Communication Context:
Measuring Behaviors and Attitudes

White Paper prepared by:

Wendi L. Adair
Department of Psychology
University of Waterloo

Nancy Buchan
Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

Xiao-Ping Chen
Foster School of Business
University of Washington, Seattle

Ruonan Zhao
School of Management
Xi'an Jiaotong University

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Communication happens everywhere and anytime. Communication is how we express opinions, interpret information, and form relationships. Communication also helps teams to negotiate, collaborate, and coordinate (Marlow, Lacerenza, Paoletti, Burke, Salas, & Processes, 2018). People communicate through a variety of channels, such as text, conversation, and motion. Besides literal content, previous research has found that nonverbal behaviors play an important role in information expression, perception, and interpretation (Bonaccio, O'Reilly, O'Sullivan, & Chiocchio, 2016). Reliance on and attention to nonverbal cues in the context of communication have been explored as both cultural and individual factors (Hall 1969, 1960; Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Holtgraves, 1997). In previous research, we integrated the broad palette of contextual cues from the culture literature with the empirical approaches that have been used to measure directness and indirectness to develop a model and measurement tool for context dependence, defined as the degree to which one attends to and relies on nonverbal cues surrounding the message, relationship, space, and time of a communication act (Adair, Buchan, Chen, & Liu, 2016).We found that people with a high context communication style tended to have higher cultural intelligence than those with a low context communication style.

In addition to the short form Context Dependence scale published in our paper (Adair et al., 2016), we also developed and validated a 96-item long form of the scale (Adair, Buchan, & Chen, 2016; Adair, Buchan, Chen, & Liu, 2009). This scale

measures communication behaviors and attitudes related to nonverbal cues surrounding the Message (e*xpression* (2 subscales), *interpretation* (2 subscales), and *conflict management* (3 subscales)), Relationship (*network reliance* (3 subscales), *relational adjustment* (3 subscales), *openness* (2 subscales)), Time (*scheduling* (2 subscales), *task structure* (1 subscale), and *flexible time* (1 subscale)), and Space (*body language* (3 subscales), *engagement cues* (4 subscales) and *physical contact* (2 subscales)). These scales have been used to measure and provide detailed personalized feedback and team training to a wide range of undergraduate students, graduate students, and employees from 2016 through 2022 via icEdge.com. This communication effectiveness training focuses on a) understanding of the socio-cultural roots of communication style along with individual and cultural differences in how people communicate through context, b) self-awareness of one's own communication style and how it can be perceived by others, and c) recognizing different communication styles and learning to communicate flexibly and adaptively.

In 2020 we began to develop a revised, improved version of the measure for two reasons. First, our initial measure did not fully capture the theoretical components of time context and we wanted to develop scales to differentiate between 1) multitasking as a time management style and multitasking during meetings and 2) flexible clock time vs event time. Second, our initial measure mixed communication behaviors and attitudes together. Given our increased awareness of identity, intersectionality, racism, and bias in the workplace, we wanted to separate attitudes from behaviors to facilitate training on communication attitudes that could be related to bias and prejudice (Hebl,

Cheng, & Ng, 2020; Shore & Chung, 2021; Kurinec, & Weaver III, 2021; McCluney, Durkee, Smith II, Robotham, Lee, 2021; McCluney, Robotham, Lee, Smith, & Durkee, 2019). For example, items such as: “looking someone directly in the eye during conversation is rude” (2016 scale) or “It feels aggressive when someone moves closer to me during a conversation” (2022 scale) capture attitudes towards communication styles that might subconsciously elicit negative perceptions or attributions of someone with a more expressive communication style or someone who engages in communication through physical connection. Understanding one’s own attitudes towards other communication styles and unlearning implicit bias will be an important part of effective communication training to complement self-awareness and flexible communication skills.

With these goals in mind, we developed additional items to refine our measures of communication behaviors and attitudes. 794 full-time employees were recruited from an online survey panel, Prolific. Participants completed the survey in two waves. In the first wave, participants answered questions about demographics and their conflict management preferences at work (for an unrelated study). 24 hours after completing the first survey, participants were sent the link to the second survey which included the communication style items. When answering questions, participants were asked to reflect on their general communication behaviors and attitudes when working in person. The sample was 41.1 % female with an average age of 36.55 (SD = 10.05). On average, participants reported working in their current position for 6.34 years (SD = 5.60).

Following, we describe how we developed the revised communication context scales for behaviors and attitudes.

Communication Behaviors

In revising our communication behavior scales, we aimed to measure a broader range of behaviors related to how people communication through time. We expected to replicate our theoretical four-factor model with some improvement in the time factor subscales. Thus, we conducted second-order CFA for communication behavior in message domain, relationship domain, space domain, and time domain. Results indicated that both message and time domains had acceptable model fit indices (message domain: CFI = 0.838, TLI = 0.822, RMESA = 0.069; time domain: CFI = 0.842, TLI = 0.814, RMESA = 0.071), and the remaining two domains had satisfactory model fit indices (relationship domain: CFI = 0.921, TLI = 0.904, RMESA = 0.056; space domain: CFI = 0.902, TLI = 0.886, RMESA = 0.061). The complete scale with all items is presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Replicating the structure of our 2016 scale, communication behavior in the message domain comprised three first-order factors, which are *expression*, *interpretation*, and *conflict management*. *Expression* included 2 second-order factors: *feelings* (4 items, α = 0.584) and *indirectness* (3 items, α = 0.536). *Interpretation* measured *attend to implicit messages*, *attend to emotions*, and *engaged listening* with 10 items (α = 0.866). *Conflict management* included 2 second-order factors which are *conflict avoidance* (7 items, α = 0.865) and *persuasion* (3 items, α = 0.522).

Replicating the structure of our 2016 scale, communication behavior in the relationship domain included 3 first-order factors. Among them, *network reliance* measured *relying on* and *communicating freely with one's social network* with 3 items (α = 0.622), *professional adjustment* measured *adjusting one's communication for another's status* and *for one's own image* with 7 items (α = 0.727), and *openness* was comprised of 2 second-order factors of *network overlap* (4 items, α = 0.812) and *cautiousness* (3 items, α = 0.765).

Improving the conceptual clarity and breadth of our 2016 scale, communication behavior in the time domain included 3 first-order factors: *timeframes*, *task structure*, and *time flow* with more robust subscales than our 2016 measure captures. Among them, *timeframes* included second-order factors of *scheduling* (4 items, α = 0.718) and *deadlines* (3 items, α = 0.713); *task structure* measured *multitasking projects* and *multitasking conversations* by 6 items (α = 0.771); and *time flow* included *flexible clock time* (3 items, α = 0.685) and *event time* (2 items, α = 0.561).

Replicating the structure of our 2016 scale, communication behavior in the space domain included 3 first-order factors. Among them, *nonverbals* included 2 second-order factors-- *looking at others* (4 items, α = 0.871) and *silence* (3 items, α = 0.264[1]); *engagement cues* included 2 second-order factors -- *interruption* (3 items, α = 0.725) and *dramatic expression* (6 items, α = 0.752); and *physical contact* measured *touching* and *hug/kiss* by 3 items (α = 0.775).

[1] Low reliability of the scale for silence behaviors will be addressed through on-going data collection and scale refinement.

Communication Attitudes EFA

We first conducted exploratory factor analysis on all attitude items from our 2016 scale plus additional attitude items developed to measure attitudes towards confrontation, silence, dramatic expression, and lateness. We used a sample of 398 employees randomly selected from the full sample of 794 employees. Among the 398 participants, 43.2 % were female, the average age was 36.07 (SD = 9.67), and the mean years in their work position was 6.39 (SD = 5.60).

Our initial communication attitude questionnaire included 15 items in the message domain measuring 4 dimensions (attitudes towards: *conflict avoidance, expressing disagreement, saying 'no' directly,* and *showing emotions*); 12 items in the relationship domain measuring 3 dimensions (attitudes towards: *communicate for social harmony, nonverbal trust with friends,* and *work-life mix*); 25 items in the space domain measuring 6 dimensions (attitudes towards: *interruption, dramatic expression, expressive touch, facing directly, social distance,* and *silence*); and 16 items in the time domain measuring 4 dimensions *(*attitudes towards: *multitasking during conversation*, *linear processing*, *scheduling*, and *lateness)*.

Aligning with our original theorized structure, a 4-factor model for communication attitudes in the message domain and a 3-factor model for the relationship domain, were significantly better than alternative solutions. However, the EFA results did not support the originally proposed theoretical structure of four dimensions for communication attitudes in the time domain and six dimensions for the space domain. Instead, results indicated a 3-factor solution for communication

attitudes in the time domain and a 7-factor solution for the space domain. At this stage, we dropped items with low communality (< 0.2) and those with strong cross-loadings on more than one factor. This resulted in a reduced number of potential dimensions for attitudes in the time (2 dimensions) and space (3 dimensions) domains.

Before continuing with Confirmatory Factor Analysis, we reran EFA with this same sample and the reduced number of scale items and confirmed adequate factor loadings for all retained items. The average factor loadings were 0.628 (ranging from 0.441 to 0.781) for communication attitudes in the message domain, 0.574 (ranging from 0.360 to 0.951) in the relationship domain, 0.655 (ranging from 0.591 to 0.756) in the time domain, and 0.700 (ranging from 0.568 to 0.875) in the space domain.

Communication Attitudes CFA

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses using the other 398 participants of the entire sample to validate the dimensions of communication attitudes based on the aforementioned EFA analyses. 39.2% of participants in this sample were female, with a mean age of 37.09 (SD = 10.42), and average years in the current position of 6.29 (SD = 5.61). The complete communication attitudes scale with all items is presented in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

The model fit indices for the four domains were all acceptable. In the message domain, the 3-dimension attitude structure fits well with data (CFI = 0. 903, TLI = 0.883, RMESA = 0.073). In the relationship domain, the 3-factor attitude model had

an acceptable fit indices with data (CFI = 0.880, TLI = 0.834, RMSEA = 0.056). In the time domain, the 2-factor model fits the data fairly well (CFI=0.949, TLI=0.924, RMESA=0.074). In the space domain, the fit indices of 3-factor model were also acceptable (CFI=0.814, TLI=0.726, RMESA=0.073).

Attitudes towards message context includes four factors: *conflict avoidance* (4 items, α = 0.761), *expressing disagreement* (3 items, α = 0.758), *saying 'no' hurts feelings* (4 items, α = 0.778), *and showing emotions* (4 items, α = 0.709). Attitudes towards relationship context include three factors: *communicate for social harmony* (4 items, α = 0.633), *inner-circle* (2 items, α = 0.723), and *work-life mix* (5 items, α = 0.740). Attitudes towards time context include two dimensions: *multitasking* (2 items, α = 0.144)[2], and *scheduling* (5 items, α = 0.752). Attitudes towards space context includes three factors: *interruption* (3 items, α = 0.657), *facing directly* (2 items, α = 0.793), and *physical distance* (3 items, α = 0.768).

Comparison Between Dimensions in 2016 and 2022 Scales

A comparison between the original 2016 scales and the new 2022 scales appears in Table 3.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

[2] Extremely low reliability of the scale for attitudes towards multitasking will be addressed through on-going data collection and scale refinement.

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Table 1
Communication Behaviors

Message Domain (CFI = 0.838, TLI = 0.822, RMESA = 0.069)		
First Order Factor	**Second Order Factor**	**Items**
Expression	Feelings α =0.58	-I orient to people through my emotions. -I trust my feelings to guide my behavior. -My facial expressions often show how I am feeling. -In communication, I keep my feelings to myself. (Rev)
	Indirectness α = 0.54	-I avoid clearly expressing my views when I communicate with others. -I say what I mean and mean what I say. (Rev) -I try to avoid saying "no" directly to someone's face.
Interpretation α = 0.87[1]	Attend to Implicit Messages	-I use cues other than words to interpret what others mean. -I pay attention to others' subtle and indirect messages. -When I don't receive a clear response from others, I look for other cues to understand.
	Attend to Emotions	-I try to read others' emotions when interpreting a message. -I try to read the underlying emotions embedded in a communication. -I attempt to interpret others' messages through the feelings they exhibit.
	Engaged Listening	-In conversation, I gesture (e.g., nod or say "hmm mmm") to signal I am listening. -I often summarize what my counterpart said to confirm that I heard correctly. -When listening, I ask clarification questions. -I listen carefully to tone of voice (e.g., speech pitch, rate and volume).
Conflict Management	Conflict Avoidance α = 0.87	-I tend to avoid confrontation with my coworkers. -I try my hardest to stay out of conflicts when they arise at work. -I generally avoid argument. -I try to keep my disagreement with others to myself. -When I disagree with someone, I say "maybe" or "but" to soften my argument. -I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges. -I avoid disagreement with others
	Persuasion	-I argue my case to show the merits of my position.

	α = 0.52	(Rev) -I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue. (Rev) -I assert my wishes. (Rev)
Relationship Domain (CFI = 0.921, TLI = 0.904, RMESA = 0.056)		
Network Reliance α = 0.62	Friendship Reliance	-When asking for help, I first contact people with whom I have a long-term relationship. -I feel more comfortable doing business with someone who was referred by a friend
	Communicate Freely	- I communicate more freely when I work with someone I know well.
Professional Adjustment α = 0.73	Adjust for Other's Status	-It is important to know someone's position so you can greet them accordingly. -I try to dress more professionally when meeting with someone of higher status than me. -When communicating with someone of higher status than me, I tend to be rather formal.
	Adjust for Own Image	-When concerned about my image, I adjust what I say and how I say it. -I always try to look professional in my appearance in order to maintain an image of competence.
Openness	Network Overlap α = 0.81	-I talk about my work colleagues with my social circle. -I talk about my social circle with my work colleagues. -My social network includes personal and professional colleagues.
	Cautiousness α = 0.77	-I find myself initiating conversations with strangers if I want to get to know them. (Rev) -I am an extremely open communicator. (Rev) -I rarely initiate conversations with strangers
Time Domain (CFI = 0.842, TLI = 0.814, RMESA = 0.071)		
Timeframes	Scheduling α = 0.72	-I rarely operate with a daily schedule. -Keeping to a strict schedule isn't important for me to get things done. -I don't need a schedule or datebook to stay on track for my meetings throughout the day. -I don't refer to a schedule or datebook often.
	Deadlines α = 0.71	-I pay strict attention to deadlines. -I feel great satisfaction in meeting deadlines. -I feel very upset if I cannot meet a deadline. (Rev)
Task Structure α = 0.77	Multitasking Projects	-If I had no time constraints, I would rather make some progress on several tasks than complete one task.

		-When I work by myself, I usually work on multiple projects simultaneously. -I prefer to do one thing at a time. (Rev) -I do my best work when I have many tasks to complete.
	Multitasking Conversations	-I can hold multiple conversations at the same time. -I often do more than one thing while having a conversation.
Time Flow	Flexible Clock Time α = 0.69	-If a meeting is scheduled to start at 9:00 am, we start the meeting at exactly 9:00 am. (Rev) -I rarely start meetings at the exact scheduled start time. -I pay close attention to scheduled meeting times (Rev)
	Event Time α = 0.56	-I say "I'll come by" using general time frames like "after work" or "this morning", rather than saying a specific time. -When I say I'll come over "after work," I mean anytime between 5:00 pm and 10:00 pm.
Space Domain (CFI = 0.902, TLI = 0.886, RMESA = 0.061)		
Nonverbals	Looking at Others α = 0.87	-I look directly into someone's eyes when I talk to them. -In conversation, I normally face my counterpart directly. -When speaking to someone, I rarely maintain direct eye contact. (Rev) -In conversation, I look directly at my counterpart.
	Silence α = 0.26[2]	-I rarely use silence in conversation to convey different meanings. -I am uncomfortable when everyone else is talking and I am just listening. -When I don't respond immediately, I am thinking. (Rev)
Engagement Cues	Interruption α = 0.73	-I often interrupt other speakers. -I often talk over others when I have something to say. -I feel comfortable interrupting others when in a group setting.
	Dramatic Expression α = 0.75	-I tell jokes, anecdotes, and stories when I communicate. -I verbally exaggerate to emphasize a point. -I use a lot of dramatic language when I talk.

		- I frequently tend to gesture when I communicate. -I alter my facial expression to communicate my reaction. -I change my tone of voice to emphasize certain points.
Physical Contact α = 0.76	Touching	-I do not normally touch someone when I am talking to them. (Rev) -During a conversation, I will frequently touch the person I am talking to.
	Hug/kiss	-It is not unusual for me to hug or kiss someone before or after a conversation.

[1]First order factor α indicates lack of model convergence for second order factors. On-going data collection and scale refinement will continue until we reach convergence with second order factors as provided in feedback reports.

[2] Extremely low reliability of the scale for silence behaviors will be addressed through on-going data collection and scale refinement.

Table 2

Communication Attitudes

Message Domain (CFI = 0. 903, TLI = 0.883, RMESA = 0.073)	
Conflict Avoidance α = 0.76	-It is a good idea to avoid conflict at any cost. -Conflict is damaging to relational harmony. -Conflict can be healthy. (Rev) -Conflict is not always destructive. (Rev)
Expressing Disagreement α = 0.76	-It is rude to directly confront someone when you disagree. -It is impolite to directly tell someone when you disagree with them. -It is better to say nothing than to say "no" directly.
Saying “No” Directly Hurts Feelings α = 0.78	-Directly challenging someone when you disagree can damage relations. -Directly expressing disagreement can hurt feelings. -Saying 'no' directly could hurt feelings. -Saying "no" directly might make others lose face.
Showing Emotions α = 0.71	-Feelings are a valuable source of information. -It is natural to let your feelings show in communication. -People should show emotion when they communicate. -Communication without any emotion is boring.
Relationship Domain (CFI = 0.880, TLI = 0.834, RMSEA = 0.056)	
Communicate for Social Harmony α = 0.63	-Choosing words carefully in communication helps save face. -Communicating in a sensitive way helps to maintain social harmony. -It's better to omit information that is not essential to a message if including it would hurt someone. -Using nuanced communication protects social harmony.
Inner-Circle α = 0.72	-You can trust a verbal business agreement with someone when you've had a long-term relationship. -A handshake is as good as a contract when you have a good relationship with someone.
Work-Life Mix α = 0.74	-I like it when my professional colleagues know my close personal contacts. -I consider my work colleagues an important part of my social circle. -It is good when one's work colleagues know one's family. -It is important to keep work life and personal life separate. (Rev) -It is important for one's work colleagues to be in one's social circle.
Time Domain (CFI=0.949, TLI=0.924, RMESA=0.074)	
Multitasking α = 0.14[1]	-In work meetings, it is acceptable to check messages. -People who multitask get more done.
Scheduling	-Keeping to a schedule allows people to be fully present at every

α = 0.75	meeting. (Rev) -It is unprofessional when colleagues don't stick to a schedule. (Rev) -Arriving late to an appointment is disrespectful. (Rev) -Making someone wait beyond a scheduled start time is disrespectful. (Rev) -Arriving on time to a meeting is a sign of respect for others. (Rev)
Space Domain (CFI=0.814, TLI=0.726, RMESA=0.073)	
Interruption α = 0.66	-I know my counterpart understands me when they interrupt and finish my sentences. -Interrupting someone before they finish speaking is rude. (Rev) -Interruption before someone finishes speaking signals enthusiasm.
Facing Directly α = 0.79	-Turning to directly face someone expresses attentiveness. -Turning to directly face someone shows interest.
Physical Distance α = 0.77	-It feels aggressive when someone moves closer to me during a conversation. -I feel disrespected when someone doesn't maintain a proper physical distance during a conversation. -When someone gets physically close in conversation, they are invading my space.

[1] Extremely low reliability of the scale for attitudes towards multitasking will be addressed through on-going data collection and scale refinement.

Table 3
Comparison Between 2016 and 2018 Context Dependence Measures
L1 = Latent Construct; L2 = Level 1 Factor; L3 = Level 2 Factor; L4 = Attitude

2016 Measure	2022 Measure
L1 Message Style	**L1 Message Domain**
L2 Expression	***L2 Expression***
L3 Communicate through Feelings	L3 Feelings
L3 Directness	L3 Indirectness
L2 Interpretation	***L2 Interpretation***
L3 Recognize Implicit Messages	L3 Attend to Implicit Messages
L3 Recognize Emotions of Others	L3 Attend to Emotions
	L3 Engaged Listening
L2 Conflict Management	***L2 Conflict Management***
L3 Avoid Conflict	L3 Conflict Avoidance
L3 Avoid Disagreement	L3 Persuasion
L3 Gentle Persuasion	
	Message Domain Attitudes
	L4 Conflict Avoidance
	L4 Expressing Disagreement
	L4 Saying "No" Hurts Feelings
	L4 Showing Emotions
L1 Relationship Style	**L1 Relationship Domain**
L2 Network Reliance	***L2 Network Reliance***
L3 Social Networks	L3 Communicate Freely
L3 Long-term Relationships	L3 Friendship Reliance
L3 Network Overlap	
L2 Relational Adjustment	***L2 Professional Adjustment***
L3 Feelings Adjustment	L3 Adjust for Other's Status
L3 Status Adjustment	L3 Adjust for Own Image
L3 Image Adjustment	
L2 Openness	***L3 Openness***
L3 Cautiousness	L3 Network Overlap
L3 Facts	L3 Cautiousness
	Relationship Domain Attitudes

	L4 Communicate for Social Harmony L4 Inner-Circle L4 Work-Life Mix
L1 Time Management Style	**L1 Time Domain**
L2 Scheduling	***L2 Timeframes***
L3 Flexible Schedules L3 Flexible Deadlines	L3 Scheduling L3 Deadlines
L2 Task Structure	***L2 Task Structure***
L3 Multitasking	L3 Multitask Projects L3 Multitask Conversations
L2 Flexible Time	***L2 Time Flow***
L3 Sharing Time	L3 Flexible Clock Time L3 Event Time
	Time Domain Attitudes
	L4 Multitasking L4 Scheduling
L1 Sensory Style	**L1 Space Domain**
L2 Body Language	***L2 Nonverbals***
L3 Closeness is Polite L3 Eye Contact is Polite L3 Facing Others is Polite	L3 Looking at Others L3 Silence
L2 Engagement Cues	***L2 Engagement Cues***
L3 Interruption L3 Avoid Silence L3 Dramatic Expression L3 Loudness is Rude	L3 Interruption L3 Dramatic Expression
L2 Physical Contact	***L2 Physical Contact***
L3 Touch L3 Stand Near	L3 Touching L3 Hug/Kiss
	Space Domain Attitudes
	L4 Interruptions L4 Facing Directly L4 Physical Distance