge, the minority group will try to move toward its group interests against the dominant ingroup's favoritism through either individual mobility to another group, social creativity, such as using new dimensions of intergroup comparison, or seeking positive distinctiveness from the dominant group. At the same time, protecting its group interest, the



dominant group will also try to maintain the status quo of the relationship between the groups. However, intergroup conflict does not happen if the subordinate group perceives the outgroup's favoritism to be legitimate.

Terror management theory (Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski, 1997) deals with the psychological function and the role of unconscious anxiety resulting from the awareness of death in communication. According to TMT, a discrepancy between the groups' worldview and values can lead to intergroup conflicts. Especially in the condition of asymmetrical power distribution, it is possible that a dominant group finds the values and worldview of a subordinate group to violate its ideology, thus the dominant group, anxious and apprehensive due to challenging beliefs of outgroup, tries to remove or change the ideological disturbance. Take for example how extremist religious groups may justify their actions against other groups that they perceive as evil.

Factor, Kawachi, and Williams' (2011) social resistance framework (SRF) explains the socio-psychological mechanisms of resistance in intergroup communication, especially in minority-majority group relationships. The SRF asserts that the asymmetrical distribution of power, along with having the perception of discrimination can create (intergroup) conflict. In this condition, the less privileged social groups are likely to take dangerous actions to emphasize their uniqueness and consequently establish their distinct identity, despite the fact that they are aware of the danger of their actions. The SRF investigates the reaction of the subordinate groups to the challenges they face from the dominant group members. According to this framework, everyday social resistance is either the result of social detachment due to perceived discrimination and power relationship, or the development of a collective non-dominant minority identity in opposition to dominant majority identity. Minority group members may engage in dangerous behaviors to behave differently than majority and to practice their behavior in a space outside of the control zone of dominant group. The SRF explores the societal power relationships on two levels; the macro level that puts emphasis on the societal and group roots of the individuals' behaviors and the micro level that mostly deals with the role of psychological and personal aspects of individuals.

Introducing WTC and CA, this chapter reviews studies on the relationship of each one of these traits with intergroup conflict across different cultures in USA, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in the late decades of the 20th century onwards. The WTC is one of the most studied constructs of intercultural communication and it is especially studied in the second language learning context. Regarding the relationship between WTC and intergroup conflict, the study reviewed MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels's (1998) heuristic model of variables influencing WTC to check out the very variable influencing WTC at the intergroup level. According to this model, at the intergroup level, two variables affect WTC: *motivations*, consisting of 1) control as the means of maintaining the social position, and 2) the desire to affiliate with the people using another language, and *attitudes* consisting of 1) integrativeness as the desire to affiliate and get more involved with the speakers of a second language

(L2) without the desire to be like them, and 2) fear of assimilation, which is the fear of losing membership in the native ethnolinguistic group due to learning a new language, a phenomenon generally referred to as subtractive bilingualism. Based on this model, the study proposes that motivations and attitudes of the speakers of a language toward L2 will be affected by the possibility of existence or absence of a conflict between the two ethnolinguistic groups. In a conflict, when the minority has less desire to integrate with the majority group and is afraid of assimilation, it may develop negative attitudes toward the majority and communication in L2. This negative attitude can also reinforce the lack of motivation to initiate a conversation in the majority language. The motivation of a minority group member to use the language of the majority group can be lower when the individuals are afraid of being positioned in a lower social position or when they are less interested in being affiliated with the majority group. Concluding the review of the model, the study asserts it is likely that due to the lesser amount of fear of assimilation among the members of the majority group, the desire to integrate has a major role in the formation of the intergroup attitude among the majority group. In the same way, a combination of majority members' perception of their social position and the degree they want to be affiliated with the minority group influence their motivation to initiate a communication in the language of the minority group. Along with the mentioned elements, in-group protection and prioritization, and communication competence in L2 can affect WTC in intergroup contexts and they could also be studied in relation to intergroup conflict.

Finally, the study introduces intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) and uses both it and CA to describe the role of communication anxiety in intergroup conflicts in organizational and educational contexts, and in relation to cultural adaptation of immigrant groups. Describing the mechanisms of CA and conflict interaction, the study explained that competition over the scarce resources and the regulations made by a culture are the major causes of (intergroup) conflict (Putnam, 2006). Minority groups with lower SES possess fewer resources to compete with the majority groups to either access scarce resources or set (cultural) regulations. This will affect the capability of those groups in their conflict with the dominant ones. On the other side, competition over scarce resources and cultural regulations do not necessarily cause conflict. Studying conflict between minority and majority ethnic groups from the viewpoint of political communication, Lake and Rothchild (1996) proposed that the main reason for intergroup and intra-group conflict is the collective apprehension and fear of the future rooted in one of the three dilemmas of information failure, problems of credible commitment, and security, and not the mere competition over resources. Therefore, to avoid the consequences of intergroup conflict, the less-advantaged minority groups are more likely to avoid intergroup conflict, unless they are apprehensive enough about the serious questions that threaten the future of their group or their group vitality. The study summarized this discussion in the following theoretical model (Figure 1). However, this version of the model is slightly different to the model

in the original study as I decided to combine CA and anxiety about the future of the group together under the more comprehensive title of anxiety.

FIGURE 1 Correlational model of minority-majority conflict and CA





## 5 DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

### 5.1 Summary of the finding

Communication is a complicated system of transmitting messages at a range of levels in different contexts from intrapersonal to global. This system helps to code, decode, understand, and finally to respond to ideas. This gradually evolved system is the result of biological and cognitive development over many generations of individuals forming a social convention of behavioral norms (Galantucci, 2005). The evolution of language as the most important means of communication is the result of both biological and historical-cultural evolutions (Origgi & Sperber, 2000).

Different models have been proposed to explain the development of communication systems (Fay, Garrod, Roberts, & Swoboda, 2010). For example, describing the different ways linguistic forms of communication systems have developed, two general models have been proposed. First, the iterated vertical learning model, which proposes on the basis of biological inheritance that linguistic items are descended vertically from generation to generation (Kirby & Hurford, 2002). According to this model, the linguistic heritage of the previous generation is affected by the innate learners' biases and intergenerational transmission. Linguistic biases are the biological predisposition of the language learners to learn language. This model also proposes that as the amount of language training increases, a holistic form of language emerges and a specific number of language exemplars can lead to a compositional form of language. Another model of linguistic system evaluation is the collaborative model, which unlike the first model proposes communication is horizontal, bidirectional, and collaborative (Fitch, 2007). The collaborative model represents the dynamic nature of linguistic systems, which are constantly evolving to meet the users' needs and shows that language users have a variety of vocabularies to communicate their ideas. Local interactions of people and their relationships result in choosing one linguistic form, word or lexicon for that idea; syntactic structures are developed in the same way (Fay et al., 2010). From a behavioral

point of view, it is necessary that language interlocutors conceptualize the items in the same way to minimize the collaborative effort to make oneself understood and to understand others.

Despite their basic differences in description of language evaluation, the iterated learning and collaborative models describe communication as a system. Interestingly, the collaborative model has been confirmed by computer simulations, laboratory results, and naturalistic studies (Fay et al., 2010). Perception and description of communication as a system provides a more organized classification of the different items that help the system work or prevent it from accomplishing its functions.

Within a communication system meanings are produced, discursively coded, distributed and consumed, and discursively decoded through a cycle of “articulation of linked but distinctive structures” (Hall, 2006, p. 164). This systemic approach to communication takes the discursive aspect of communication into consideration, and emphasizes the role of message form within the entire process. An important aspect of studying messages is to define the production, reception, and reciprocity processes related to it. In Hall’s model of encoding and decoding of broadcast structures (Hall, 2006), frameworks of knowledge, relationships of production, and technical infrastructures influence the ways senders encode the message. At the same time, the same factors influence the way receivers decode messages. A minimum of compatibility and similarity between coded and decoded messages is necessary for *functionality of communication system* or communication effectiveness. Communication effectiveness defined as the compatibility between the intended meaning of the sender and the perceived meaning by the receivers is an important quality of mindful communication (Gudykunst, 1995) and a sign of communication competence (Beamer, 1992).

Within the communication system, communication apprehension (CA) could be perceived as a noise that prevents the sender from sending the encoded message or at least sending it properly. As a special form of anxiety, CA can be studied in different contexts. Although anxiety in its general sense can be a sign of self-awareness about the choices one can make as a free human being (Kierkegaard, 1980), the positive perceptions of CA are rare. However, theoretically it is possible to consider CA to have some constructive cognitive effects on interlocutors. Such effects could be related to an increase in the level of the self-awareness and emotional commitment during communication, which motivates the communication parties to assess their relative status and to reduce their communication uncertainty. This is compatible with the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) theory that proposes a minimum level of both anxiety and uncertainty is needed to maintain communication (Gudykunst, 1995). This is an actual ground for future studies to see if CA can be of constructive communicational value or not.

Although CA has mostly been approached as a personality trait (Biggers & Masterson, 1984) and within the interpersonal context, it can provide great cultural information in other contexts such as intergroup and intercultural.

Thus, there are many CA studies that investigate it in cross-cultural studies of USA and Asian cultures or USA and European contexts (a long list of such studies can be found in Rahmani and Croucher, 2017 in press). Also, in intergroup studies of minority and majority groups, CA information is both critical and meaningful.

Minority groups can be affected by CA for a variety of reasons. Minority groups with lower SES are more likely to have lower level of education, access to healthcare and medical opportunities, and lower functional skills (Smith et al., 2010; Thomas, 2013). For instance, limited financial and cultural resources prevent such people from asking for help from or to access specialists who can provide them with consulting information to overcome their anxiety. Less job security related to an unstable financial situation and inability to bear financial burdens of going unemployed for a while could potentially increase CA. Generally, people with higher levels of CA are more likely to censor themselves during communication in the case of disagreement with others (Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005). In other words they tend to accommodate or avoid conflict and dissent.

However, a higher level of CA does necessarily mean a lower communication competence of minority groups. Previous studies of minority groups' communication skills indicated that despite the disadvantage in using and/or learning the communication skills of majority groups, minority groups do not lack communication competences and skills (Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Miller, 1979). The Singapore study showed that despite the significance difference in CA and WTC between the minority and majority groups, there was no significant difference in SPCC scores of the two groups. This affirms previous research, which refuted a cultural deficit among the minority groups (Lebav, 1972). In other words, the finding showed while minority groups may have considerations in initiating a conversation (due to higher levels of CA or lower WTC), once they begin to communicate, they feel as confident and skillful as majority groups do.

It is likely that CA and low SES (re)produce each other. As CA levels increase, individuals avoid communication, and decreased communication can result in less communication experiences and skills. A persistence of lower SES can also worsen educational, financial, and occupational conditions for minorities, which can increase CA even more. Additionally, the children of minorities with higher levels of CA may inherit their parents' communication behaviors and be more apprehensive. This can lead to decreased educational success among minority groups, as previous research shows students with higher levels of CA are significantly more likely to drop out of school (Ericson & Gardner, 1992).

Linguistic barriers, due to using L2 are another challenge minority groups may face in their communication with majority groups. Communication in a second language, especially when it is not voluntary, imposes pressures such as fear of assimilation and being judged because of second language skills, and results in both a lack of confidence and higher levels of CA (Rahmani, 2017 in

press). Various sociopolitical reasons lead minorities to abandon their language and communicate in an L2, mostly the majorities' languages. Lower competence in the L2 can deprive the minorities from establishing a satisfactory relationship with the majority or with other minorities with whom they share the majority's language (Gareis, Merkin, & Goldman, 2011).

Along with SES, other factors affect minorities' levels of CA. Croucher (2013) argues that faith affects communication characteristics such as CA. This effect is mostly related to the long-standing societal role of faith. Islam for example is a very social faith. Different Islamic rituals and prayers gather believers on daily, weekly, and annual bases. Muslims are strongly advised to collectively say their 5-time daily prayers at mosques, and they are obliged to attend Friday prayers. There are obligatory holiday morning prayers too. Additionally, millions of Muslim pilgrims attend the annual Haj festival, which is also obligatory for every Muslim who can afford it once in their life. Practicing this system of collective religious commitments for hundreds of years has resulted in an extensive custom of social contact and communication engagements among Muslims for generations. This kind of communalism could significantly help reduce their communication anxiety. Previous studies have shown Middle Eastern cultures have lower levels of CA than most other cultures (Rahmani & Croucher, 2017 in press). A minority group rooted in such a culture could show a lower level of CA despite its lower SES (Rahmani & Croucher, 2017 in press).

The intergroup relationship of minority and majority groups usually entails competition over different cultural, social, financial, and political resources and this can potentially create intergroup conflict. The CA and other forms of communication anxiety play an important role in groups' approaches to conflict. Minority-majority conflicts, and problems in acculturation and integration with the majority group increase anxiety among minority groups (Fairhurst & Snavely, 1983; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002). Subordinate groups such as minorities with lower SES have less social, financial, and political resources to compete over interests with dominant groups. For example, lower SES has been reported to be a reason for conflict with school and peers among minority group students (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Also, subordinate groups' lower power status makes it difficult for minorities to maintain their cultural characteristics or to set cultural norms (May, 2012). In other words, minority groups with lower SES have less power to compete during the conflict, which increases CA levels among minority groups.

However, conflict is a costly process and intakes a lot of financial and emotional investments by all engaged parties. Due to the high costs of conflict, from a political communication viewpoint, groups tend to avoid conflict unless group vitality is threatened (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). This fear about the future of the group results from dilemmas of information failure, problems of credible commitment and security (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Each one of these dilemmas could be affected by the (lack) of intergroup communication. High-quality and more frequent intergroup communication could enhance intergroup awareness

and provide groups with more constructive information about other ones. Higher levels of apprehension can prevent intergroup commination and make conflict unavoidable.

## 5.2 Evaluation of research and limitation

This study aimed at investigating CA among minority groups. Despite taking reliable and tested methodological considerations into account, the results from this study should be interpreted in light of some presuppositions and limitations.

This study used the PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982), which measures CA as a trait and across four states: public, small groups, dyadic, and meeting. Although the PRCA-24 has been used in many intercultural and cross-cultural investigations, previous studies have shown cultural variations can affect the reliability of the scale (Levine & McCroskey, 1990). It is possible that cultural differences cause different perceptions of the scale's contexts. For example, the perception of "public" in different cultures might be different. While, talking to others in public places and about public issues may constitute public communication in some cultures, introducing oneself to a stranger on a bus could be considered public in another. Moreover, the border between group, public, and meeting can be vague culturally. Although, different methodological considerations were taken into account to make sure the accumulated data is reliable and valid, there is a chance of different cultural perceptions of the scale questions among the studied nations.

By minority group, this study means a heterogeneous group of individuals, with a lower SES due to various cultural, political, ethnic, religious, sexual reasons. There are basic differences among these groups, and due to them, groups represent different responses to the same conflicts they face. Even among the groups which are in the position of minority for the same reasons, there could be huge differences. For example, it is possible that the situation of an ethnic minority who lived in a place for long time is different to another, which has recently immigrated to another country and has formed a cohesive immigrant community. While the first group could have stronger historical and geographical ties with its immediate environment, the second group must deal with the question of adaptation, among many other issues. This is the case about the minority groups in this study. Malays in Singapore are immigrants who face growing resentment and prejudice, and predominately have lower SES compared to the majority ethnic-Chinese (Croucher, Rahmani, Sakkinen, & Hample, 2016). The Kurds in Iran also have lower comparative SES, have been living in their homeland Kurdistan for a long time, and they have a long history in their region. At the same time, one should notice that the samples for both groups have been collected in urban areas. A more inclusive perspective of the minority groups should take the results from rural areas into considerations.

Caution should be taken into consideration in interpretation of the correlational model of minority-majority conflict and CA. First, the development of the model relied on previous literature in CA and intergroup conflict, and has not been tested. Further studies are needed to test this proposal in different contexts. To make the model simpler, the most common definition of (intergroup) conflict has been adapted. There are different approaches to, and definitions for conflict, and each one emphasizes an aspect of conflict. The perception of conflict in this model is based on the shared area of most of the definitions, which define it as competition over scarce resources and setting cultural norms (Putnam, 2006). More expended definitions of conflict along with more factors could produce a more complex and comprehensive model. The next point regards the distinction between “CA” and “fear of future” in the proposed model. As both of these elements represent an aspect of group anxiety, it would be more helpful to combine both elements into a broader factor of “anxiety” that mediates the relationships of the causes of conflict and conflict itself. This change has been applied to the latter version of the model.

### **5.3 Practical and theoretical implications**

The results from this project show that the cultural characteristics of a group could affect the group’s CA levels. Such cultural characteristics can bring the group’s members together and establish social connections among them at different levels. Faith is one such cultural characteristic. A faith such as Islam brings people together and connects them. It is more likely that such practices play a role in decreasing the level of CA of groups and provides them with better communication opportunities. Based on the findings from this project, to put people in more contact with each other and enhancing social and cultural relationships among them could be helpful in decreasing minority groups’ levels of CA. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the communication links between the minority and majority groups and help them practice communication behaviors more and more. It should be noticed that enhancing communication between the minority and majority does not necessarily leads to better communication and more mutual understanding, but it is more likely it will decrease CA.

One good example of such practices may be educational courses in public speaking and speech courses at various educational levels. Decreasing CA levels of individuals from minority groups especially in the early school years is of significant importance, as CA as a traits forms in this period, and affects later communication behaviors of individuals (Daly & Friedrich, 1981; McCroskey, Andersen, Richmond, & Wheelless, 1981). It is recommended that educational systems help minority groups students to 1) develop their intergroup connections and engage them in the constructive intergroup communication with other students, and 2) to participate in educational courses that will teach



them how to express themselves in different settings, and finally to decrease their levels of CA. Based on the finding of this research, minority language issues and the question of minorities' L2 education should be carefully taken into consideration because education in the L2 has significant effects on student's WTC and CA. Thus, it is seriously recommended that educational systems prepare the required cultural and technical infrastructures for minority group students to be educated in their mother tongue.

Also, this study is of significance due to the information it provides about the process of communication in understudied minority groups. In a world divided among a finite number of nation-states, the question of minority groups of different races, ethnicities, cultures, sexes, and languages is gaining more attention. Especially, considering the amount of immigration taking place all over the world, and due to different reasons, the question of minority groups is becoming more important. This situation poses nation-states with challenging questions regarding different societal, cultural, political, and financial aspects of minority populations. Answering such questions and taking a stance about the rights and roles of minority groups in society is an essential and evolving responsibility for nation-states and a constructive section of citizenship education (Banks, 2004). Clearly, the ability to communicate and provide different groups with the chance to mutually understand and be understood is of great significance in establishing a just society that values diversity and inclusion.

Having a useful and utilitarian perception of a communication system is impossible without knowing the obstacles that may interfere with its basic functions. The concept of CA can potentially be one of the main issues in this regard. This project investigated CA in relation to sociocultural factors such as SES of minority groups. The results from this study can help policy-makers in future planning to increase the role of minority groups and remove the barriers of sociopolitical participation of subordinate groups in the community. Enhancing WTC and communication competence of individuals facilitates the process of intergroup communication and elevates mutual understanding among groups. One important step, according to the results of this project, is to provide minority groups with better SES, as this provides them with better education, welfare, and occupational situations. In its turn, this enhances the minority groups' confidence within the community, and allows them to feel more secure and possess more communicational skills to communicate with other groups.

The last but not least important implication of the project is about the relationship between CA and intergroup conflict. This study proposed a correlational model of minority-majority conflict and CA. The theoretical implication of this model is to pay attention to the role of anxiety and apprehension in conflict. It is more likely that groups avoid conflict as it asks for a lot of time, energy and resources from the groups, which could be spent in a more constructive way. The model proposed that when the level of anxiety is high enough to make groups worried about group vitality, there is higher



potential for intergroup conflict. Based on this model, a group's SES affects its ability to compete over scarce resources and setting cultural norms. Minority groups with lower SES have less access to social, political, and financial resources. For example, such groups may have lower education, less access to health care and higher unemployment. They also have less power to produce their cultural artifacts such media, language education, and institutional support for their cultures. This situation can gradually and eventually face minority groups to the threat of group vitality. The disability to communicate this anxiety in a proper and effective way makes intergroup conflict unavoidable. Therefore, while from an egalitarian viewpoint, it is crucial the minority group be given the equal socioeconomic opportunities, they should be granted the proper channels of proper and effective communication to majority groups.

## 6 SUMMARY

Communication is a complicated system of message transmission in different contexts. Using this gradually-evolved and complicated cognitive and behavioral system, ideas and perceptions are shared among communication parties (Galantucci, 2005). Various models have been proposed for communication evolution (Fay et al., 2010). A description of communication as a system provides a more organized classification of different items helping the system work or preventing it from accomplishing its functions. Communication apprehension (CA), at its higher levels, is an obstacle that interferes within communication system and functions in two major ways: (1) prevent the parties from beginning a communication, (2) prevents from an effective message transmission. Communication apprehension is affected by different sociocultural elements such as the social status of the communities.

This study investigates the CA of minority groups. Mostly, minorities' access to power resources, media, educational, and health care resources, i.e. their socio-economic status (SES), is different and rather less than majority groups. The CA of minority groups can be affected by different elements such as lower SES. Lower SES causes minorities to have less communication skills and approach intergroup conflict. Intergroup conflict is also related to groups' anxiety and apprehension. Previous studies of CA are mostly focused on special geographical areas, student samples and mainstream groups. This study tried to fill in this gap through investigating CA in intercultural relationship of minority and majority groups in Iran and Singapore, and designing a theoretical relational model that explains the relationship of anxiety and intergroup conflict. The minority groups of the project are the Iranian Kurds and the Singaporean Malays. Kurds in Iran, a religious and ethnic minority are considered to be of lower SES compared to the Persian majority group. Malay people in Singapore are a minority group with a significant lower SES compared to the mainstream ethnic-Chinese people.

Various theories such as Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory, and Integrated Threat Theory explain the theoretical bases of communication apprehension in intergroup

context. The roles of apprehension in communication and its relation to intergroup conflict are also explained using different theories such as Social identity theory, Terror Management theory and Social Resistance Framework. Based on this theoretical framework this research is looking into the following research questions

- 1) What are the characteristics of communication apprehension of minority groups?
- 2) What is the relationship of minority communication apprehension and intergroup conflict?

To examine this research questions, the project used a quantitative research method and analyzed the data from two samples collected in Iran and Singapore. The project used two theoretical studies of the intergroup communication anxiety, and intergroup conflict and CA and a willingness to communicate. These studies used the existing literature to prepare a theoretical ground for empirical studies of the project and proposing future directions for the research area.

This project found CA to be a cultural variable which could be affected by the cultural characteristics of the group such as their SES and their intra/intergroup contact levels. CA of the minority groups is also affected by their position as minority group and their cultural identity. Furthermore, the project proposed that the relationship between CA and intergroup conflict is bidirectional. A conflict in the relationship of minority and majority groups will raise apprehension and a higher amount of anxiety about the future of the groups and their group vitality can lead to a conflict. Intergroup conflict could also be affected by SES of the groups. Perceiving conflict as a competition over access to the scarce resources and setting sociocultural regulations, groups' SES affects their capability and ability for competition.

This thesis calls for a better understanding of, and approaches to, to reduce CA in order to have a more effective communication in intergroup and intercultural contexts. This will help to prevent and resolve unwanted intergroup conflict. Educational, cultural and economic plans could be useful in helping the minority groups with managing their CA and enhancing their intergroup/intercultural communication quality. The existing gap in the cultural studies of various cultural groups also calls for a more varied theoretical and methodological attitude to those cultural components traditionally being defined within the boundaries of limited cultural groups. This new attitude should be applied to the (re)definition of the components, measurements, intra/interdisciplinary correlations and generalizability of the constructs. Special attention is advised to be given to the even less-studied minority groups such as gender, religious and ethnic minorities, understudied age group, especially senior citizens and younger children, and people with physical and mental disabilities.

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## **ORIGINAL PAPERS**

### **I**

#### **APPREHENSION AND ANXIETY IN COMMUNICATION**

by

Diyako Rahmani, 2017

In Oxford Encyclopedia of Intergroup Communication

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## **APPREHENSION AND ANXIETY IN COMMUNICATION**

Diyako Rahmani

### **Summary**

Intergroup anxiety is a form of restlessness and negative feeling caused by communicating with someone with a different social and cultural identity. Just like any other form of anxiety, intergroup anxiety has negative consequences such as disability in social interaction, weak cognitive performance, and even life consequences. Intergroup anxiety is the result of fear for being disapproved, embarrassed and rejected across different racial, ethnic, religious and social groups' interactions. Theoretically, intergroup anxiety is influenced by the previous experiences one has had with the members of other groups, one's knowledge of other groups and the situation in which one interacts with other groups. Intergroup anxiety has behavioral, cognitive and affective consequences. There are different theories of communication that explain the nature and function of intergroup anxiety. Uncertainty reduction theory, for example, defines anxiety as a result of uncertainty and asserts to maintain communication parties should decrease their uncertainty and consequently their anxiety. Anxiety/uncertainty management theory focuses on anxiety and believes to have effective communication the level of intergroup anxiety should be managed between a minimum and a maximum threshold. A decrease in anxiety and uncertainty is also essential to intercultural adaptation. Different factors can increase the amount of anxiety in intergroup contexts, namely ethnocentrism, prejudice, and discrimination. These factors are related to individuals' feeling of threat due to one or some of the following: intergroup conflict, unequal group status, ingroup identification, knowledge of outgroup, and intergroup contact. To settle intergroup conflicts individuals are advised to establish more high quality intergroup



contacts and to change the way they make distinctions among various groups. Quality intergroup contact can be reached through strategies such as establishing cross-cultural friendships and intergroup disclosure. One form of intergroup anxiety is intercultural communication apprehension which is the apprehension individuals feel due to real or imagined intercultural communication. Intercultural communication apprehension is positively correlated with uncertainty, ethnocentrism, and negatively correlated with intercultural willingness to communicate.

**Keywords:** Intergroup Anxiety, Intergroup Contact, Intercultural Communication Apprehension, Uncertainty, Prejudice, Conflict, Intergroup Communication

### **Anxiety and Communication**

Anxiety is a negative and unpleasant, emotion with mental and physiological effects on body. Anxiety may emerge as trait or state feelings. A trait form of anxiety is a stable and permanent level of anxiety that forms in the early ages and will remain with individuals, while in a state form the level of anxiety changes based on the situation (McCroskey, 1977). Anxiety is the central explanatory concept in most psychological theories of human personality, and it is a principal causative agent for many different behavioral consequences such as insomnia, immoral and sinful acts (Spielberger, 1966).

Anxiety could be an obstacle to communication. People with a high level of anxiety often find it difficult to engage in social interactions and to enhance their self-presentational confidence. Because anxious people usually concentrate on negative aspects of social interactions, they often have difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships with other people and their social behavior is protective. The lack of ability to establish healthy

communication could be especially dangerous in relationships such as in patient-healthcare professional interactions, where communication is an important tool to provide individuals with their exact and proper healthcare needs. In addition, anxiety may result in severe educational and work consequences. Anxiety as a disorder is associated with poor life course consequences and conditions, and depression (Halls, Cooper, & Creswell, 2015). Halls, et al. (2015) posited that the lack of social skills can revoke the negative reactions of others, which results in negative attitude about self, social avoidance behaviors and eventually, anxiety. Anxiety also affects cognitive performances such as the ability of learning a second/foreign language in the entire four major language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. This is related to the lower amounts of the ability to concentrate and lower performance among the anxious individuals. However, not all kinds of anxiety are harmful in learning second language. Certain levels of facilitating anxiety are necessary and energizing in language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Higher levels of anxiety (too much anxiety) either in the form of social anxiety, or in its general form needs psychological and medical attention.

There are different manifestations and concepts of anxiety in communication. One of the most studied forms of communication anxiety is communication apprehension (CA). Communication apprehension (CA) is defined as the feeling of anxiety individuals have as a result of a real or anticipated communication (McCroskey, 1977). CA is a specific form of anxiety as a multifaceted affective response during which individuals have an unpleasant feeling of tension, apprehension and worry about possible negative outcomes manifested in feelings such as discomfort, distress, and fear. CA is characterized as apprehension at the interpersonal level. Most CA studies investigate it at the individual-to-individual relationship and concentrate on the psychological aspect of this trait. There are several cross-cultural CA studies that have compared the intracultural CA level of a cultural group with the intracultural

CA score of other cultures. For example Watson, Monroe, and Atterstrom (1989) compared the CA scores of young American and Swedish children and reported higher CA among the Swedish. At the intercultural/intergroup level, CA has been studied in the form of intercultural communication apprehension (ICA), which is “the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with people from different groups, especially cultural and/or ethnic groups” (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997b, p. 148).

### **Intergroup Anxiety**

Intergroup anxiety is a negative and unpleasant emotion that individuals feel while interacting in an intergroup communication. Intergroup communication is a social interaction in which interactive parties define themselves in terms of group membership, and message transmission is influenced by the group membership of the involved individuals. People get anxious in intergroup interactions because they are afraid of negative outcomes such as disapproval, embarrassment, and rejection (Stephan, 2014). Intergroup communication is different than the other forms of apprehension such as social anxiety, because it is specifically related to the outgroup members and its consequences are broader than the consequences of social anxiety, such as hesitation in the establishment of interactions (Stephan, 2014). Various intergroup interactions among the people from different races, ethnicities, sexes, religions, and social classes can result in anxiety. Intergroup anxiety can cause four types of consequences: (1) negative psychological consequences, (2) negative behavioral consequences (3) negative evaluations by outgroup members, and/or (4) negative evaluations by ingroup members (Littleford, Wright, & Sayoc-Parial, 2005).

The theoretical model of intergroup anxiety by Stephan (2014) explained development, antecedents, and consequences of anxiety in intergroup context. Based on this

model, three interrelated components make intergroup anxiety: 1) the affective component that deals with the negative and aversive effects of intergroup anxiety, 2) the cognitive component that is related to the psychological and cognitive aspects of intergroup anxiety, such as negative psychological consequences, negative behavioral consequences, negative outgroup evaluation, and ingroup disapproval, and 3) the physiological component that deals with the physiological effects of intergroup anxiety such as skin responses and blood pressure. At the trait-like anxiety level, i.e. anxiety as a persistent personal characteristic, there is a reciprocal relationship between the cognitive and affective components, while the physiological arousal is likely to be minimal. At the state-like anxiety level, i.e. the changing amount of the anxiety in different situations, the causal and reciprocal relationship between the cognitive and affective components exists and these components can activate physiological arousal from a medium to high level.

The model explains how the reciprocal interaction between the antecedents of intergroup anxiety with intergroup anxiety itself leads to consequences in intergroup contexts. The antecedents of intergroup anxiety are: 1) personal characteristics, 2) attitudes and related cognition, 3) personal experiences, and 4) situational factors. Personal characteristics that increase prejudice, ethnocentrism, mistrust, intolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty can raise intergroup anxiety. Also, the personal characteristics related to a stronger social identity can have the same effect. Negative attitudes in the forms of prior prejudice and negative stereotyping can also promote higher intergroup anxiety. The lack of personal experiences with outgroup can increase intergroup uncertainty and concerns about being rejected, and decrease the opportunities to acquire intergroup communication skills. Also, negative contact with outgroup increases negative expectation about intergroup contact, and eventually intergroup anxiety. Other studies showed during the less positive contact experience between minority and majority groups, minorities' attitude of outgroup was influenced by perceived

attitudes of parents and peers (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mähönen, & Liebkind, 2011). Situational factors such as competition, unequal ratio of ingroup to outgroup, differences in groups' status, lack of clarity in the role of the participants, unfriendly encounters, arguments, misunderstanding, rudeness, discrimination and aggression can increase intergroup anxiety too.

The consequences of intergroup anxiety can be categorized as 1) cognitive, 2) affective, and 3) behavioral. Cognitive consequences of the intergroup anxiety are more likely to be a result of prior attitudes and situational factors. Intergroup anxiety influences cognition in three ways. First, it can activate consistent negative cognition of outgroup in the forms of negative attitude, negative stereotyping, negative beliefs about outgroup, and biased perceptions of outgroups. Second, it depletes cognitive resources, because in anxiety situation, participants pay more attention to worrying about the negative expectations and spend more energy on being vigilant. Third, it interferes with executive functioning; for example by increasing more inaccurate responding in situations requiring rapid judgment. Based on the type of negative cognition and situational factor, intergroup anxiety has affective and emotional consequences such as fear, anger, threat, embarrassment, humiliation, frustration, guilt, dread, or hatred. Also, intergroup anxiety leads to various behavioral consequences. Intergroup anxiety lead to 1) non-verbal manifestations such as speech difficulties and increased volume, and 2) overtly negative behaviors such as avoiding outgroup members, not being open with outgroup members and terminating intergroup interactions quickly. The model proposes that physiological arousals amplify behavioral responses to outgroup members.

Theoretical model of intergroup anxiety proposes a reciprocal relationship between the antecedents and consequences of intergroup anxiety. That is the results of intergroup anxiety can reproduce and increase apprehension in their turn. To reduce intergroup anxiety,

Stephan (2014) suggested addressing apprehension in three affective, cognitive and physiological components. Thus, to decrease intergroup anxiety 1) the negative affect should be reduced and negative emotions should be diminished, 2) negative expectation should be modified and replaced, and 3) physiological arousals should be lowered (for a more in-depth discussion of these solutions refer to Stephan, 2014).

Different studies have confirmed the intergroup anxiety model. A study of dyadic intergroup interactions of White-White, White-Black and White-Asian American college students in the U.S. supported the affective amplification outcome of anxiety (Littleford et al., 2005). This study showed when feeling less comfortable, White students had more positive feelings toward Black partners than White partners. According to the model, more anxiety causes an amplified reaction to interracial challenges by the dominant group of the Whites, and they show an exaggerated amount of positive feeling to cope with their anxiety. Also, this study reported a difference between men and women in intergroup discomfort, as women increased their friendliness, whereas men decreased in friendliness. Another study of undergraduate college students backed the model's postulation that anxiety will amplify interactional norms and in the absence of those norms people may show social incompetence and confused behavior (Harber, 1998). In this study, White students showed less criticism and more appreciation toward Blacks than Whites. The amplified behavior resulting from intergroup anxiety led the Whites to be exaggeratedly polite and emotionally positive when they interacted with Blacks.

### **Theories of Intergroup Anxiety**

#### ***Uncertainty reduction theory***

Various theories try to explain how and why people are anxious in different interpersonal, intergroup and intercultural communication contexts. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) explains the role of uncertainty and the anxiety in communication. According

to URT, the basic purpose of interaction is to reduce the amount of uncertainty individuals have prior to interaction through different verbal and non-verbal strategies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Such strategies are generally categorized as passive, active, and interactive. During passive strategies individuals unobtrusively observe others' verbal and non-verbal behaviors. In active strategies information is knowingly gathered, yet there is no contact between the parties. Different strategies of information seeking and framing could be categorized as active, although framing can also be done passively. Strategies such as self-disclosure, question asking, and question/disclosure intimacy are categorized as interactive strategies in which there is a proactive confronting among communication participants. Meeting people from different cultural backgrounds, entails different levels of strangeness/familiarity, and consequently uncertainty in both cognitive and behavioral levels. Uncertainty limits the ability to predict or understand others' behaviors which, in its turn, results in apprehension and anxiety (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998).

#### ***Anxiety/uncertainty management theory***

Closely related to URT is the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory (AUM), which investigates the interrelationships of uncertainty, anxiety, mindfulness, and communication effectiveness (Gudykunst, 1995). Despite their similarity, AUM is different than URT, as URT assumes people communicate to reduce their amount of uncertainty while according to AUM people try to manage their uncertainty and anxiety during communication. Another aspect of AUM is its emphasis on the importance of anxiety management as much as uncertainty management to form effective communication. According to AUM communication participants should manage their levels of uncertainty and anxiety between a minimum and maximum threshold to be able to continue their interaction. Getting to the level above the maximum threshold make parties too stressful and uncertain to initiate or follow an interaction, and being at the level below the minimum threshold will leave



individuals with no motivation to initiate or follow the interaction. Two important concepts of AUM are mindfulness and effective communication. As a quality of communication, mindfulness means the communication participants are consciously aware of the process of communication and the differences among the parties. In effective communication the receiver of the message perceives and understands the messages relatively similar to the initial intended meaning of the sender. The more similar the intended and received meanings are, the more effective the communication is. Mindfulness is an important tool to have effective communication, and managing anxiety and uncertainty are the crucial factors in this regard. According to AUM, communication takes place among people with a certain level of “strangeness”. Strangers are the people who are physically close to each other but conceptually apart. The level of strangeness increases as the conceptual difference between the participants grows (Neuliep, 2012).

[Insert Figure 1 here]

AUM proposes a set of axioms to explain the interrelationships of anxiety, uncertainty, mindfulness, and effective communication in interpersonal and intergroup communication. The final version of the AUM has 47 axioms. These axioms and their related theorems help illuminate the relationships among basic causes of effective communication (i.e. uncertainty and anxiety management) and superficial groups of causes such as self and self-concept, motivation to interact with strangers, reaction to strangers, social categorization of strangers, situational process, and connection with strangers (Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999). Some of these elements are applicable in intergroup communication, while others could be applied to the interpersonal context.

The axioms of the AUM can explain how anxiety affects and is affected by intergroup communication. Some examples of such mechanisms and elements are: perceived threat to social identity; prejudice and ethnocentrism; stereotypes; different social identities; lack of

collective self-esteem and confidence; the need for group inclusion; the lack of information about the outgroup, generalization about outgroups and the lack of ability to categorize them; negative expectations for outgroup; lack of normative and institutional support for communicating with the outgroup; less perceived power over the outgroup; decrease in quality and quantity of contact with the outgroup; decreased interdependence, shared networks, intimacy, respect and ingroup attraction for the outgroup; decreased mindful communication with the outgroup. Also, uncertainty and anxiety are related to cross-cultural distinctions, such as individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, power distance, and cultural uncertainty avoidance. Here is an example of AUM axioms.

*Axiom 5: An increase in perceived threats to our social identities when interacting with strangers will produce an increase in our anxiety and a decrease in our confidence in predicting their behavior.*

Previous research has used this theory to investigate CA of different cultural groups. For example, a study of strangers and close friends relationships in the U.S. and Japan supported the presented axioms of AUM (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). This study revealed a negative correlation between anxiety and attributional confidence (the inverse of uncertainty). Also, it showed anxiety negatively predicts how individuals perceived similarity between the sent and received communication message (perceived communication effectiveness), and attributional confidence. In another study, Neuliep (2012) used AUM to study the relationship between ICA, ethnocentrism, uncertainty reduction, and communication satisfaction during initial intercultural interactions. The study showed in intercultural dyadic interactions, ICA and ethnocentrism are negatively correlated with uncertainty reduction and communication satisfaction. The study did not prove the same relationship in the intracultural dyadic interactions.

A major line of research related to intergroup anxiety and uncertainty is how individuals adapt to a new cultural environment and how anxiety and uncertainty influence this process. One theory of cultural adaptation is Gudykunst and Hammer's theory of cultural adaptation (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988), which asserts individuals upon their arrival in a new cultural context have high cognitive uncertainty and anxiety due to the lack of security. Cultural adaptation according to this theory entails reducing the amount of both uncertainty and anxiety which according to the theory take place independently. A study of international students in the U.S. supported the assumption that the reduction in uncertainty and intergroup anxiety increases the level of cross-/intercultural adaptation (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990).

### **Ethno-centrism, Intergroup Prejudice, and Anxiety**

Ethnocentrism is closely related to intergroup anxiety. Ethnocentrism is the tendency of individuals to perceive the cultural and behavioral norms of the ingroup to be superior to those of outgroups. Ethnocentric people attribute positive adjectives to the ingroup while they characterize members of the outgroup in a negative way, a phenomenon called ethnocentrism attribution bias (Neuliep and McCroskey, 1997a). Along with a line of research that studies ethnocentrism attribution bias, there is a psychological approach to ethnocentrism that explains it as a general attitudinal profile not only directed toward a special outgroup, but also influencing the general attitude of individuals toward the all outgroups. The psychological approach defines ethnocentrism to be a trait. Individuals high in this trait view their own groups' standards to be relevant to other groups and they judge outgroups accordingly (Lin & Rancer, 2003a). Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) believe all cultures have some degree of ethnocentrism and this is useful when the ingroup is threatened or is in danger. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) asserted there are three communicative

distance categories resulting from ethnocentric speech: indifference, avoidance and disparagement. Indifference distance represents one's cultural superiority through speech patterns such as speaking loudly and slowly to non-native speakers. Avoidance distance is shown through refusing to have or minimizing contacts with outgroups and disparagement distance is explicit expression of cultural superiority of the ingroup.

Previous research has found ICA was positively related to ethnocentrism, and both ICA and ethnocentrism were negatively related to intercultural willingness-to-communicate and the intention to participate in intercultural interactions (Lin & Rancer, 2003a). According to AUM intergroup anxiety is positively correlated with ethnocentrism because the ethnocentric approach to intergroup communication lacks the intergroup/intercultural awareness and mindfulness. This is evident in a study of British teachers and Thai students' interaction that showed higher levels of cultural awareness is related to less CA (Monthienvichienchai, Bhibulbhanuwat, Kasemsuk, & Speece, 2002).

Prejudice is also a form of developing negative attitudes toward the outgroup and is defined as the expression of negative emotions and hostility towards a social group (Allport, 1954), whereas ethnocentrism is a general tendency to maintain negative attitude to the multiple outgroups. Previous research has shown higher amounts of intergroup contact such as interracial contacts are associated with the reduced amount of anxiety and prejudice (Goldstein, 2013). However, the literature about the correlation between contact and intergroup threat (a main source of intergroup anxiety) toward the outgroup is divided. In an intergroup contact, both quality and quantity of contacts can affect the cognitive attitudes of communication participants (Stephan, 2014). Higher amounts of low quality intergroup contact are more likely to lead to negative attitudes. A study of Muslim immigrants in three European nations (Germany, France, and the UK) did not show a significant reduction in

ingroup identification and contact (Croucher, 2013). The study proposed higher amounts of intergroup connection won't cause higher identification and understanding of the outgroup.

Prejudice has been studied in different contexts. A study of the relationship of imagined intergroup contact with LGBTs and intergroup anxiety in Korea and U.S. showed the Koreans had less intergroup anxiety in imagined conversations with guys, but this was not the case for the Americans (Lee & Cunningham, 2014). This study showed intergroup anxiety is a mediator of the relationship between imagined intergroup contact and sexual prejudice for Koreans but not for Americans. Intergroup anxiety is also a main source of racial prejudice toward immigrants. Russian and Ethiopian immigrant to Israel and Moroccan immigrants to Spain are more likely to be perceived as a threat by host members with a higher amount of intergroup anxiety (Stephan, Ybarra, Martnez, Schwarzwald, & Turkaspa, 1998). In an interracial study, Whites' higher level of intergroup anxiety was reported to be positively associated with their likelihood of not returning for interaction with Blacks (Plant & Devine, 2003).

### ***Integrated Threat Theory***

The Integrated threat theory (ITT) is a theory of intergroup communication that helps to understand intergroup prejudice, conflict and anxiety. Originally developed by Stephan and Stephan (1996), the ITT proposed that when individuals believe their social group, identity, value and beliefs are threatened they develop prejudice as a defensive reaction. According to Stephan and Stephan (1996) the mere perception of threat is enough to develop prejudice toward the outgroup. While ITT resembles AUM in dealing with intergroup anxiety, it differs from the AUM in how it conceptualizes the effect of anxiety. ITT uses a measurement of anxiety that encapsulates uncertainty along with other forms of negative feelings, which are publicly known as anxiety. AUM differentiates anxiety and uncertainty

as correlated but separates constructs. AUM focuses on a greater range of antecedents and asserts anxiety has beneficial effects, but ITT focuses on prejudice and asserts anxiety has detrimental effects. ITT perceives (higher amount of) anxiety as the reason for responses such as stereotyping, and polarized emotions and evaluations, which are typically negative.

Stephan and Stephan (1996) defined four classes of intergroup prejudice: realistic threats, symbolic threats, negative stereotyping, and intergroup anxiety. *Realistic threat* is the result of economic, physical, and political threat that an individual feels from outgroup members. Such threats result in competition over scarce resources, and development of prejudicial and discriminatory behaviors. For example, it is common for host nation individuals to complain about fewer occupational opportunities because [immigrants take the jobs](#) for lower wages. The differences in values, beliefs, and norms of groups cause *symbolic threats*. Groups with different values develop different worldviews, and incompatibility among such worldviews can threaten group members. A recent example of symbolic threat is the ban on the [burkini](#) on French beaches because it was perceived to be against the secular values of the society. Burkini (combination of burqa and bikini) is a women's swimsuit based on the [Islamic law for modesty](#) that covers the entire body.

When the perceived outgroup threat is attributed to the behavior of a typical member of the outgroup, a case of *negative stereotyping* happens. A stereotype about another group makes people expect a special behavior by the members of that group. [The negative feeling the majority show](#) while facing a member of an ethnic or religious group can be explained by this class of intergroup prejudice. *Intergroup anxiety* is the fear people have while interacting with an outgroup member. According to ITT, this antecedent of intergroup prejudice is different, as it functions at the individual level which means it is the fear someone personally feels in interacting with the outgroup, while in realistic and symbolic threats and negative stereotyping the threat is perceived at the group level (Croucher, 2013).

[Insert Figure 2 here]

ITT predicts five factors influencing the amount and type of intergroup prejudice the individuals show in their interactions: inter-group conflict, inequality in the status of ingroup and outgroup, ingroup identification, knowledge of outgroup, and intergroup contact. Intergroup conflict is the result of competition over the scarce resources or divergence in the cultural norms and values and this increases the likelihood of intergroup prejudice and confrontation. For example, individuals with a higher social position perceive more threat posed by the less-advantaged groups (Curseu, Stoop, & Schalk, 2007) because they have more resources to lose and be worried about. Higher levels of ingroup identification raise the perceived threat of the outgroup. The individuals with a higher ethnic identity are more likely to develop prejudice toward the outgroups they believe threaten their ethnic identity, while the people whose ethnic identity is not as strong will be less sensitive about the influence of their interaction with outgroup on their ethnic identity. Previous research indicated that more knowledge of the outgroup will decrease the perceived threat (Curseu et al., 2007). As already mentioned, existing literature on the role of intergroup contact on anxiety is divided. Some resources indicated a higher amount of contact with the outgroup can decrease perceived threat, but others have questioned the idea (Croucher, 2013). Intergroup anxiety also mediates the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Various studies have investigated prejudice in intergroup contexts of the mainstream and minority groups such as immigrants, disabled people, and sexual orientations. An intercultural study of prejudice of U.S. American and Mexican students revealed the more interculturally anxious U.S. American students tended to be prejudicial (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000). The same study showed better quality (favorable) relationships (i.e.



equal status, voluntary, positive, cooperative and individualized) helped Americans have less prejudice and anxiety toward Mexicans, while the amount of contact was unrelated to the attitudes of Americans. The same trend was relevant for Mexican students' perception of Americans. A study of the prejudice toward immigrants to Spain and Israel showed intergroup anxiety and negative stereotyping are more powerful predictors of prejudicial attitudes than realistic and symbolic threats (Stephan et al., 1998). Another study of White and *First Nation* peoples in Canada revealed intergroup anxiety and other forms of intergroup threat are predictors of negative outgroup attitude, and are associated with negative intergroup contact, strength of ingroup identity and perception of intergroup contact (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001). Glodstein and Davis (2010) studied intergroup communication apprehension of 46 heterosexual college students to characterize the students eager to have alliance with LGBTs to reduce their sexual prejudice. They found out the participants with more positive stereotypical beliefs are more likely to have higher intergroup anxiety.

### **Anxiety and Conflict**

Different theories of conflict characterize conflict as a result of competition over scarce resources and divergent cultural values (Putnam, 2006). Conflict is relevant to intergroup communication because it is a communication style between at least two groups of individuals and it helps building up group identity because sharing the same interest while struggling to access the resources can unite separate people, give them the shared feeling of belonging to the same group and contribute to the formation of ingroup identity. The definition of conflict as the competition over scarce resources and divergent cultural values is compatible with realistic and symbolic perception of threat in intergroup contexts. Competition over different forms of social resources results in realistic threat because

individuals will perceive members of outgroup to be threatening their political and economic power or physical and material wellbeing. Divergent values and cultural inconsistencies can also lead to symbolic threat, where the ingroup finds the outgroup as a threat to its moral values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes.

Previous research has shown intergroup anxiety and apprehension are associated with conflict in family, school, organization or social contexts (Rahmani, 2017 in press). Anxiety as a mediator affects the relationship of perceived threat and demonstrated prejudice. In other words, when people are anxious they show more prejudice toward outgroup members in the case of an intergroup conflict. However, it is also likely the relationship of anxiety and conflict is mediated by the socioeconomic status of the groups. Considering that some groups have lower socioeconomic status, they have more potential of having higher amounts of CA. Minority groups are more likely to be in a lower socioeconomic status due to the reasons such as less access to educational and medical opportunities, linguistic incapacities, and less functional skills (Rahmani, 2017 in press). Facing intergroup conflicts, such groups have less ability and power to compete with the outgroups over the resources, which causes worry, apprehension and anxiety. Previous studies have also showed the lower socioeconomic status of the minority groups can be an agent of apprehension (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993).

Fear of the group's future can also cause anxiety during conflict. Previous research in political conflict research has shown not every competition over scarce resources results in conflict because conflict entails financial, emotional, and social costs, but it is the miscommunication between the groups and the resulted fear of future consequences that lead the group to engage in intergroup conflicts (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Thus, when the group finds it difficult to continue its vital functions due to its lack of access to the resources or it finds itself incapable of maintaining its basic cultural values, it gets more anxious.

Stereotyping also fosters escalation of anxiety in conflicting conditions (Greijdanus, Postmes, Gordijn, & van Zomeren, 2015). During a conflict, people take various strategies to deal with members of the outgroup. Initially, they look for the information about how their image is perceived by outgroup. A negative perception of “us” by “them” is threatening per se, and it raises intergroup anxiety. Based on the principles of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individuals’ evaluation of their ingroup influence is affected by the outgroup and the ingroup’s social identity valence, and to maintain a favorable ingroup identity, the group members take various strategies in favor of the ingroup. Generally such strategies aim at either building a positive the ingroup image or a negative the outgroup image.

Stereotyping is a strategy to build one of these images, and negative stereotyping of ingroup by outgroup results in negative ingroup identity. This effect of stereotyping during a conflict is more obvious as the groups confront each other over reaching the resources or setting the cultural and social norms. Thus, stereotyping can also manipulate the amount of anxiety when a conflict among the groups leads to intergroup prejudice.

Due to the significant role of anxiety in intergroup communication, scholars of conflict resolution have done a lot of research on how to decrease the amount of anxiety in intergroup conflicts. Generally such studies have profiled two major strategies of improving contacts between the members of the different groups and changing the structure of social categorizations (Hewstone & Greenland, 2000). The strategy of improving intergroup contact includes helping members of the groups have constructive contact, which allows them to acquire an in-depth knowledge of each other, improve their positive feelings and image of outgroup, and gain a cooperative view. Social categorization is the process of making distinctions among different groups and categorizing them into ingroups and outgroups based on the differences attributed to the groups (Hewstone & Greenland, 2000). It can result in discrimination against certain social groups, thus one way to improve

intergroup interactions and resolution of the intergroup conflict is to reduce the salience of the existing social categorizations through the steps of decategorization (eliminating the existing categorizations), recategorization, and cross-categorization (redefining the categorizations into one or several new categories).

One form of intergroup contact is intergroup friendship. Cross-group friendship generally involves common goals and cooperation between equal-status parties over time and across different settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Self-disclosure helps establish and maintain cross-group friendships as an effective strategy to reduce intergroup prejudice and conflict. Typically when a party discloses in an interpersonal relationship, s/he encourages the other party to mutually disclose too, and this establishes a stronger friendship relationship. Turner, Hewstone, and Voci (2007) identified three mechanisms through which self-disclosure might reduce prejudice during a cross-group friendship. First, self-disclosure results in a more positive evaluation of the outgroup by generating empathy. Second, it increases the perceived importance of cross-group friendships. Third, it promotes reciprocal trust. Their study practically showed self-disclosure mediates the relationship between cross-group friendships and explicit outgroup attitudes. An investigation of the relationship of anxiety and empathy with intergenerational attitude showed higher self-disclosure of grandchildren to their grandparents is associated with higher intergroup empathy and lower intergroup anxiety (Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy, 2006). Along with that, the psychological environment created by the internet can be used to strengthen individuals' sense of identity and decrease the likelihood of breaking the intergroup severance. Such environment provides with greater anonymity and control, higher chance of finding similar others and less time and space limitation (Amichai-Hamburger, 2012).

### **Intercultural Communication Apprehension**

Intercultural communication apprehension was first conceptualized by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997b) as a specific construct of anxiety which deals with perceived communication apprehension in intercultural contexts. The theoretical background of the construct is based on the idea of URT that the strangers from different cultural groups have higher communication anxiety and uncertainty (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997b). The theoretical discussion and mechanism of anxiety production in URT can be found earlier in this entry. ICA is positively correlated with uncertainty and negatively with socio-communication orientation (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). Socio-communication attitude has two dimensions: assertiveness that explains the ability to show positive or negative personal rights and feelings, and responsiveness that explains the ability to recognize, engage and understand others' communication needs. Neuliep and Ryan (1998) showed that ICA is negatively correlated with both assertive and responsive communication behaviors. People with higher anxiety have less socio-communicative attitudes, thus they are less likely to initiate communication. On the intergroup level, differences in group characteristics cause these dimensions to be harder to show. For example, religious differences could be a barrier to responsiveness, as religious prejudice toward outgroup members prevent perceiving others' communicational purposes, especially if the outgroup's religious values are in opposition with the ingroup's. The individuals with a higher amount of ICA have more difficulties in asserting their needs within intergroup communication when group differences increase uncertainty. Previous research also showed an individual's level of ICA is not relate to the size of an individual's hometown, how often the participants traveled outside their home state, or the number of people of the same race in the participants' hometown (Wrench, Corrigan, McCroskey, & Punyanunt-Carter, 2006).

ICA has been studied in relation to other constructs. A study of religious fundamentalism showed no relationship between this construct and ICA, but ethnocentrism positively, and tolerance for religious disagreement negatively do predict ICA (Wrench et al., 2006). A study of ethnocentrism, ICA and intercultural willingness to communicate (IWTC) tried to predict willingness to participate in intercultural dialogue program and found that ICA and ethnocentrism were negatively correlated with IWTC and willingness to participate in the program (Lin & Rancer, 2003a). A study showed emotional intelligence is reported to manage and reduce the amount of ICA (Fall, Kelly, MacDonald, Primm, & Holmes, 2013). Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand emotions and to use the knowledge of emotions to increase cognition. A study of ICA of international teaching assistants in the U.S. showed people higher in ICA rated both their relationship with the students and their perceptions of student rating of instruction to be less satisfactory (Roach & Olaniran, 2001). ICA research has also shown men are more interculturally apprehensive than women and they are more ethnocentric and less willing to communicate interculturally (Lin & Rancer, 2003b).

### **Discussion of the Literature**

As a historically familiar concept, anxiety (originated from the Latin word of *anxi* meaning constriction) is documented to be conceptualized and known by the ancient Greek and Egyptians. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kierkegaard investigated anxiety and concluded it is the result of self-awareness about the consequences and responsibilities of our choices as free humans (Kierkegaard, 1980). Anxiety became one of the main themes of social and psychological studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that once was labeled as the age of anxiety by the famous poet W.H. Auden (Horwitz, 2010). Anxiety was vastly studied by psychologists such as Freud in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his studies, Freud distinguished different forms of

objective, neurotic and moral anxiety (Endler & Kocovski, 2001). Later on, Charles Spielberger (1966) advanced the theoretical foundation of the concept by making a distinction between state and trait anxiety. The psychological approach to anxiety developed further and helped recognize and define the chronic forms of anxiety, such as generalized anxiety disorders and other specific phobias like social phobia.

Self-awareness influenced research on anxiety in different ways. Philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Heidegger reflected on the relationship of self-awareness and anxiety. Heidegger described anxiety as the result of *being's* (individual's) awareness of its mortality and non-existence (Heidegger, 1996). This view is manifested in some communication theories such as terror management theory (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012). According to this theory, individuals develop ideologies to deal with the anxiety resulting from the awareness of death. The anxiety has psychological influence on intergroup interaction of the individuals, especially when they face confronting outgroup ideologies. However, despite its popularity as a theme of research, anxiety remained a vague concept to be defined because due to the behavioral manifestation of the concept, it is important and equally hard to define and measure the anxious behaviors.

Influenced by the increase in the international and intercultural contact during and after World War II, social scientists such as Allport began to theorize an intergroup contact. Allport's classic work, *The nature of prejudice* (1954) specified a situational-based framework to manage prejudice within intergroup contact. Allport based his theory on previous works in intergroup contact studies such as a study of Black and White students' interactions and attitudes. Intergroup anxiety found an important place in intergroup contact theory. The interest in intergroup anxiety also comes from a broader attention to understand how affect and emotions shape intergroup communication.



The situational research tradition of intergroup contact founded by Allport, which focused on the situational variables that affect intergroup relationships, dominated the discipline until the mid-1980s. Stephan (2014) presented a model of intergroup anxiety in which they also concerned with inner states of parties. This model includes both the intrapersonal and situational considerations, along with the cognitive and behavioral study of the reactions to intergroup contacts. Advances in medical science and brain function studies paved the way to study anxiety from a psychophysiological approach that perceives anxiety and fear as the bioelectrically measurable states in muscles and glands, during which human brain activates its defensive components of motivation circuit and engages the related autonomic and somatic reflexes (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1998).

Studies of intergroup communication cover and intersect with different lines of research in communication studies. This entry already reviewed the most important fields such as adaptation, intergroup contact, ethnocentrism, prejudice, conflict, and self-disclosure. Further research in this field has been asked to investigate different aspects of intergroup anxiety in the topics and fields of research such as mass media, social media, and imagined contact or generally the mass-mediated contact and mediated interpersonal/intercultural contact.

### **Primary Resources**

To grasp a basic knowledge of the intergroup anxiety, it is important to know about the philosophical and historical backgrounds of anxiety and fear in related resources. For example, the advanced epistemological works and the resources on the ideas of the ancient Greek thinkers could be helpful. Also, it is important to mention the studies on anxiety and the self by the later philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Heidegger. A historical and evolutionary study of anxiety would be incomplete without having works by Freud on the

list. The same is relevant to Allport's work on intergroup contact as a classic and must-read book. Most of these works should be available in the university and local libraries as they are popular, influential and comprehensive.

There are also different journals in the field of communication that include information about various topics discussed in this article, and about intergroup anxiety in general. Here is the list of the most important and related journals in psychology, social psychology and communication: *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Research Reports*, *Human Communication Research*, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *Group Process and Intergroup Relations*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *The Journal of social psychology*, *International Journal of Psychology*, *Annual Review of Psychology*, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *Personality*, *Communication Monographs*, *Journal of personality & Social Psychology*, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, and *Social Psychology Bulletin*. These journals are mostly published by the major academic publishers such as Taylor and Francis, Sage, Elsevier, and Wiley. Academic social online websites also have developed a lot recently and they provide with an easier interaction and connection with the authors to ask them questions and to access to their publications. [Research Gate](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Academia](#) are among the most popular ones.

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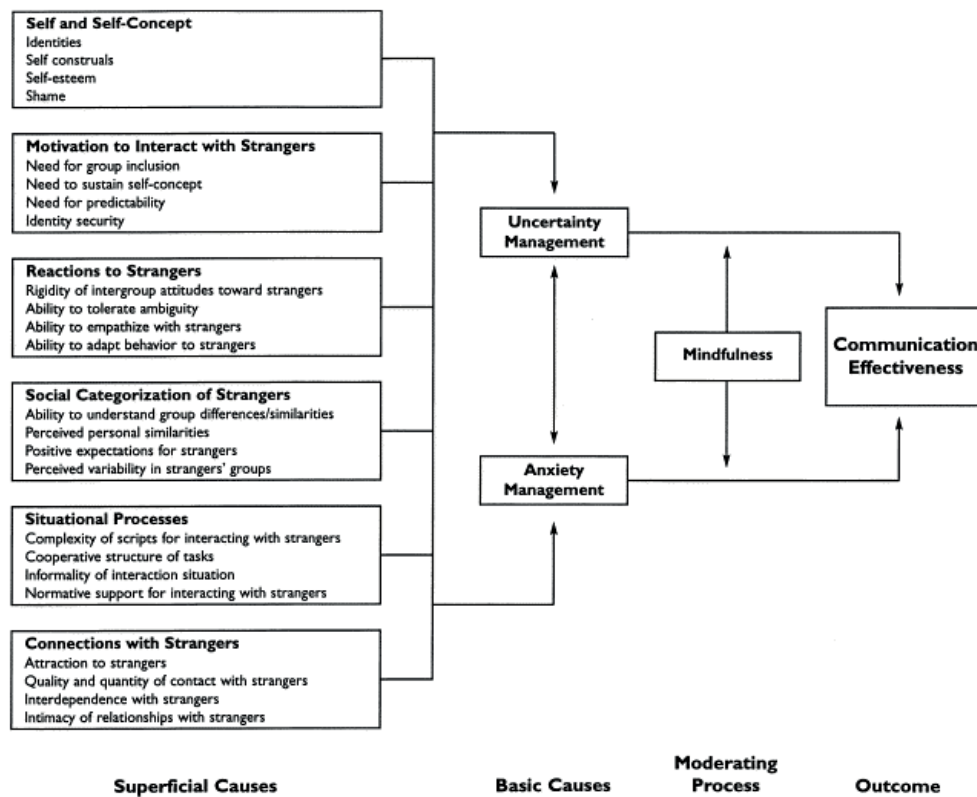


Figure 1. The basic AUM theory model (Stephan et al., 1999, p. 617)

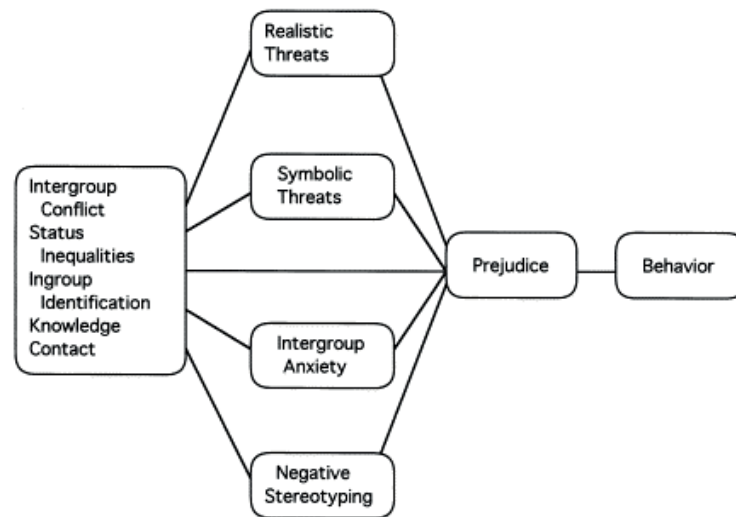


Figure 2. The Basic ITT Model (Stephan et al., 1999, p. 620)

## **II**

### **MINORITY GROUPS AND COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION: AN INVESTIGATION OF KURDISTAN**

by

Diyako Rahmani and Stephen M. Croucher, 2017

In *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 43

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## **Minority Groups and Communication Apprehension: An investigation of Kurdistan**

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University of Jyväskylä

### **Abstract**

This study explores communication apprehension among the Iranian Kurdish minority group. Based on a sample of 157 self-administered surveys, the study investigates the relative communication apprehension (CA) score of Iranian Kurds and the influence of sex, age, and education on CA. Results revealed Kurds are relatively less apprehensive than many other cultures. It was also revealed that women have significantly higher levels of dyadic, public, and total CA. Moreover, all CA contexts (dyadic, groups, meeting, and public) and total CA tended to increase after grade 9 and decrease after completing high school. Age however, only had a modest effect on meetingCA. The findings propose higher levels of social encounters reduce the amount of CA among Kurds. Implications, limitations, and areas of future research are posited.

**Keywords:** Communication Apprehension, Socioeconomic status, Kurdistan, Culture, Regression

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### **Introduction**

Communication apprehension (CA), a “broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated [oral] communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey 1977: 78) is one of the most studied communication traits. Research has consistently shown American college/university students to have less CA than students from East-Asian nations (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, etc.) (Burroughs & Marie 1990; Hsu 2007; Zhang, Butler, & Pryor 1996) and from European nations (Finland and Sweden for example) (Mansson & Myers 2009; Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey & Richmond 1991). A focus of CA research has been to understand how it relates to an individual’s communicative competence (McCroskey & McCroskey 1988). The literature on CA is rich, exploring many populations in various national cultures, e.g., Australia, China, England, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Micronesia, Philippines, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States (Barracough, Christophel & McCroskey 1988; Croucher 2013; Hsu 2004; Neuliep, Chadoir, & McCroskey 2003; Zarrinabadi 2012).

On the other hand, CA research is mostly restricted to a limited number of cultures and this trend does take into consideration the varieties in CA of less-studied cultures. Self-reporting of communication traits like CA varies considerably depending on the sample tested. A sample collected in the US for example cannot and should not be generalized to any population other than the US. Levine and McCroskey (1991) reported that a factor analysis for the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA), the most used measure of CA, in a US American sample does not hold in another sample from Puerto Rico. They assert that although based on only one culture, the validity of the PRCA-24 should not be generally questioned in intercultural contexts, the results should be interpreted with caution. A study of content validity of US American and Japanese samples revealed differences that could prevent generalization of results based on a specific culture to other cultures (Pribyl, Keaten, Sakamoto, & Koshikawa

1998). While numerous national cultures have been studied, many are still left unexplored. The current study adds to this body of literature by exploring CA among the minority Kurdish society in Iran, which due to political, social and economic reasons is of a low socioeconomic status (SES). Increasingly researchers are analyzing communication in the Middle East (Heisey 2011; Landis & Wasilewski 1999; Merkin 2012; Semati 2011). However, except for research on mass communication (Baydar 2013; Sheyholislami 2010, 2012) there is little research on Kurdistan.

### **CA of Minority groups**

Different factors can affect CA levels of minority groups. Linguistic differences (Chesebro et al. 1992; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986) and religious variations (Croucher 2013) can raise CA among minority groups. Lower socioeconomic status can also make the minority groups be more anxious. This lower SES is more likely the result of immigration (Prevoo et al. 2014), less access to educational and medical opportunities, and less functional skills (Smith, Wolf, & Wagner 2010; Thomas 2013). Such factors affect individuals' interactive strategies, and communication characteristics and traits such as individualism and collectivism, and CA (Kim, Tasaki, Kim, & Lee 2007; Rodríguez, Hines, & Montiel 2006, 2009; Triandis 1989).

Economically, Kurdish society in Iran is underdeveloped and marginalized (Yildiz & Taysi 2007). A previous investigation in the Kurdistan province in Iran showed lower literacy and higher unemployment rates than the rest of the country (Groohi, Rossignol, Barrero, & Alaghebandan 2006). Various social, linguistic, and political differences with the majority groups, not only in Iran, but also in the countries where the Kurds reside have resulted in the perception of the Kurds as a danger to national integrity and sovereignty, and kept the Kurdish community in a lower socioeconomic position. This could affect CA among the Kurds. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Kurds in Iran will rate highly on communication apprehension.*

But this lower SES has not prevented the Kurds from developing their ethnic identity. Kurdish language, religion, and political attitudes are aspects of a distinctive identity manifested in various cultural characteristics.

### **The Kurds**

Kurdistan is the homeland of an estimated 25 to 30 million Kurds, also linguistic and ethnic minority in Turkey (13 – 15 million, up to 23% of the population), Iran (5.7 – 5.6 million, up to 11% of the population), Iraq (3.5 – 4.2 million, up to 20% of the population), and Syria (1 – 1.1 million, up to 9% of the population) (Gunter 2003) with a common ethno-national identity and a high level of solidarity (Tejel 2009) who believe they are the largest stateless nation in the world (McDowall 2004; Mojab 2001). Kurds' unique language, religion, and cultural characteristics make them distinct from their neighboring societies.

Linguistically, Kurdish language is different than the neighboring Persian, Arabic, and Turkish languages. As a member of the Indio-European language family, Kurdish is considered to be a western Iranian language similar to Farsi (Persian) but different than Arabic and Turkish (Kreyenbroek 1992). The Kurdish language has four main dialect groups of Kirmanji, spoken in Turkey and the Northwest of Iran by 60 – 65% of all the Kurds, Sorani, spoken in Iran and Iraq by 25 – 30% of all the Kurds, Kirmashani, spoken in Iran, and Zazaki/Dimli and Hawrami/Gorani, respectively spoken in Turkey and across the Iranian and Iraqi border (Hassanpour 1992). Although some researchers reported considerable phonological and

morphological differences between the major dialects of the Kurdish language (Kreyenbroek 1992), most Kurdologists consider them varieties of the same language (Sheyholislami 2011). Except for Iraq after 2003, Kurdish is not an official language anywhere (Iraqi Constitution n.d.).

Religiously Kurdistan is a diverse society. Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims with a minority Shiite living in Southern Iranian Kurdistan, but Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Jews, Yazadis, Alavis, and Yaressanis also live there (Dahlman 2002). Kurdistan has solidarity with its religions and linguistic minorities (Skutnabb-Kangas & Fernandes 2008) and it has been a safe haven for non-Muslim refugees after the 2003 religious clashes in Iraq (Hanish 2009).

Historically, after the first break-up of Kurdistan in the 16th century until World War I, Kurds partly could continue their autonomous political and social lives within the borders of the Persian and Ottoman Empires in the form of local dynasties (McDowall 2004). Nevertheless, in the redrawn map of the Middle East after 1918, Ottoman Kurdistan was divided among three newly formed countries of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Since then, the centralized policies of these three countries and Iran have sought to implant a comprehensive national identity by melting down minority identities to surmount the danger of possible territory separation. For example, in Turkey, oral or written usage of Kurdish was prohibited and the existence of Kurdish identity was denied (Marcus 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas & Fernandes 2008). In Syria, many Kurds were excluded from having Syrian citizenship (Tejel 2009). This marginalization of the Kurdish community resulted in poverty, low SES, social and military unrest to rectify assimilating Kurdish identity (Gunter 2011; Romano 2006), and immigration of about 1.5 million Kurds to mostly North America, Nordic, and Western Europe (Skutnabb-Kangas & Fernandes 2008).

Recently, Turkey's application for admission in the European Union has brought attention to its conflict with the Kurds (Gunter 2011) and in Iraq, Kurds managed to form the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (Natali 2010). This autonomous administration has recently gained a lot of economic and political attention because of its reserves of oil, 45 billion barrels (Mearns 2011), its potential role in hydropolitics of the Middle East (Soffer 1999), and especially its role in the international fight against the terrorist group of the Islamic State (IS) (Phillips 2014). In eastern Iran, Kurds have been struggling to preserve their identity through having the right of education and media in Kurdish and establishing other institutions to maintain different forms of Kurdish traditions. Yet, the educational system in Iran does not use Kurdish as a mean of instruction where Kurds reside. Kurds are thought to have originated from nowadays Iranian Kurdistan and the only Kurdish state ever existed was formed there during 1945-1946, but Iranian Kurds have received less media attention compared to other parts and there is less information available about them (Yildiz & Taysi 2007).

These different cultural characteristics in Kurdistan resulted in the formation of a unique Kurdish identity, manifested in specific cultural aspects, such as the culturally distinctive role of women in the Kurdish community compared to neighboring cultures. Described as being more liberal, Kurdish women have been reported to be important public figures and rulers who have shadowed over their male relatives (Bruinessen 1993). According to Bruinessen, having a Kurdish woman in the position of commanding and ruling has been generally accepted, as it is depicted in Kurdish folklore and described in the records of commentary law during the time when the Ottoman Empire ruled over southern, western, and northern Kurdistan. This matriarchal influence is rare among other Middle Eastern cultures. In recent cases, Kurdish women's participation in the war against IS terrorists in Syrian and Iraqi presented a different image of the Middle Eastern women. However, the role of Kurdish women is reported as a distinctive characteristic of Kurdish society to designate the specifications of the Kurds from

those of neighboring cultures, but generally Kurdish society, just like most other Middle Eastern cultures, is a patriarchal society where there is a high power distance between the sexes (Bruinessen 1993). For example, investigating the role of women in the Kurdish Republic of 1946 in Iranian Kurdistan, Mojab (2001, p. 71) indicated the educational and political presence of women in both pre-modern forms of Kurdish statehood and in the Kurdish republic were generated by “a thoroughly masculine politics”.

### **Communication Apprehension Contexts**

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Scale (PRCA-24), which is regularly used to measure CA, measures both trait and contextual CA across four contexts: dyadic, meetings, public, and small groups. While CA research has been extensively conducted throughout the world, in many of these studies US participants have regularly been compared with non-US participants in cross-cultural analyses (Croucher 2013; Neuliep et al. 2003).

Trait CA deals with the anxiety someone has across different contexts while contextual CA measures discomfort someone may experience while communicating in various situations such as dyadic, small groups, meeting and public (McCroskey 1977). Trait CA is measured through the accumulative amount of anxiety someone feels in each one of the four anticipated unique and not dichotomous contexts (Russ 2012). Cross-cultural comparison of CA necessitates reporting total (trait) CA of a sample, however contextual investigations of CA are of importance because the perception of these contexts could be different cross-culturally (Vinson & Roberts 1994). On the intragroup level, a contextual investigation of a cultural group is necessary to explain its communicative predispositions (Sue, Ino, & Sue 1983) and it has been recommended for further research (Kim, Tasaki, Kim, & Lee 2007). This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Pribyl et al. (1998) who reported as opposed to US Americans, the Japanese do not differentiate meeting context from group context and rarely do they have the opportunity to speak publicly. Other studies have reported examples of the incongruity of the different contextual subscales of the PRCA-24 among cultures (Pederson, Tkachuk, & Allen 2008). Many previous studies have applied a contextual approach to investigate CA (Edwards & Walker 2007; Honeycutt, Choi, & DeBerry 2009; Jung 2013; Russ 2012). In addition to state CA that provides with cross-cultural comparison of the Kurds with other cultural groups, the study of contextual CA in the present study will provide a better understanding of CA among a minority community.

Numerous demographic variables have been studied in collaboration with CA, such as sex, age, and level of education (Baus & Welch 2008; Donovan & MacIntyre 2004; Dwyer 1998). In the US, research has found slight differences between the sexes on CA (Canary & Hause 1993). Research shows women tend to be more apprehensive than men (Donovan & MacIntyre 2004; McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond 1982), except for Lin and Rancer's research (2003) that found men to be more apprehensive. However, there is less information available about this possible difference in other cultures. Differences in the level of apprehensiveness of men and women are often ascribed to the cultural biases resulting from social roles (Allen, O'Mara, & Andriste 1986) and psychological stereotypes of the genders (Greenblatt, Hasenauer, & Freimuth 2006). Although as already mentioned, Kurdish women experience more freedom in comparison to other Middle Eastern societies, this relative freedom of Kurdish women is related to their social position as mothers and wives of the elite and not to their sheer womanhood (Bruinessen 1993), and Kurdish society is traditional, male-dominated, and patriarchal. Men control families and social, political, and military institutions. This different status between men and women in Kurdistan may influence apprehension levels as

social roles differ between the sexes, which may promote more communication for women. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2:* Women in Iranian Kurdistan will report higher communication apprehension than men.

Research examining the relationship between age and CA has shown conflicting results. Some studies have shown a significant negative relationship between CA and age (Donovan & MacIntyre 2004). Other studies have shown a positive relationship between CA and age (Watson, Monroe, & Atterstrom 1989; Watson, Monroe, Fayer, & Aloise 1988). Other studies have shown no relationship between CA and age (Dwyer 1998). Previous studies of age in more collectivist cultures have shown older people are venerated due to their knowledge, sagemess, and experience resulting from age (McCann, Kellermann, Giles, Gallois, & Viladot 2004). As one of the Middle Eastern cultures, Kurdish community values age as a prominent element to determine the social place of the individuals (Tang & Ibrahim 1998). As people get older, they experience higher social importance and respect. Thus, due to an increase in social confidence, aging could affect apprehension. Thus, to further our understanding of the effect of age on CA, the second research question is put forth:

*RQ1:* To what extent does age affect communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?

Education is also reported to be related to CA levels. The educational environment and the amount of perceived educational and behavioral error correction during grade school can affect the amount of CA in the latter part of individuals' lives (Daly & Friedrich 1981), and spending years at school while US American students go through middle to secondary school (McCroskey, Andersen, Richmond, & Wheelless 1981). Kasemkosin and Rimkeeratikul's research (2012) indicated lower CA among individuals with higher education and higher CA among individuals with lower education. Nevertheless, it is difficult to separate the effects of schooling on CA as teenage students could actually become of higher CA as the result of "biological and/or social maturational elements unrelated to the school" (McCroskey et al. 1981: 129). It is important to test any possible relationship between education, especially among the holders of higher educational degrees, and CA.

In the Iranian educational system, a higher number of individuals have found the chance to pursue higher education in recent decades, which means more Kurds have also attended higher educational institutions (Bazargan 1999). However, the Kurdish language is not a means of instruction in Iran. The basic educational system in Iran includes 12 years of public education, which leads to a high school diploma and consists of six-years of elementary school followed by two three-year periods of junior high school and high school, which are exclusively taught in Persian. When one holds a high school diploma, it is possible to apply for a university degree. Based on the aforementioned literature on the relationship between education and CA, one can expect engaging in higher educational levels will provide individuals with more knowledge and confidence and less anxiety to participate in different interactional contexts. This does not necessarily mean education can modify CA as a trait, but education can be one of the many elements of a process in which trait CA forms. Thus, to further the understanding of the effects of educational level on CA, the third research question is put forth:

*RQ2:* What is the relationship between educational level achieved and communication apprehension levels in Kurdistan?

## **Method**

### **Participants**



After appropriate institutional review board approval, in 2014, the principal researcher distributed 157<sup>1</sup> self-administered paper and online surveys in Bikan, Iran, which is in Iranian Kurdistan and a center for Kurdish nationalism. Bikan along with Mahabad, are the cities included in Kurdistan Republic in 1945-1946. The surveys were distributed via previously-established social networks and via Facebook. Overall 21 people filled out the digital version of the questionnaire and 136 people filled out the paper version. In terms of the variables and the items, the digital and paper versions were identical. Thus, the principal investigator used a snowball sample. This kind of sampling technique is standard, and in many cases necessary in intercultural/cross-cultural communication research. The participants did not receive financial incentive for their participation.

Participants ranged in age from 17 to 61<sup>2</sup> ( $M = 34.27$ ,  $SD = 9.55$ ). Men accounted for 57.8% ( $n = 89$ ) of the sample, women for 41.9% ( $n = 65$ ), and 1 (.6%) person did not report their sex. The sample's educational background was diverse: 6.5% ( $n = 10$ ) reported having completed up to grade 9, 16.8% ( $n = 26$ ) had a high school diploma, 45.8% ( $n = 71$ ) an undergraduate degree, 20.6% ( $n = 32$ ) a graduate degree, and 10.3% ( $n = 16$ ) did not report their highest completed education.

#### **Instrument – Personal Report of Communication Apprehension**

Surveys and consent documents were initially written/prepared in English and then translated into Persian because the only official reading education Kurds in Iran receive is in Persian. Although the Kurdish language is one the most immediate indicators of Kurdish identity (Sheyholislami 2011), lack of education in Kurdish language could distort the results of the survey due to possible perception difficulties among subjects. After the documents were written in English, a Persian speaker translated the documents into Persian. Bilingual Persian-English speakers then back-translated the documents. After the translation was completed, translations were compared for accuracy through comparing semantic similarities of corresponding Persian and English phrases ( $\kappa = .89$ ).

The survey included the following demographics questions: sex, age, and highest educational level achieved. Participants were asked to circle their sex (male or female). Regarding age, participants were asked to write their age. Participants were asked to write their highest educational level achieved. Based on these results the following categories were compiled: up to grade 9, high school diploma, 2-year degree, BA or equivalent, MA or equivalent, and PhD. The survey also included the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey 1982). The PRCA-24 is a 24-item scale that measures trait-like communication apprehension across four contexts: small groups, public, meetings, and dyadic. The scale measures CA using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 *strongly agree* to 5 *strongly disagree*. It has emerged as the main instruments to measure CA. The scale has shown high reliability in the past, with alphas for the four contexts ranging from .80 to .92 (Croucher 2013; Dwyer 1998; McCroskey et al. 1982). In this study the alphas were: .70 for dyadic, .76 for meeting, .80 for small group, and .80 for public. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations for the four contexts of CA in Kurdistan.

Table 1: *Means, standard deviations, and correlations of CA contexts in Kurdistan*

<sup>1</sup> Two surveys were removed as the participants were under the age of 17.

<sup>2</sup> The institutional review board approved data collection among participants between the ages of 17 and 70.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Dyadic CA	13.68	3.98	-			
(2) Small Group CA	14.28	4.74	.43**	-		
(3) Meeting CA	13.75	4.45	.67**	.60**	-	
(4) Public CA	15.65	4.90	.62**	.37**	.62**	-
(5) Total CA	57.36	14.67	-	-	-	-

Note: \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Analysis and Results

*H1* investigates an intercultural perception of CA among the Kurds. A comparison of the results of the CA test of this culture with the previous results from the US, the most studied context of CA studies (Croucher, Sommier, Rahmani, & Appenrodt 2015), will be the most helpful to this aim. As the following studies of CA in the context of US show, different samples of US Americans have already been compared with various other cultures in the Caribbean region, East Asia, and Europe. Thus, to test *H1*, the total CA of this sample was compared to previous studies in the context of the United. Based on 20 randomly published studies of CA using the PRCA-24, US-American CA scores ranged from 51.39 to 71.72<sup>3</sup> (Allen, O'Mara, & Long 2014; Beatty et al. 2011; Fall, Kelly, MacDonald, Primm, & Holmes 2013; Gearhart & Bodie 2012; Hsu 2007, 2010; Limon & La France 2005; Madlock 2012; Madlock & Martin 2011; Madlock, Martin, Bogdan, & Ervin 2007; Maki et al. 2009; Malachowski & Martin 2011; Malachowski, Martin, & Vallade 2013; Mansson & Myers 2009; Pearson, Child, DeGreeff, Semlak, & Burnett 2011; Roby 2009; Shimotsu & Mottet 2009; Stockstill & Roach 2007; Vevea, Pearson, Child, & Semlak 2009; Wrench, Brogan, McCroskey, & Jowi 2008). The Kurds averaged 57.36 on CA, which is lower than most of the American samples. This is consistent with other studies that have shown CA in Middle Eastern samples (Middle Easterners in the US and Turkey) to be relatively lower than other groups/nations (Allen & Andriste 1984; Allen, O'Mara, & Andriste 1986; Üstünel & Yüksel 2011). Thus, the hypothesis is not supported.

To confirm *H2* and answer the two research questions, four separate linear regressions were constructed. In each regression, a context of CA (small group, public, meeting, and dyadic) served as the criterion variable. The following variables were predictor variables in all of the regressions: sex (female as the reference group), age, and highest educational level achieved (BA level as the reference group). The regression for dyadicCA was significant:  $F(3,134) = 4.30$ ,  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $p = .01$ . See Table 2 for the full regression results. Females had significantly higher dyadicCA ( $b = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while individuals with more than a BA degree had significantly lower dyadicCA ( $b = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As this sample was collected in one city in Kurdistan, a cross-validity coefficient was calculated to estimate the validation of these results in different (hypothetical) samples. The results reveal the combination of sex, age, and education to still be significant predictors of dyadicCA,  $R^2_{cv} = .04$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Table 2: *Regression for Communication Apprehension*

Regressor	Unstandardized beta	Standardized Beta	<i>T</i>
<u>DyadicCA</u>			
Intercept	12.89		8.22

<sup>3</sup> All studies that use the PRCA are based on a Likert type scale that ranges from 1-5.

Female	1.98	.23**	2.78
Age	.06	.03	.33
BA-Level Education	-.59	-.18*	-2.18
<i>F</i>		4.30**	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.09	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>		.07	
<u>MeetingCA</u>			
Intercept	16.40		9.56
Female	.66	.07	.84
Age	-.04	-.02	-.20
BA-Level Education	-.98	-.28***	-3.30
<i>F</i>		4.06**	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.09	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>		.06	
<u>PublicCA</u>			
Intercept	17.01		8.96
Female	1.89	.18*	2.19
Age	-.13	-.05	-.58
BA-Level Education	-.98	-.25**	-2.98
<i>F</i>		5.13**	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.11	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>		.09	
<u>GroupCA</u>			
Intercept	15.93		8.46
Female	.53	.05	.61
Age	-.16	-.06	-.72
BA-Level Education	-.55	-.15	-1.69
<i>F</i>		1.42	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.03	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>		.01	

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The regression for meetingCA was also significant:  $F(3,134) = 4.06$ ,  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ . See Table 2 for the full regression results. Individuals with more than a BA degree had significantly lower meetingCA ( $b = -.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The cross-validity coefficient revealed the combination of sex, age, and education to still be significant predictors of dyadicCA,  $R^2_{cv} = .04$ ,  $p < .05$ .

The regression for publicCA was significant:  $F(3,134) = 5.13$ ,  $R^2 = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ . See Table 2 for the full regression results. Females had significantly higher publicCA ( $b = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while individuals with more than a BA degree had significantly lower publicCA ( $b = -.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The cross-validity coefficient revealed the combination of sex, age, and education to still be significant predictors of publicCA,  $R^2_{cv} = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ .



The regression for groupCA was non-significant:  $F(3,134) = 1.42$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ ,  $p = .24$ . See Table 2 for the full regression results. The cross-validity coefficient revealed the combination of sex, age, and education to be non-significant predictors of groupCA,  $R^2_{cv} = .02$ .

## Discussion

### Trait CA in Kurdistan

The first hypothesis of the study anticipated that Kurds would rate highly on CA. Despite the prediction of the hypothesis, Kurds in Iran rated as less apprehensive on the communication apprehension continuum. One explanation for this low amount of the CA is the shift toward individualism. Kurdistan is located in the Middle East; the Middle East is culturally considered relatively collectivist and high-context (Kaynak & Kara 2013; Merkin 2012; Pons, Pons, Laroche, & Mourali 2006). However, the trend is changing in recent years and Iranian society is getting more individualistic (Moaddel 2010). Kurdish society is also getting more individualistic. Sanandaj, the center of Kurdistan province in Iran, is one of the most individualist cities in the country (Rastgar-Khaled & Mohammadi 2015).

Cultural elements unique to Kurdistan might also be reasons for lower CA scores in comparison to other nations. Within the social context of the Kurdish culture, religion, family, and other social ties play an important role in people's everyday communication (Bruinessen 1992; McDowall 2004). Modernization and urban life have not been known to the nomadic and rural culture of the Kurdish people until recently (McDowall 2004). In this culture, tribal and family relationships are considered of high importance and priority. Kurds living in the small concentrated villages and cities know each other very well and frequently meet and talk. This social presence is not confined to Kurdish men but women's social presence and their intra/intersexual communication is historically approved and accepted (Bruinessen 1993). Previous research showed higher frequency of communication is significantly related with lower CA (Pederson et al. 2008).

Religion can be another explanation for the lower amount of CA. Different religions vary in their level of individualism and collectivism (Cohen & Hill 2007). Islam emphasizes collectivist tendencies more than other monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Christianity (Cukur, de Guzman, & Carlo 2004). Under the influence of Islam, Kurds gather daily in the mosques and within the family to follow their religious practices, and as a result, to have more social and communicational contacts. People get ready for these kinds of close relationships from childhood when they practice communication behaviors in different social occasions. These skills gained from communication engagements could lead to lower levels of CA.

### Contextual CA

The analysis for  $H2$  revealed that there is a significance difference in CA levels between Kurdish men and women. While women tend to be more expressive in Kurdistan than in neighboring cultures (Mojab 2000), which suggests lower levels of CA among women, this was not the case. Women had significantly higher dyadicCA and publicCA than males, which is consistent with previous literature (Donovan & MacIntyre 2004). Higher levels of apprehension are correlated with lower self-perceived communication competence (Bandura 1988; MacIntyre, Noels & Clement 1997). Higher public CA could represent less access to public positions and reveal the barriers women face while promoting their position in society.

Regarding  $RQ1$ , the analysis revealed that, similar to the findings of Dwyer (1998), there was no significant difference in CA levels among age groups. It is difficult to definitively

separate the effect of education on CA from age. However, it is clear that the basic culture acquisition that takes place in early childhood and during the first years of schooling provide stable communicative ability. However, future work should continue to explore the relationship between societal factors, such as social and religious conventions, human development (age), and communication traits.

In regards to *RQ2*, analysis showed education was negatively related to CA. Consistent with Kasemkosin and Rimkeeratikul's (2012) research, having a university education was negatively correlated with CA. A higher degree of education provides students with more social encounters and at the same time the confidence to communicate with more knowledge and expertise. Previous studies have also shown the importance of higher education in lowering CA levels (Croucher et al. 2015). On the other hand, the fact that there was no significant difference in group CA levels based on educational level could refer to cultural aspects of the newly-modernized Kurdish society, which is influenced by traces of its tribal structure (Gunter 2011). This tribal structure entails different social and religious gathering that trains people to be more relaxed in group communication.

### **Implications, Limitations, and Future Research**

This study is an examination of CA among an unexplored cultural and geographic population. While an abundance of CA research has been conducted on various cultural groups, no CA research has explored the Kurdish people. It is imperative to study this population to improve existing understanding of CA in a global context and establish research methods and standards of evidence particular to different cultural contexts and intercultural patterns (Arasaratnam 2006; Croucher 2013; Durant & Shepherd 2009; Watson et al. 1988).

This study promotes CA research among diverse participants. Most CA studies have analyzed data acquired from elementary aged or undergraduate students; while the present study targeted people from various social groups with different ages, and educational backgrounds. This diverse group provides a more representative picture of CA in Kurdistan, as a student sample inherently excludes a great proportion of the population.

There are five potential limitations to this study. The first relates to the translation of the PRCA-24. Even though the translation showed high reliability, and the scale had high alpha reliabilities, there is a possibility of discrepant meanings due to language. The survey language was Persian. While people in Kurdistan speak Kurdish, there is not an official program of Kurdish education and instead Persian is the language of schooling in Iranian Kurdistan. Thus, the questionnaires were prepared and given out in Persian, which could have led to discrepant meaning among these Kurdish-Persian speakers. On the other hand, these language issues could be contributing to some of the effects of education on CA. Second, the data for this study came from one city in Iranian Kurdistan. While some of the participants were drawn from the suburbs of the city, the overwhelming majority of the participants came from this city. Future research should work for more geographic representativeness. Third, although this study was an exploratory investigation of CA in Kurdistan, more subjects could have been beneficial, especially in conducting comparisons. Fourth, although the results from this study were compared to other studies from the US, and the comparison provides a proper understanding on the intercultural place of Kurdish community in Iran in the continuum of communication apprehension, a comparison with the majority Persian speaking Iranian population would provide a better understanding of role of social status in formation of communication apprehension. Previous research has shown minorities feeling less secure in their communication than the

majority (Giles, 1978; Giles & Johnson, 1987). This is potentially an area of future research. The fifth limitation regards the difference found in the CA of men and women, which could be a result of higher levels of self-criticism among the women in the morning. Future research could explore whether self-reports of CA correspond to how CA of the participants is judged by the people who interact with them.

Another area of future research is the need for further research on Kurdistan itself. Previous studies on Kurdish communication are confined to studies of Kurdish media (Baydar 2013; Sheyholislami 2010, 2012). These studies have shown how Kurds use media to construct their national identities while facing the threat of assimilation by majority and dominant groups. Except for the current study on CA, there is no study dealing with other communication traits/behaviors in the area. To understand the culture of a nation it is vital to understand the communication of that nation (Dilbeck, McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey 2009). Future research could explore communicative traits/behaviors in Kurdistan to improve our understanding of this population.

The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between SES of individuals and their communication apprehension in the context of Iranian Kurdistan. The study examined the influence of sex, age, and education on CA in Kurdistan. More research investigating CA and other communication traits/behaviors in Kurdistan and the rest of Iran is warranted to better understand Kurdish communication and culture.

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### **III**

#### **COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION, SELF-PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE, AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN SINGAPORE**

by

Stephan M. Croucher, Diyako Rahmani, Dale Hample, and Kari Säkkinen, 2016

In *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 40

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# Communication Apprehension, Self-Perceived Communication Competence, and Willingness to Communication in Singapore

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## Abstract

Based in the assertion that different cultures value aspects of communication differently, this study explored the position of Singapore on the continuum of communication apprehension (CA), self-perceived communication competence (SPCC), and willingness to communicate (WTC). Responses were obtained from 209 self-identified ethnic-Chinese born in Singapore and 105 Malay immigrants. The results revealed ethnic-Chinese to have low self-reported CA, while Malays had high CA in comparison to regional neighbors. Malays and ethnic-Chinese both had low WTC and low SPCC levels in comparison to regional neighbors. The findings show a potential “immigrant effect,” as Malay immigrants had much higher CA than ethnic-Chinese. Moreover, further studies on these communication traits should explore ingroup differences in CA, SPCC, and WTC.

**Keywords:** *Communication apprehension, Self-perceived communication competence, Willingness to communicate, Singapore*

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## Introduction

A body of research has developed exploring communication differences across national cultures, with emphasis on communication apprehension (CA), willingness to communicate (WTC), and self-perceived communication competence (SPCC). Research shows Americans, particularly university students, are more willing to communicate than East Asians (Hsu, 2007; Mansson & Myers, 2009), have higher SPCC (Hsu, 2007), and are less apprehensive communicators (Hsu, 2004; Zhang, Butler, & Pryor, 1996). The focus of this research has been to better understand communication competence, or the ability to communicatively complete one's goals (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). Individuals make choices based on their perceived communicative competence, which is influenced by their willingness and/or fear of communication. Self-report measures of competence are used to assess an individual's perception of their communicative competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

Communication competence differs culturally, and the exploration of these differences is needed. Dilbeck, McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey (2009) asserted an understanding of Thai SPCC offered an understanding of how and why people communicate. In a similar study of SPCC, Zarrinabadi (2012) analyzed Iranians to provide a greater understanding of the how and why people communicate. In both

studies the authors asserted the goal of these studies was to understand the communicative world around us. The current study takes this approach further.

Previous research shows self-reports of communication competence “vary as a function of the sample tested in the U.S. (typical college students, African American students, Hispanic students, Euro-American students, at-risk students, and gifted students) (Dilbeck et al., 2009, p. 2). Samples also differ from different national cultures. While studies of CA, WTC, and SPCC have been conducted in many national cultures (e.g., the US and Puerto Rico, England, Germany, Finland, France, Sweden, Japan, Korea, China, Thailand, Israel, India, Iran, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia, and Micronesia (Barraclough, Christophel, & McCroskey, 1988; Burroughs & Marie, 1990; Croucher, 2013; Dilbeck et al., 2009; Hsu, 2004; Neuliep, Chadoir, McCroskey, 2003; Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1991; Yook & Ahn, 1999; Zarrinabadi, 2012), many have been ignored.

This study adds to previous research by exploring these traits in Singapore. Singapore has been chosen for the following reasons. First, Singapore is an ethnically diverse nation with an ethnic-Chinese majority and many minority groups (Malay, Indonesian, and Indian). This diversity provides group-level comparisons. Second, research shows levels of CA, SPCC, and WTC differ based on an individual's status within society (Croucher, 2013; Richmond, McCroskey, McCroskey, & Fayer, 2008). Thus, it is advantageous to explore these traits in Singapore as it has dominant majority and minority groups. Third, Singapore is politically and culturally different from US, European, and Southeast Asian national cultures (Mutalib, 2005), who make up the bulk of the cultures studied in CA, WTC, and SPCC research. Exploring CA, WTC, and SPCC in Singapore will expand our understanding of communication, and further answer how and why people communicate. Therefore, the current study assesses the overall position of Singapore on the CA, WTC, and SPCC continuums.

## Communication Traits

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) (McCroskey, 1982) measures communication apprehension, or “a broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated [oral] communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1997, p. 78). The PRCA has 24-items measuring trait-like CA across four contexts: dyadic, meetings, public, and small groups. CA studies have been conducted in the US, Puerto Rico, Europe, South Africa, the Pacific Rim (China, the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea), Micronesia, Thailand, India, Iran, and Australia (Barraclough et al., 1988; Burroughs & Marie, 1990; Croucher, 2013; Hsu, 2004; Mansson & Myers, 2009; Neuliep et al., 2003; Sallinen-Kuparinen et al., 1991; Yook & Ahn, 1999). In such studies, US participants have reported lower levels of CA than international participants. Research has shown significant differences between US and international participants. One study explored CA in Singapore (Lee, Detenber, Willnat, Aday, & Graf, 2004); the study considered CA as a predictor of spiral of silence. The authors found Singaporeans to be more apprehensive than Americans. However, as the study was not about CA, no analysis of CA in Singapore was provided. Moreover, the place of Singapore on the CA continuum is unknown. While it would be possible to compare the results from Singapore to nations studied, the focus of this study is to compare Singapore with regional neighbors for a cultural understanding of the region. Thus, the following is put forth:

*RQ1:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of communication apprehension (CA) scores?

A trait linked to CA is willingness to communicate (WTC), or an individual's readiness to initiate communication with others (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). This kind of communication can take place in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts, and with acquaintances, friends, and/or with strangers. The Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey, 1992) is a 20-item measure that assesses an individual's willingness to initiate communication. WTC studies have been conducted in the US, Puerto Rico, Europe, South Africa, the Pacific Rim, Micronesia, Micronesia, Thailand, and Australia. In these

studies, US participants have regularly reported higher levels of WTC than international participants. As no research has been conducted on WTC in Singapore, to better understand WTC in the Singaporean context, the following is put forth:

*RQ2:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of willingness to communicate (WTC) scores?

The third variable is self-perceived communication competence (SPCC), or a person's belief in his/her ability to adequately perform communication activities (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). SPCC focuses on communication with acquaintances, friends and/or strangers in interpersonal, small group and public speaking contexts. The Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) instrument (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) is a 12-item scale used to measure SPCC. In addition to the nations analyzed for WTC, Iran has been studied for SPCC (Zarrinabadi, 2012). US participants regularly are shown to have higher levels of SPCC than international participants; SPCC is positively correlated with WTC, and negatively with CA (Croucher, 2013). As no research has been conducted on SPCC in Singapore, to better understand SPCC in the Singaporean context, the following is put forth:

*RQ3:* What is the position of Singapore on the continuum of self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) scores?

## Relationship between Ethnic Chinese and Malay Immigrants

Malays are marginalized in Singapore. Malays have higher unemployment rates than Chinese. The Chinese dominate professional and managerial occupations (Lyons & Ford, 2009). Malays experience higher divorce rates, larger numbers of single parent households, and larger family sizes (Mutalib, 2005). Such social problems attract government and public attention, and reinforce a variety of negative stereotypes toward Malays (Lyons & Ford, 2009). The Malay immigrant population continues to grow. However, many ethnic Chinese are not happy with this growth. In fact, the growing Malay population faces growing resentment and prejudice. While the government tries to integrate the groups, the long-standing differences between the groups often lead to a lack of communication, which is not spoken about openly in Singapore (Lyons & Ford, 2009). Ultimately, the differences between these two groups may attribute to differences in levels of CA, SPCC, and WTC. Based on the assertion that majority group members will feel more comfortable communicating than minority group members (Croucher, 2013; Richmond et al., 2008) the following is posed:

*H1a:* Chinese Singaporeans report lower CA levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.

*H1b:* Chinese Singaporeans report higher WTC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.

*H1c:* Chinese Singaporeans report higher SPCC levels than Malay immigrants to Singapore.

## Method

### Participants

The sample included 314 individuals (51.3% female and 48.7% male). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60 ( $M = 28.14$ ,  $SD = 7.17$ ). Of the participants, 209 were ethnic-Chinese born in Singapore (66.6%), and 105 were Malay (33.4%). All data were collected after institutional review board approval in 2013. The principal

investigator contacted participants through established social and professional networks; thus, this is a convenience sample. Participants did not receive financial incentives for their participation. The instrument was delivered in English and Malay. The instrument was first prepared in English and then back-translated from Malay to English. The reliability was high ( $k = .83$ ). English was used for the majority of the participants as English has been one of the official languages of Singapore since the 1980s.

## Instruments

The PRCA is a 24-item scale measuring trait-like communication apprehension in four contexts: dyadic, meeting, small group, and public (McCroskey, 1982). It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly agree* to (5) *strongly disagree*. The scale is reliable, with alpha reliabilities ranging from .80 to .95 (Croucher, 2013; Hsu, 2007). In the current study, the alphas were: .87 for dyadic, .86 for meeting, .88 for small group, and .90 for public.[1]

The Willingness to Communicate scale is a 20-item measure of one's willingness to initiate communication among acquaintances, friends and strangers. The scale items range from (0) *never* to (100) *always*. McCroskey (1992) asserted that while the scale has seven dimensions, it could be scored as unidimensional. Previous alpha reliabilities have ranged from .81 to .89 (Mansson & Myers, 2009). The alpha for WTC in the current study was .84.[2]

The Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale is a 12-item scale measuring an individual's perceptions of their own communicative competence among acquaintances, friends and strangers (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). The scale items range from (0) *not at all competent* to (100) *completely competent*. While there are three types of receivers, and four contexts for competence (public, meeting, group, and dyad), often the combined score is only reported. Previous reliabilities have ranged from .81 to .93 (Hsu, 2007). The alpha in the current study was .91[3]. For the sake of comparability with literature on these topics, and in view of the acceptable Cronbach's alphas, we decided to use standard procedures involving summed or averaged items in the analyses to follow. We discuss the CFA results in the Discussion. Table 1 shows the correlations among the study variables.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation Results**

Variable	Ethnic Chinese						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(1) Group CA	-						
(2) Meeting CA	-.18**	-					
(3) Dyadic CA	-.37**	.08	-				
(4) Public CA	-.01	.02	-.11	-			
(5) Total CA	.01	-.02	.03	.06	-		
(6) WTC	-.04	-.09	.17*	.09	-.36**	-	
(7) SPCC	.07	-.01	.01	-.01	.04	-.10*	-

**Malay Immigrants**

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(1) Group CA	-						
(2) Meeting CA	.18*	-					
(3) Dyadic CA	.01	.29**	-				
(4) Public CA	.08	-.09	.23**	-			
(5) Total CA	.08	.06	.01	.05	-		
(6) WTC	.01	.05	-.05	.10	.09	-	
(7) SPCC	-.02	.03	-.02	.02	.16*	.41**	-

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results

The position of Singapore on the continuum of CA scores is in Table 2 (*RQ1*). The table is divided between the ethnic-Chinese sample and the Malay immigrant sample, in conjunction with the CA scores of other Asian “neighbor” nations to Singapore. As illustrated in Table 2, there is a wide range of scores. As all of the studies from neighboring countries combined the four contexts of CA in their data reporting[4], the four contexts of CA in this study are combined for data comparison with other studies on this region. The scores range from a Malaysian study with an undergraduate sample of 31 (Devi & Shahnaz Feroz, 2008) with the lowest CA scores, to the current study where the Malay immigrant population in Singapore was the highest on the combined CA score ( $M = 85$ ,  $SD = 6.22$ ). Ethnic Chinese in Singapore scored next to the bottom of the range with a fairly low combined CA score ( $M = 53.17$ ,  $SD = 11.02$ ). In support of *H1a*, Chinese Singaporeans scored significantly lower on two of the CA contexts: dyadicCA ( $M_C = 16.23$ ,  $SD_C = 1.57$ ;  $M_M = 17.12$ ,  $SD_M = 2.21$ )  $t(312) = -4.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and publicCA ( $M_C = 16.76$ ,  $SD_C = 2.51$ ;  $M_M = 17.60$ ,  $SD_M = 2.75$ )  $t(191.81) = -2.64$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Table 2:** Communication Apprehension Scores: Southeast Asian Studies

Nation	Sample <i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Singapore (Present Study Malay immigrants)	105	85	6.22
China (Zhang et al., 1996)	688	79.8	11.5
Thailand (Knutson et al., 1995)	640	71.05	N/A
Malaysia (Sarriiff & Gillani, >2011)	130	71.03	12.2
Singapore (Waipeng et al., 2004)	688 (no separation between groups)	62.68	16.32



Taiwan (Hsu, 2007)	311	70.92	10.84
Philippines (Rojo-Laurilla, 2007)	24	66.62	13.16
Singapore (Present Study Ethnic-Chinese)	209	53.17	11.02
Malaysia (Devi & Shahnaz Feroz, 2008)	31	36.13	5.16

The position of Singapore on the continuum of WTC scores (*RQ2*) is in Table 3. The table is divided between the ethnic-Chinese sample and the Malay immigrant sample, in conjunction with the WTC scores of other Asian “neighbor” nations to Singapore. As illustrated, there is a large range of scores. The WTC scores range from Del Villar’s (2012) analysis of 385 employees in multi-national corporations, to ethnic-Chinese ( $M = 60.57$ ,  $SD = 8.12$ ) and Malay immigrants ( $M = 54.52$ ,  $SD = 5.19$ ) in Singapore in the current study. In support of *H1b*, Chinese Singaporeans scored significantly higher on WTC: ( $M_C = 60.57$ ,  $SD_C = 8.12$ ;  $M_M = 54.52$ ,  $SD_M = 5.19$ )  $t(312) = 6.96$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3:** Willingness to Communicate Scores: Southeast Asian Studies

Nation	Sample <i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Philippines (Del Villar)	385	74.06	18.62
Taiwan (Hsu, 2007)	311	63.38 <sup>[5]</sup>	13.95
Thailand (Knutson et al., 2002)	315		
<i>Strangers</i>		19.82	
<i>Acquaintances</i>		72.49	
<i>Friends</i>		88.49	
Singapore (Present Study Ethnic-Chinese)	209	60.57	8.12
Singapore (Present Study Malay immigrants)	105	54.52	5.19

The position of Singapore on the continuum of SPCC scores (*RQ3*) is provided in Table 4. The table is divided between the ethnic-Chinese sample and the Malay immigrant sample, in conjunction with the SPCC scores of other Asian “neighbor” nations to Singapore. As shown, there is a wide range of scores. The SPCC scores range from Hsu’s (2007) analysis of 311 Taiwanese undergraduates to, ethnic-Chinese ( $M = 61.6$ ,  $SD = 7.09$ ) and Malay immigrants ( $M = 60.79$ ,  $SD = 6.23$ ) in Singapore in the current study. Chinese Singaporeans did not score significantly higher on SPCC: ( $M_C = 61.60$ ,  $SD_C = 7.09$ ;  $M_M = 60.79$ ,  $SD_M = 6.23$ )  $t(312) = .99$ ,  $p = .99$ , thus *H1c* is not supported.

**Table 4:** Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scores: Southeast Asian Studies

Nation	Sample <i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
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Taiwan (Hsu, 2007)	311	70.26 <sup>[6]</sup>	13.56
Thailand (Dilbeck et al., 2009)	346	68.4	13.0
Malaysia (Devi & Shanaz Feroz, 2008)	31	67.26	12.01
Philippines (Rojo-Laurilla, 2007)	24	64.15/79.46 <sup>[7]</sup>	17.82/11.84
Singapore (Present Study Ethnic-Chinese)	209	61.60	7.09
Singapore (Present Study Malay Immigrants)	105	60.79	6.23

## Discussion

Dilbeck et al. (2009) argued to understand communication we must explore the communicative traits and behaviors of individuals in different national cultures. This study explored CA, WTC, and SPCC in Singapore. Based on these results, the following conclusions are drawn. First, Malay immigrants have the highest levels of CA in comparison to other respondents in the region while ethnic-Chinese born in Singapore have the lowest CA levels in the region. This could be linked to what Croucher (2013) called the immigrant effect. Immigrant status had a significant effect on CA, and WTC levels; immigrants had higher levels. Individuals born into a group with more economic, political, or social power are more likely to be enculturated/socialized to develop more communicative competence (Croucher, 2013). He hypothesized this was because they had less economic, political, and cultural power in society.

Previous research has also shown social status is related to level of CA among communicators. A study of Japanese, Hawaiian, and American undergraduate students revealed the level of CA is higher when students are communicating to a higher social status (professor) than a lower social status (classmate) (Kim, Tasaki, Kim, & Lee, 2007). Among the Asian cultures such as China and Japan, people with higher social ranks, for example the elderly and people of great authority are high respected (Sue & Kitano, 1973), so it is usually avoided to oppose them. According to Kim et al. (2007) preventing getting negative comments and punishment are other reasons that make Asians avoid or be cautious communicating with individuals of higher social position. Thus, they are less likely to feel communicatively comfortable, or secure, which in turn will increase apprehension levels. However, minority groups could be communicatively uncomfortable for a variety of different reasons. Racism and discrimination, and interracial stress are different kinds of stress caused by being in the position of a minority (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). More research should explore these links between an individual's place in society and communication traits.

Second, the PRCA, WTC, and the SPCC scales are primarily used to measure CA, SPCC, and/or WTC among ingroup members. However, as nations diversify it is advantageous to include other variables in studies that explore issues related to power. The results show Malay immigrants who are often discriminated against in Singapore (Rubdy & McKay, 2013) differed statistically from the majority ethnic-Chinese in levels of CA and WTC. As this group lacks economic, social, and political power it is likely they are less likely to want to or perceive themselves as communicatively competent. The out-group status of the Malays in Singapore might well result in their communication being less welcome than messages from the majority ethnic Chinese. Consequently, the various indicants of apprehension on the part of Malays reflect an accurate perception of their social worlds, rather than following from personality orientations, which is the ordinary interpretation.

Level of communication apprehension is significantly related to whether or not an individual decides to begin communication or not. Based on an individual's socio-economic situation and previous experiences,

an individual in a minority group may feel less or more anxious to begin communication in a specific context. This also affects individual's willingness to communicate and the situations in which the person chooses to establish communication. Higher levels of communication apprehension indicate less willingness to communicate. However, the decision to communicate does not affect self-perceived communication competence. It seems that when the decision to communicate is set, individuals perceive themselves to be competent to communicate regardless of the party they are communicating with. Previous research showed among individuals with high CA from either high or low context cultures, the decision to communicate is influenced by cultural expectations and previous experiences, but their certainty and interpersonal solidarity is not affected (Allen et al., 2014). This might explain why Chinese and Malays differed on CA and WTC, but not on SPCC. In other studies (that do not compare majority and minority status), the three measures used tended to result in a more consistent pattern than discovered in the current study. Malays seemed to feel they were just as able to communicate as the Chinese, but were less eager to participate. Research that uses paired instruments to compare in-group versus out-group scores within each ethnic sample might be illuminating.

Third, in comparison to its regional neighbors, Singapore scored lower on WTC and SPCC. Aside from the Malay immigrant WTC score, the other scores are representative of this region when compared to US and/or European scores. In previous research US and European samples have scored higher on WTC and SPCC (Mansson & Myers, 2009). Thus the majority of the WTC and SPCC scores in Singapore are in line with previous "Asian" trait research. This body of research posited Asian cultures such as China, which are perceived to be more collectivist, show higher CA, lower WTC, and lower SPCC in comparison to their more individualist European and American counterparts (Gudykunst, 2001). Previous research showed higher CA and lower WTC and SPCC among Asian cultures such as China and Taiwan could be explained by collectivist cultural values, and personality traits such as neuroticism and extroversion (Hsu, 2010). Due to the push toward being harmonious with the in-group, holding social duties and being obedient, people in collectivist cultures are more likely to be sensitive about peers' evaluation of them than people in individualistic cultures (Hsu, 2004). However, there is not enough available data to relate cultural identity to communication traits (Hsu, 2010), and the WTC score among Malay immigrants supports the need to conduct more research on the significance of group dynamics between dominant and minority groups. These particular results demonstrate how the Malay immigrant community has low WTC in Singapore. While the Singaporean government takes steps to integrate immigrant populations into Singapore, the results from this study suggest differences in the communicative traits and behaviors of the immigrant and dominant groups. More open dialogue should take place about the similarities and differences between these groups to better understand the changing demographics of Singapore.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFAs) did not produce an acceptable solution for the well-established PRCA, WTC, or SPCC scales. While frustrating in one sense, these are substantive results, indicating these Western-developed scales did not resonate with our respondents in Singapore. Prior research has not for the most part reported CFAs, relying instead on Cronbach's alphas (Levine, Hullett, Turner, & Lapinski, 2006; Schmitt, 1996). The results of the current study bring earlier results into question, and suggest the need to statistically re-examine the idea of communication apprehension in its local cultural context.

Little research has considered such traits in other parts of the world. As Dilbeck et al. (2009) stated, "if we are to generate truly human communication theories, it is incumbent on communication scholars to pay attention to the traits of humans in other cultures" (p. 6). This study attempted to answer this call by exploring these traits in Singapore. As the results show, more work is needed to understand the potential influence of an individual's position in society on communication traits before we can generate "truly human communication theories."

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[1] We conducted several confirmatory factor analyses of the scale, using LISREL 8.8 and maximum likelihood estimation, as was true for all the CFAs reported here. The PRCA results were unsatisfactory. The initial CFA divided the items into the usual four scales and produced poor fit:  $\chi^2 = 4559.10$ ,  $df = 246$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .21 (90% CI .21 - .22), CFI = .86, SRMR = .11. A second order CFA that assigned each of the four latent subscales to a second order factor failed to run because the key matrix was not positive definite. Inspection revealed a very high likelihood of multicollinearity, with many zero-order correlations exceeding .90, especially among group and meetings items. A third CFA assigned all 24 items to a single factor, and this was also unsatisfactory:  $\chi^2 = 9254.09$ ,  $df = 252$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .31 (90% CI .30 - .31), CFI = .79, and SRMR = .21. Inspection of the R-squared for loadings of items to the latent variable indicated the group and meeting items often had R-squared exceeding .90 but those for the dyadic and public speaking items rarely exceeded .20, and were often below .10. In short, the group and meeting items behaved so similarly they approached perfect multicollinearity, and the dyadic and public speaking items barely loaded at all.

[2] We also performed a CFA on this instrument. The WTC scale was unidimensional, dropping the final item due to missing data. The CFA produced poor results:  $\chi^2 = 1018.16$ ,  $df = 152$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RSMEA = .12 (90% CI .11 - .13), CFI = .31, and SRMR = .11. Many items had R-squared of less than .10 on the latent variable.

[3] We conducted a CFA on the SPCC scale, and treated it as a single scale. The CFA of all 12 items gave poor fit:  $\chi^2 = 334.17$ ,  $df = 54$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .11 (90% CI .10 - .12), CFI = .43, and SRMR = .09. Inspection of the R-squared between the items and the latent variables revealed many loadings below .10.

[4] In numerous studies of CA researchers report totalCA and to use totalCA as a dependent or independent variable (e.g., Allen, O'Mara, & Long, 2014; Beatty, Heisel, Lewis, Pence, Reinhart, & Tian, 2011; Burroughs, Marie, & McCroskey, 2003; Hsu, 2010; McCroskey, Fayer, & Richmond, 1985; Neuliep et al., 2003).

[5] Originally Hsu (2007) reported the WTC mean as 1267.53; to standardize the mean for comparison purposes, the  $M$  and  $SD$  were both divided by 20, the number of questions in the Willingness to Communicate Scale.

[6] Originally Hsu (2007) reported the SPCC mean as 843.19; to standardize the mean for comparison purposes, the  $M$  and  $SD$  were both divided by 12, the number of questions in the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale.

[7] Two values are provided because the authors conducted an experiment and thus had two values for SPCC.

[8] Originally Hsu (2007) reported the WTC mean as 1267.53; to standardize the mean for comparison purposes, the *M* and *SD* were both divided by 20, the number of questions in the Willingness to Communicate Scale.

[9] Originally Hsu (2007) reported the SPCC mean as 843.19; to standardize the mean for comparison purposes, the *M* and *SD* were both divided by 12, the number of questions in the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale.

[10] Two values are provided because the authors conducted an experiment and thus had two values for SPCC.

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Journal of Intercultural Communication, ISSN 1404-1634, issue 40, March 2016.

URL: <http://immi.se/intercultural>



## **IV**

### **INTERGROUP CONFLICT, WTC AND CA: AN ANALYSIS OF MINORITY AND MAJORITY GROUPS**

by

Diyako Rahmani, 2017

In Approaches to conflict: Theoretical, interpersonal, and discursive dynamics,  
175-192

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