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The Influence of Conformity Orientation on Communication Patterns in Family Conversations

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Abstract

Two studies investigated the role of conformity orientation in family communication. Conversations of 31 families (study 1) and 50 families (study 2) were analyzed employing Stiles (1992) Verbal Response Mode coding scheme to test 5 hypotheses regarding the influence of conformity orientation on the frequency of specific speech acts. Analysis of 12,520 (study 1) and 17,724 (study 2) speech acts showed statistically significant differences in the speech production of families low and families high in conformity orientation during general conversation. Specifically, families high in conformity orientation were more self-oriented, particularly in their frame of reference, and used relatively more advice, interpretation, and questions in their conversation. Families low in conformity orientation were more other-oriented in their speech and used relatively more confirmation, acknowledgment, and reflection in their general conversations.

Keywords: Family Interaction, Family Communication Patterns, Conformity Orientation, RFCP.

The family has long been regarded as among the most interesting and influential interpersonal systems and nowhere is its influence on individual behaviors more profound than in the area of communicative behaviors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972; Reiss, 1981; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Particularly Reiss (1981) has argued strongly that families are characterized by uniquely shared world views and value and belief systems. These value and belief systems have far reaching consequences for how family members perceive their social environment and their family's place in it and, as a consequence, how they communicate within it.

Conformity Orientation in Families

One dimension of social and interpersonal relationships that has received increased attention in the study of family communication is the conformity orientation of the family. Conformity orientation is one of two important dimensions underlying family communication patterns (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), conversation orientation is the other. Conformity orientation refers to the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Families on the high end of this dimension are characterized by interactions that emphasize a uniformity of beliefs and attitudes. Their interactions typically focus on harmony, conflict avoidance, and the interdependence of family members. In inter-generational exchanges, communication in these families reflects children's obedience to parents and other adults. Families on the low end of the conformity orientation dimension are characterized by interactions that focus on heterogeneous attitudes and beliefs, as well as on the individuality of family members and their independence. In intergenerational exchanges, communication reflects the equality of all family members and

children are usually involved in decision making.

Recent work by Fitzpatrick and her colleagues (Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 1997; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997a, 1997b; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) has demonstrated the influence of conformity orientation on various outcomes for families, such as conflict and conflict resolution (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997a), children's resiliency to adverse environmental influences (Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 1997), children's future romantic relationships (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997b), utilization of social self-restraint and social withdrawal behaviors (Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler & Krcmar, 1996), the enactment of family rituals (Baxter & Clark, 1996), and effect of parent's work environments on the family context (Ritchie, 1997).

Associated with high conformity orientation is the belief in what might be called a traditional family structure (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997a). In this view, families are cohesive and hierarchical. That is, family members favor their family relationships over relationships outside of the family and they expect that resources, such as space and money, are shared among family members. Families high in conformity orientation believe that individuals' schedules should be coordinated among family members to maximize family time and they expect family members to subordinate personal interests to those of the family. Parents are expected to make the decisions for the family and the children are expected to act according to their parents' wishes.

Conversely, families low in conformity orientation do not believe in a traditional family structure. Instead, they believe in less cohesive and hierarchically organized families. Families on the low end of the conformity dimension believe that relationships outside the family are equally

important as family relationships, and that families should encourage the personal growth of individual family members, even if that leads to a weakening of the family structure. They believe in the independence of family members, they value personal space, and they subordinate family interests to personal interests.

These descriptions of high and low conformity orientation in families are very similar to those that cross-cultural research has produced for collectivist and individualist cultures. Studies by Triandis and his colleagues (Triandis, 1989a, 1989b; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990; Trafimow, Triandis & Goto, 1991) suggest that for collectivists, group goals have primacy over individual goals, individual behavior is regulated by norms rather than attitudes, and hierarchical structures, harmony, and saving face are emphasized. In short, unlike individualists who are self-oriented, collectivists are generally other-oriented in their social behaviors (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Triandis, 1995). It stands to reason that these cultural differences might very well describe variations of family culture as well.

One important aspect of family communication that research thus far has not answered is how conformity orientation is expressed in everyday conversations of families. If conformity orientation is truly a pervasive characteristic of family communication as claimed (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997a, 1997b; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) than it cannot be limited to the explicit verbalization of rules, norms, and expectations. For conformity orientation to be pervasive, one would expect it to operate in everyday conversations and to operate on the micro level of individual speech acts and not only on the macro level of conversational topics. To test this assertion is the purpose of the studies reported here.

Self-Orientation and Other-Orientation in Communication

Based on the already discussed findings on conformity orientation in family and its similarities with collectivist cultures, one way in which we would expect conformity orientation to find expression on the micro-level is in the overall self- versus other-orientation in speech. A detailed conceptualization and operationalization of self- and other-orientation in individual speech acts was provided by Stiles' (1992) through his Verbal Response Mode (VRM) coding system. Based on theory initially proposed by Goodman (Goodman & Dooley, 1976; Goodman & Easterly, 1988) and validated through empirical observation, Stiles identified three dimensions in which speech acts can be coded either self- or other-oriented: source of experience, presumption of experience, and frame of reference.

Source of Experience refers to whose experience the speech act is about. That is, either speakers talk about themselves and their own experiences (coded speaker) or about others and others' experiences (coded other). Presumption of Experience refers to whether speakers presume to share others' experiences (coded other) or do not presume to share others' experiences (coded speaker). Finally, Frame of Reference refers to the viewpoint from where the speech act is made. If the topic of the speech act is evaluated from the speakers' viewpoint it is coded speaker, if it is evaluated from the viewpoint of the other it is coded other. Because each speech act is classified along all three dimensions, Stiles' taxonomy yields eight types of speech acts: acknowledgement, advice, confirmation, edification, disclosure, interpretation, question, and reflection (see Table 1).

Conformity Orientation and Speech Act Production

We have argued that the conformity orientation of families should be evident in their

communicative behaviors. Specifically, based on the findings in cross cultural settings linking conformity orientation to greater other-orientation, we expected that conformity orientation of families should be characterized by a greater other-orientation in their speech acts' source of experience, presumption of experience, and frame of reference. Thus, the first hypothesis can be formulated to state:

H1: Family conformity orientation will be positively correlated with other-orientation in all three dimensions of speech: source of experience, presumption of experience, and frame of reference.

Conformity Orientation and Specific Speech Acts

The expression of conformity orientation in speech should not be limited to a general other-orientation in speech production, but should also become evident in the relative frequency of specific types of speech acts. Because families high in conformity orientation are very concerned that other family members do not deviate from family norms, they should be much more likely to use speech acts that establish conformity than members of families low in conformity orientation. Speech acts that establish conformity can be direct (i.e. advising the other persons what to think or how to behave) or indirect (i.e. in the form of interpretation of the other). Consequently, we would expect these two responses to be more frequent in high conformity families than in low conformity families. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Family conformity orientation is positively correlated with the frequency of advice in family conversations.

H3: Family conformity orientation is positively correlated with the frequency of

interpretations in family conversations.

In families that are low in conformity orientation, diversity of opinion and beliefs is valued. As a result, family members feel a need to accept each other's opinions, even if they are incongruent with their own and those of other family members. This should lead to interactions where speech acts reflecting acceptance, such as confirmation and reflection, occur more frequently than in families high in conformity orientation. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H4: Family conformity orientation is negatively correlated with the frequency of confirmations in family conversations.

H5: Family conformity orientation is negatively correlated with the frequency of reflections in family conversations.

Method of Study 1

Participants

Thirty-one Midwestern families participated in the study. Average number of participants per family was 3.9 and ranged from 2 (1 parent and 1 child) to 8 (2 parents and 6 children). For married couples, the average length of marriage was 17.4 years (range: 1 to 47 years), parents' mean age was 43.2 years (range: 33 to 68), and children's mean age was 18 years (range: 8 to 43). In all, 39 daughters and 21 sons participated in the study, as well as 12 fathers and 32 mothers (N=106). Two respondents did not indicate their family role.

Procedures

Families for this study were recruited with fliers, advertisements in local papers, and through announcements in several communication classes at a large research university and a

small, private liberal arts college. Families who contacted the research team to volunteer for the study were given a description of the procedures, signed informed consent forms, and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study or the procedure.

After the introduction, participants individually responded to questionnaires containing Ritchie and Fitzpatrick's (1990) Revised Family Communication Pattern (RFCP) instrument, a demographic section, and some unrelated measures. Then families were brought together and instructed to discuss issues they perceived to cause family conflict and their possible solutions for at least 15 minutes. Families discussed each issue and possible solutions until they either concluded that the issue was resolved or that they could not, or did not want to, resolve it. Discussions were videotaped for their entire length, even if the family chose to exceed 15 minutes. After families had concluded their discussion, participants were thanked for their participation and fully debriefed.

Independent Variables

Conformity orientation was measured using the Revised Family Communication Pattern (RFCP) instrument (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The RFCP measures two dimensions of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation is defined as a family climate where all family members are encouraged to participate freely in interaction about a wide array of topics. Conformity orientation is defined as a family climate that stressed homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs. The RFCP is based on McLeod and Chaffee's (1972) Family Communication Pattern instrument, but represents an advancement over it in that it better labels and operationalizes the underlying dimensions of conformity and conversation orientation (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Reliabilities for both the conversation

orientation ($\alpha = .89$) and the conformity orientation ($\alpha = .73$) in this study were acceptable.

Unlike most other studies of family communication, participating families in this study were free to define their family as they saw fit. This was done to account for the changing definition of family in our society, which increasingly causes external validity problems for studies that define families traditionally as father-mother-child triads (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993). As a consequence, the number of members in each family varies widely (range: 2-9) and the constellation of parents varied as well, from single parent mother-child dyads to a married couple with seven children to a lesbian couple with two children. This created a methodological problem for aggregating family data to assign families to either high or low conformity groups. Past research has shown that there are perceptual biases in participants' reports of conversation orientation and conformity orientation that are associated with family roles (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). For example, mothers generally perceive their families as more conversation oriented, whereas sons usually report their families as more conformity oriented. To account for these role specific differences in how families were perceived, z-scores based on the overall average for each family role rather than raw scores for conversation orientation and conformity orientation were used in computing the family scores on these variables. This technique was suggested by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (1997b).

Dependent Variable

Stiles (1992) VRM instrument, which was discussed earlier, was used to classify the speech acts produced by the families. Family discussions were transcribed and individual turns were separated into speech acts (defined as a simple sentence containing, or implying, at least a subject and a verb) by two trained research assistants, who had an initial agreement on unitizing

of 93 percent. Each individual speech act was then evaluated separately and coded as belonging into one of the eight intent categories of the VRM. In cases of unclear intent or incomplete thoughts (i.e. "I...well, you know"), speech acts were coded "incomplete." All together, 12522 speech acts were coded.

Three research assistants were trained in the use of the VRM by completing Stiles' interactive computer training program (Stiles, 1992). Each of the three research assistants coded all 31 family interactions. After the transcripts were coded individually, coders came together to compare and discuss their codes. In cases of disagreement (i.e. at least one coder had coded a speech act differently) all three coders discussed the speech act in question and agreed on a final code used in the analysis. To obtain an estimate of the reliability of the codes, Kappas were computed for all three possible pairings of coders using ten percent of the total conversations ($K = .73$, $K = .74$, and $K = .90$).

Results of Study 1

Other-Orientation in Speech

H1 stated that conformity orientation is positively correlated with other-orientation in speech. To test this hypothesis, VRM codes were decomposed into their underlying dimensions (source of experience, presumption of experience, and frame of reference) to yield a score on each of the three dimensions for every speech act. These scores were then summed for each individual and for each family and divided by the total sum of turns taken by the individual or family, respectively, to obtain the average other-orientation on each dimension for families and individuals (range: 0-1). These average scores were then correlated with either the family's or the individual's conformity orientation. Using the family as level of analysis, conformity orientation

correlated negatively with other-orientation for the frame of reference dimension ($r = -.34$; $p = .03$). The other correlations did not reach statistical significance. The analysis of individual level data produced no significant correlations between conformity orientation and other-orientation for any of the three dimensions of speech. Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported by the data.

Differences in Types of Speech Acts

Hypotheses 2 to 5 made specific predictions in regard to differences in the relative frequencies of speech acts for families high and low in conformity orientation. Specifically, it was predicted that families high in conformity orientation would make more speech acts coded as advice and interpretation, whereas families low in conformity orientation would make more speech acts coded as confirmation and reflection.

To test these hypotheses, families were divided into a high and a low conformity group using the median split technique. To evaluate the statistical significance of the overall difference between the two groups in their production of speech unit types, Pearson's Chi Square statistic was computed for the resulting 9 (speech act) by 2 (conformity high/low) table. Results indicate a strong difference in the frequencies of speech act types produced by families high or low in conformity orientation ($\chi^2 [8] = 105.86$, $p < .001$).

To evaluate the statistical significance of the differences between the two groups for specific responses, adjusted standardized residuals (ASR) also were computed (see Table 2). ASRs are comparable to z-scores (Bakeman & Robinson, 1994), that is, ASRs larger than 2.0 indicate a statistically significant difference between the frequencies of the speech acts at the $p < .05$ level. Results showed that families high in conformity orientation produced more advice, interpretation, and questions than families low in conformity orientation. Conversely, families

low in conformity orientation produced more speech acts coded as confirmation, reflection, and acknowledgement than families high in conformity orientation. The results regarding advice, confirmation, interpretation, and reflection support hypotheses 2 through 5. There were no predictions made in regard to the differences between the two family types in their production of acknowledgements and questions.

Discussion of Study 1

Other-Orientation in Speech Production

The correlation between conformity orientation and a general other-orientation in speech that is often observed in research investigating communication on the macro level did not materialize on the micro level of individual speech acts. In fact, we observed a statistically significant correlation in the opposite direction, indicating that conformity orientation was actually correlated with a greater self-orientation for frame of reference.

Conformity Orientation of Families and Speech Acts

Unlike the unexpected findings in regard to a general self- versus other-orientation in speech, the results of this study strongly support the predictions made about how conformity orientation is associated with the production of specific types of speech acts. As theorized, families high in conformity orientation produced significantly more advice and interpretation than families low in conformity orientation, whereas families low in conformity orientation produced significantly more confirmation and reflection in their conversations.

These results are consistent with the notion that families high in conformity orientation are concerned with achieving a high degree of correspondence of their attitudes and beliefs. Consequently, in their speech they give advice on how to think and to behave as well as evaluate

others' behaviors and ideas through their interpretations of it. Also reflecting these families' heightened concern for coordination is their greater use of questions and their relative greater willingness to allow others to hold the floor. Combined, these attributes of the speech of families high in conformity orientation describe their interaction as more directive, more deliberate, and more coordinated than the interactions of families low in conformity orientation.

Conversely, families low in conformity orientation are concerned with validating others' divergent attitudes and beliefs. Consequently, their speech is characterized by confirmations of others and by value-free reflections of others' statements. At the same time, there is greater independence in how their conversations are structured and family members compete for the floor more readily than members of families high in conformity orientation. Combined, these attributes of the speech of families low in conformity orientation describe interactions that are freer, more spontaneous, and less coordinated than interactions of families high in conformity orientation.

Study 2

One prediction in study 1 that was not supported by the results was that conformity orientation in families is associated with family members' tendencies to be more other-oriented in their speech. Instead conformity orientation was correlated with a greater self-orientation in speech, at least for frame of reference. This surprising result, which suggests a deficit in the ability of high conformity families to take the other's perspective, might be explained by Burleson, Delia, and Applegate's (1995) theory on the position- versus person-centered style of parenting.

Burleson, et al. (1995) addressed the socializing influence of parents on their children's

communication styles. They reviewed and contrasted two communication strategies that parents use to regulate children's behavior: a person-centered or position-centered approach. In the person-centered approach, parents communicate discipline and comforting rationalizations to their children with an emphasis on the other people that are affected by the child's behavior. Conversely, the position-centered approach emphasizes rules and norms that apply regardless of whether or how others are affected by the behavior. In other words, the person-centered approach encourages children to develop communication skills that enhance their ability to be empathetic and to take the other person's perspective on their own behavior. In contrast, the position-centered approach encourages children to develop communication skills that enhance their ability to identify pertinent rules and norms, but that does not require them to be able to take the other person's perspective into consideration. Thus, to the extent that conformity oriented families are position centered, one would expect less other-orientation and more self-orientation in these families.

Findings in the family context suggest that family conformity orientation is indeed associated with a greater use of position-centered strategies (Baxter & Clark, 1996; Ritchie, 1991). Ritchie (1991) found that parental power to enforce conformity was reflected by the parent's ability to convince children to accept decisions and information with little or no need for explanations. That is, in high conformity families, children were socialized to engage rules rather than perspective taking to regulate their behaviors. In a similar vein, Baxter and Clark (1996) investigated the relationship between conformity orientation and ritualizing family behaviors and found a positive correlation between a family's conformity orientation and adherence to normative guidelines. Combined, these studies illustrate a high conformity orientation family's

dependence on rules rather than perspective taking to regulate communication behaviors.

Based in these findings, it appears that rather than furthering an other-orientation as we initially hypothesized, conformity orientation actually furthers an orientation toward rules and norms. In this view, it is low conformity orientation that enhances empathetic perspective taking. When communication is regulated by rules and norms, it is unnecessary for family members to take the other's perspective, because all family members follow the same rules and norms. Conversely, when communication is regulated by how others are affected by one's behavior, family members are required to take the other's perspective. Therefore, families low in conformity orientation are more attuned to each other's opinions and thoughts and better skilled in perspective taking than families high in conformity orientation.

The purpose of study 2 then was to test this new prediction about the relationship between family conformity orientation and self-orientation in conversation. Specifically, we predicted that conformity orientation would lead to a greater self-orientation in the speech of families high in conformity orientation, especially in regard to frame of reference. In addition, the study also served to replicate the findings of study 1 associating conformity orientation with a relative greater frequency of speech acts coded advice and interpretation and a relative lower frequency of confirmation and reflection.

Method of Study 2

Participants

Fifty Midwest families (two parents and one adolescent) participated in the study (56% with a son, 44% with a daughter). The median family income ranged from \$50k – \$75k. Parents' average age was 42 years old (range = 23-51) and they had been married for an average of 17

years (range = 1-28). The average age of the adolescent was 12 years old (range = 11-14). Forty-seven families were Caucasian, two were Hispanic, and one family was African-American.

Procedures

Participants were families randomly selected from a list containing addresses and phone numbers of all parents of middle school students in a mid-sized Midwestern community. Selected families received a letter describing the study and were subsequently called to verify that they met the criteria for inclusion in the study (two-parent household, parents together for more than 1 year, English first language) and asked to participate. Of the 300 families initially contacted, 76 qualified and 50 were willing to participate. Participating families were asked to attend with both parents and the middle school child and to come to the laboratory, where they completed the study following the same procedure as in study 1. Families received \$ 20 for their participation.

Variables

Both the dependent and independent variables were measured the same way as in study 1. The reliabilities for the RFCP were $\alpha = .78$ for conformity orientation and $\alpha = .85$ for conversation orientation. Classification and VRM coding was done by four trained research assistants blind to the study hypotheses following the same procedure as in study one, that is, after extensive training on the VRM and only after they coded with more than 95% agreement on the practice interactions.

Results of Study 2

Self-Orientation in Speech Production

To test the prediction that family conformity orientation and self-orientation in conversation are positively correlated, individual VRM codes for each speech act were

transformed into a binary score for each of the three underlying dimensions of speech: source of experience, presumption of experience, and frame of reference. These scores were totaled for each family member and divided by the total number of speech acts for each family member. The resulting average score corresponded to the proportion of which each family member produced speech acts that were self-oriented for each of the three dimensions underlying the coding scheme. These proportions (for each individual and for various groupings of family members) are presented in Table 2. In addition, these scores were also correlated with family conformity orientation, controlling for conversation orientation and sex of the child (see Table 3).

As can be seen in both the proportions and correlations, the data supported our prediction that conformity orientation is associated with a greater overall self-orientation in speech acts, an effect that is, as predicted, mainly due to a greater self-orientation in the frame of reference. Using both families and individuals as unit of analysis, the speech of members of families high in conformity orientation overall was more self-oriented and this effect was most pronounced for frame of reference. In fact, there was no difference between families high and low in conformity orientation for presumption of experience, and the results for source of experience were mixed. For source of experience, parents of high conformity families were actually less likely to be self-oriented than parents of low conformity families, an effect that was stronger for mothers than for fathers. Only the results for daughters showed a greater self-orientation for high conformity families.

In regard to how family conformity orientation affected the self-orientation in the speech acts of individual family members, a more complex picture emerged. It seemed that the speech acts of fathers and sons were very similar and in line with the results for the combined families

(i.e., positive correlations for overall self-orientation and for self-orientation in frame of reference). In contrast, mothers' self-orientation was independent of family conformity orientation. The results for daughters were most unique in that family conformity orientation for them was only associated with a greater self orientation in source of experience and, running counter to our prediction, with greater other orientation in presumption of experience (see Table 3).

Differences in Types of Speech Acts

As in Study 1, we predicted that families high in conformity orientation would produce relatively more speech acts coded as advice and interpretation, whereas families low in conformity orientation would produce relatively more speech acts coded as confirmation and reflection.

To test these hypotheses, families were divided into a high and a low conformity group using the median split technique. To evaluate the statistical significance of the overall difference between the two groups in their production of speech acts, Pearson's Chi Square statistic was computed for the resulting 9 (speech unit) by 2 (conformity high/low) table. Results indicate a strong difference in the relative frequencies of speech acts for families high or low in conformity orientation ($\chi^2 [8] = 123.74, p < .001$).

As in study 1, adjusted standardized residuals (ASR) (Bakeman & Robinson, 1994) were computed and used to evaluate the statistical significance of the differences between the two groups for specific speech codes (see Table 2). ASRs larger than 2.0 indicate a statistically significant tendency for families high in conformity orientation to produce more advice, disclosure, and questions than families low in conformity orientation. Conversely, families low in

conformity orientation produced more speech acts coded as confirmation, edification, and acknowledgement than families high in conformity orientation. Thus, the hypotheses that families high in conformity orientation would produce more advice and less confirmation were supported by the data, whereas the predictions that the same families would produce more interpretation and less reflection were not supported.

Post-Hoc Analyses

To gain a better understanding of the differences in speech act production by high and low conformity families, a number of post hoc analyses were conducted. An interesting finding came to light when comparing the speech acts made by high conformity families with sons to those of families with daughters (see Table 4). By producing more advice and less confirmation, high conformity families with sons followed the predictions regarding these speech acts. The data, however, did not reveal the same tendency for families with daughters. Instead, high conformity families with daughters produced more interpretation, which is consistent with our earlier prediction, but they did not differ from low conformity families in their production of advice or confirmation. These findings suggest that conformity orientation has different consequences regarding speech act production for families communicating with sons versus daughters, however, more research is needed to understand the implications of this finding.

Discussion of Study 2

These results strongly supported our prediction that conformity orientation was associated with a greater self-orientation in the speech acts of family members. This self-orientation was most pronounced in the frame of reference, which replicated the findings of study 1. These findings are important, because they show that the inability to empathize with others that

Burleson et al. (1995) predicted to be a consequence of conformity orientation not only manifests as the psychological phenomenon they described, but also a communicative behavior that is directly observable at the level of individual speech acts. This lack of empathy is not only characteristic of children growing up in conformity orientated families, but also evident in the speech of adults. Thus, the lack of empathy observed in children of conformity-oriented families is not a consequence of their specific role as child (i.e., the main target of instructions and rules that originate from the adults). Rather, it is characteristic of the entire family, and parents model this behavior to their children.

In regard to the frequency of types of speech acts, the results from study 2 also replicated the findings of study 1 in regard to the correlation between conformity orientation and the production of advice and confirmation. High conformity families produced more advice, indicating a greater involvement of these families in regulating each other's behavior. This tendency was greater in families with sons than families with daughters, which might be explained by the greater self-restraint exhibited by girls in high conformity families (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). High conformity families were less likely to make confirmations (i.e., to agree or disagree with others), which is consistent with families where agreement with personal opinions is less relevant to family discussions than are rules and norms. Again, this effect was greater in families with boys, which could be the result of girl's greater relational orientation (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996).

The results of study 2 did not support our findings in study 1 that conformity orientation was associated with greater production of reflection and interpretation. In regard to interpretation, we tend to have greater confidence in the findings of study 2, even though they are inconsistent

with our prediction. The sample in study 2 was not only larger, but also more homogenous. In addition, to interpret another person, one needs to be able to take the other's perspective, something that our initial results have shown families high in conformity orientation have difficulty doing. The exception was families with girls, where family conformity orientation was associated with more interpretations. Again, the likely explanation is in the girls' greater relational orientation. In regard to reflections, we do not feel confident in interpreting the result of either study. Reflection accounted for only about 1 percent of the total speech acts, making it too infrequent to provide reliable statistics even in relatively large samples such as ours.

Findings that were consistent in studies 1 and 2 that were not predicted were that families high in conformity orientation asked more questions and made fewer acknowledgements. One possible explanation for the greater frequency of questions could lie in the demand characteristics of the study. Families were asked to discuss potential problems, which would be more difficult for conformity oriented families that value harmony and obedience. As a result, members in these families might have needed more prodding and encouragement in the form of questions before they were willing to discuss their conflicts. That high conformity families were less likely to use acknowledgements in their conversations may be explained by their reliance on the family members' overall understanding of the rules and norms that are reinforced in the family context. This reliance on rules and norms would eliminate the family members need to acknowledge other family members' perspectives.

Unpredicted findings that were somewhat inconsistent in studies 1 & 2 involved the use of disclosure and edification speech acts. The tendencies observed in study 1 of high conformity families to produce more disclosures and less edification reached statistical significance in study

2, which may be a result of the greater sample size in the second study. This effect may be in part due to the demand characteristics of the study. High conformity families usually avoid conflict so they might have been in greater need to explain their individual perspectives to family members. Families low in conformity orientation, on the other hand, do not usually avoid conflict and are therefore more aware of others' perspectives and less in need of explanation. As a result, high conformity families produce more disclosures and less edifications.

Conclusion

These studies have clearly demonstrated that conversations are distinctively different for families high versus families low in conformity orientation, and that these differences are manifest on the level of individual speech acts. To find this correspondence between families' reports on their general philosophical belief systems about communication in their families and their actual, observable behaviors is encouraging for communication researchers for two reasons. First, it validates the use of self-report measures that ask respondents to evaluate and describe their own communicative behavior in general terms for the assessment of specific communicative behaviors. Second, it also reaffirms the role that communication plays in creation of family systems and the attitudes and beliefs they hold. To observe that family beliefs and communicative behavior correlate closely is equivalent to observing that family beliefs and communicative behavior are but different manifestations of the same phenomenon. That is, family beliefs and their communication are inextricably bound to one another, they complement one another, and one would not be possible without the other.

The most important finding, however, remains that we demonstrated a greater self-orientation in families high in conformity orientation. Although counterintuitive, this finding is

not only consistent with the work of Burleson et al. (1995), Baxter and Clark (1996), and Ritchie (1991) already discussed, but also with a long line of research that has shown that children of conformity oriented families are less critical receivers of persuasive messages and more susceptible to outside influences (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Our results suggest that the inability to take the other's perspective might be the underlying reason for this susceptibility to persuasion. More importantly, our results have shown that the effects of conformity orientation are not limited to the children, but are apparent in the communication behavior of the parents as well.

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Table 1

Taxonomy of Stiles's Verbal Response Modes

Source of Experience	Presumption about Experience	Frame of Reference	
		Speaker	Other
Speaker	Speaker	<u>Disclosure</u> "I feel sad when you say that"	<u>Edification</u> "That is very expensive"
	Other	<u>Advisement</u> "You should do the dishes, too"	<u>Confirmation</u> "Yes" "This is not true"
Other	Speaker	<u>Question</u> "How does that make you feel?"	<u>Acknowledgment</u> "Well" "Huhm"
	Other	<u>Interpretation</u> "You must be tired"	<u>Reflection</u> "You feel very lonely"

Note. Adapted from Stiles (1992).

Table 2

Frequencies and Adjusted Standardized Residuals (ASR) of Speech Units of High and Low Conformist Families.

Speech Unit (VRM)	Family Conformity Orientation			
	Low		High	
	Observed (ASR) Study 1	Observed (ASR) Study2	Observed (ASR) Study 1	Observed (ASR) Study 2
Advice	381 (-6.0)*	467 (-2.4) *	418 (+6.0)*	506 (+2.6)*
Confirmation	562 (+4.2)*	1245 (+2.4)	309 (-4.2)*	1056 (-2.4)*
Disclosure	2017 (+1.4)	2625 (-4.1)*	1415 (-1.4)	2686 (+4.1)*
Edification	1977 (+1.0)	1727 (+6.6)*	1401 (-1.0)	1290 (-6.6)*
Interpretation	479 (-2.8)*	523 (-0.3)	419 (+2.8)*	495 (+0.3)
Acknowledgment	953 (+2.2)*	1368 (+4.9)*	626 (-2.2)*	1056 (-4.9)*
Question	686 (-4.3)*	1129 (-7.1)*	627 (+4.3)*	1368 (+7.1)*
Reflection	81 (+4.4)*	96 (+0.2)	21 (-4.4)*	87 (-0.2)
Incomplete	99 (+2.3)*	53 (-1.2)	49 (-2.3) *	62 (+1.2)

Note. Sample 1 (N = 12520). Sample 2 (N=17, 724). * = p <.05.

Table 3

Mean Self-Orientation and Standard Deviations in Speech Acts of Families and Family Members in High/Low Conformity Orientation Families (Study 2).

	Overall Self-Orientation	Source of Experience	Presumption of Experience	Frame of Reference
Families	.66(.27) / .64(.27)**	.65(.48) / .65(.47)	.75(.43) / .75(.46)	.59(.49) / .52(.50)**
<u>Parents</u>	.65(.26) / .64(.27)**	.58(.49) / .61(.49)**	.76(.43) / .75(.43)	.62(.48) / .55(.50)**
Fathers	.65(.27) / .66(.27)**	.59(.49) / .61(.49)	.75(.43) / .77(.42)	.62(.48) / .56(.50)**
Mothers	.65(.26) / .63(.27)**	.57(.49) / .61(.49)*	.76(.43) / .74(.44)	.63(.48) / .53(.50)**
<u>Children</u>	.68(.29) / .65(.28)**	.79(.41) / .76(.43)*	.73(.44) / .73(.44)	.52(.50) / .46(.50)**
Sons	.68(.29) / .64(.28)**	.77(.42) / .72(.42)	.72(.45) / .70(.46)	.54(.50) / .45(.50)**
Daughters	.69(.29) / .66(.27)*	.81(.39) / .75(.43)**	.75(.43) / .77(.42)	.51(.50) / .46(.50)**

Note: * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$.

Table 4

Observed Frequencies and Adjusted Standardized Residuals (ASR) of Speech Acts of High and Low Conformist Families with Sons or Daughters (Study 2).

Speech Unit (VRM)	Sex of Adolescent			
	Families with Sons		Families with Daughters	
	Observed (ASR)	Observed (ASR)	Observed (ASR)	Observed (ASR)
	Low Conf	High Conf	Low Conf	High Conf
Advice	247 (-4.1)*	328 (+4.1)*	220 (+1.2)	178 (-1.2)
Confirmation	699 (+2.9)*	571 (-2.9)*	546 (+0.4)	485 (-0.4)
Disclosure	1337 (-5.4)*	1507 (+5.4)*	1288 (-0.1)	1179 (+0.1)
Edification	993 (+7.2)*	682 (-7.2)*	734 (+1.9)	608 (-1.9)
Interpretation	349 (+2.7)*	268 (-2.7)*	174 (-3.7)*	227 (+3.7)*
Acknowledgment	728 (+3.6)*	573 (-3.6)*	640 (+3.4)*	483 (-3.4)*
Question	608 (-5.4)*	757 (+5.4)*	521 (-4.6)*	611 (+4.6)*
Reflection	53 (-1.0)	61 (+1.0)	43 (+1.7)	26 (-1.7)
Incomplete	19 (-2.3)*	34 (+2.3)*	34 (+0.4)	28 (-0.4)

Note. N = 17724. * = p<.05.

Table 5

Partial Correlations Between Family Conformity Orientation and Self-Orientation and its Three Underlying Dimensions in Conversation of Families and Family Members.

	Overall Self-Orientation	Source of Experience	Presumption of Experience	Frame of Reference
<u>Families</u>	.27*	.04	-.03	.29*
Parents	.19	-.04	-.03	.24*
Fathers	.14	-.06	-.10	.27*
Mothers	.21	-.01	.07	.19
Children	.28*	.19	-.01	.28*
Sons	.41*	.05	.24	.37*
Daughters	.32	.46*	-.40*	.35

Note: * = $p < .01$;

Log-Linear Analysis

To test these hypotheses, log-linear analysis was employed. First, a three-dimensional frequency table containing all 958 responses to self-disclosure was computed. In addition to the eight type of response codes of the VRM (R), sex (S) and family collectivism (C) (high vs. low collectivism by median split) were the other two dimensions to yield an 8(R) * 2(S) * 2(C) table with 32 cells. As it was the case in the preceding analyses, conformity z-scores based on the family role were the operationalization for collectivism. Sex was used as the third variable to test and control for possible effects of sex on responses to self-disclosure (Derlega et al., 1987; Bate, 1988).

To measure individual effects sizes for the variables as well as their two-way interactions, a saturated model (R*S*C) was computed to obtain partial associations (see Table 3). The three way interaction (χ^2 Change = 11.15, $p < .13$), the collectivism by sex interaction (χ^2 Change = 1.95, $p < .15$), and, the response by sex interaction (χ^2 Change = 9.04, $p < .25$) did not contribute greatly to the fit of the saturated model. The only two-way interaction that did contribute significantly to the fit of the model is the response by collectivism interaction (χ^2 Change = 23.70, $p < .002$). To confirm this interpretation, hierarchical log-linear modeling using SPSS's (1990) Hiloginear procedure was employed as well. This process, in which statistically insignificant effects are deleted until the most parsimonious model that still fits the data ($\alpha > .05$) is reached also identified the (R*C) (S) model as the most parsimonious fitting model.

Inter-Cell Comparisons

To identify the relative magnitude and direction of the effects of collectivism on the responses given to self-disclosure, a frequency table was computed that contains the expected

frequencies that would occur had collectivism no effect on responses. The model underlying this frequency table is called Base Model by Bakeman (Bakeman & Robinson, 1994) and usually consists of the main effects (and their interactions) that vary by chance in their frequency due to sampling or design. To improve its readability and because sex had no significant impact on the responses, the cells for gender were collapsed in Table 4. To aid in the interpretation of the table, standardized residuals also are reported. However, because standardized residuals only approximate the normal distribution, claims regarding their statistical significance have to be made carefully. Many authors suggest interpreting their tendency rather than their absolute value (Bakeman & Robinson, 1994), although larger values are obviously desirable.

Keeping this in mind, Table 4 can be interpreted as indicating that the interactions of families high in collectivism orientation are characterized by a tendency to respond to self-disclosure by giving more advice, more reflections, and more questions, and to produce less confirmation and acknowledgments than families low in collectivism, whereas individualistic families have the exact opposite tendencies. Thus, hypotheses 8, 9 and 11 are supported by the data, because collectivists produce more reflection and advice and less acknowledgments than individualists in response to self-disclosure. Hypotheses 10 and 12 find no support, as there is no difference between individualists and collectivists in the amount of interpretation and self-disclosure they produce in response to self-disclosure. Hypothesis 7 is contradicted by the data, because individualists produce more confirmation than collectivists.

An interesting result of the study that relates to how self and other orientation finds its expression in conversation are the differences in the organizational structures of conversations

between families low versus high in conformity orientation. Although having the same number of participants, families low in conformity orientation produced disproportionately more speech acts (7235) than families high in conformity orientation (5285). In addition, of their speech acts, families low in conformity orientation produced 55 percent in response to others, whereas families high in conformity orientation produced only 46 percent of their speech acts in response to others. This indicates a greater tendency for longer turns among families high in conformity orientation (average turn = 2.15 speech acts for high conformity families versus 1.82 speech acts/turn for low conformity families), and a greater tendency to interrupt and to compete for the floor in families low in conversation orientation. Derber (1979) associated competing for the floor with making the self the cognitive focus of the conversation. Similarly, Triandis (1989a) would explain the phenomenon with the greater concern for the self with a simultaneous disregard for others' needs for the floor. Although derived in post hoc analysis, the differences in turn taking between families high and low in conformity orientation might indicate an alternative mechanism of how self versus other orientation is expressed in conversation.