THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES
ON THE PERSISTENCE OF RETICENT BEHAVIORS

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Abstract

Communication reticence has the potential to negatively impact an individual’s ability to succeed in organizational life (McCroskey & Richmond, 1979; Richmond, 2009). A probable reason for this impact stems from what research has identified as a cultural preference for extroverted temperament traits over introverted traits (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Cain, 2012; McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009). This study reviewed the biological and environmental origins of reticence, linking reticence to the introverted temperament. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, it explored the relationship between organizational messages concerning preferred temperament traits and the persistence of reticent behaviors. A quantitative approach, employing a two-part survey instrument comprised of the Reticence Scale (Keaten, Kelly, & Finch, 1997) and open-ended question from the sensemaking theoretical perspective, indicates that reticent individuals believe that they receive less recognition in their organizations than others. Findings examined the perceptions of both high and low reticent individuals revealing that high reticents feel overlooked in organizational life whereas low reticents believe that members are recognized equally. Future studies are necessary to develop our understanding of the impact of organizational messages on the persistence of reticent behaviors and to more effectively target interventions.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Susan Cain’s book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can’t Stop Talking* has brought national attention to a question that has long been in the air but rarely verbalized: “why does the American culture seem to value extroverted personality types over introverted types?” Since *Quiet*’s 2012 publication, introverts have been speaking up on the subject.

English professor William Pannapacker (2012) recounts his experience incorporating the Myers-Briggs personality type indicator into a course assignment. After the assessment was completed and the results were in, to his surprise, all of the students turned out to be extroverts. Suspicious, Pannapacker (2012) addressed the unlikely results with the group. In the ensuing discussion, he discovered a surprising bias: not only did students reject the notion of being classified as introverts, they generally agreed that “introversion was a kind of mental illness” (para. 5). Pannapacker (2012) quickly deduced that students had not answered questions in a way that represented their temperamental realities but to the contrary “had used the test to confirm that they had the right ‘healthy’ qualities” (para. 4).

Relatedly, journalist Chris Crouch (2013) of the *Huffington Post* wonders why the American culture associates extroversion with leadership ability and success. He points out that in this culture, more so than in others, “we build and encourage extroverts over all the other potential personality types” (para. 7).

Scholars have been making similar observations. In a study of culturally related personality traits Allik and McCrae (2004) mapped geographically related personality traits across thirty-six cultures and found, unsurprisingly, that American and European cultures were more “outgoing, open to new experiences, and antagonistic” (p. 21). They noted that findings
suggested that traits such as “extraversion and openness are more valued and more readily endorsed in Western cultures” than in non-Western cultures where cooperation and tradition are valued (p. 23). Communication scholars studying trait like communication apprehension even note that there is a cultural bias in favor of talkers (McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009).

So how are introverts affected by this culturally embedded value judgment? From Cain’s perspective the “extrovert ideal,” her reference to our culture’s preoccupation with extroversion, which she traces to the early 20th century, “opened a Pandora’s Box of personal anxieties from which we would never quite recover” (2012, p. 21). This preoccupation is evident in subsets of our culture such as educational institutions and the workforce. This study will explore the impact on introverts of organizational preferences for the extroverted personality type. Specifically it will look at its effects on a condition called communication reticence, which has its roots in the introverted temperament.

**Reticence Defined and Statement of the Problem**

Reticence is a construct of communication avoidance, and is often studied in proximity to communication anxiety and communication apprehension. Reticence is characterized by the subject’s belief that it is better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish (Keaten & Kelly, 2000). Reticent individuals avoid communication because they fear negative outcomes (Keaten, Kelly & Phillips, 2009). The anxiety reticent individuals experience is rooted in their recognition of the importance of communication and the attendant intense fear of negative evaluation, a dichotomy that make it difficult to display effective communication behaviors (Keaton, Kelly, & Finch, 2000). Reticence can present significant barriers to personal development and professional advancement. Reticent people are often perceived by others as unfriendly, un-
engaged or disinterested, and they rarely rise to management levels in employment because these positions typically require frequent verbal communication and require individuals to display those skills (Keaten et al., 2009; McCroskey & Richmond, 1979). Ultimately, silence is the response to the threat of negative evaluation (2009). In our competitive and individualistic society, choosing silence presents a distinct disadvantage for those who are unable to “assert, promote, and defend their own ideas” (2009, p. 154). Therefore, reticents and less communicative individuals often find themselves marginalized, overlooked, or left behind in organizational life (Cain, 2012; Kahnweiler, 2013).

**Importance of the Study**

Researchers have been working to pinpoint the causes of reticence and identify effective interventions for nearly four decades (McCroskey, 2009). This study aims to build upon previous work by providing further insights into the forces that fuel reticent behaviors. Specifically it will examine the influence of organizational attitudes on reticence by looking at how reticent individuals perceive both their organizational experiences and their sense of value in their organizations. Furthermore, the study, for which there is little precedent, will examine how these perceptions potentially contribute to the persistent nature of reticence.

**Definition of other terms used**

*Introversion:* a temperament trait characterized by an internal, subjective preference for processing and responding to information and environmental stimuli. This trait is also characterized by a more limited need for verbal communication (Jung, 1964; Myers, 1980). For example, introverts typically verbally communicate less frequently than extroverts.
Extroversion: a temperament trait characterized by an external, objective preference for processing and responding to information and environmental stimuli. This trait is also characterized by a broader need for verbal communication (Jung, 1964; Myers, 1980). For example, extroverts typically verbally communicate more frequently than introverts.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 will establish the philosophical assumptions which underpin the study and provide the theoretical framework that supports and guides the study. Chapter 3 will map the scope of the study and research methods. Analysis of the data and discussion of major findings will be presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 will review the study, note its limitations, suggest future research directions and summarize the main points.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Etiology is central to any discussion of communication avoidance constructs such as reticence. Researchers have found that both biology and environment combine to produce reticence (Keaten, Kelly & Phillips, 2009). In this review I will explore both its biological and environmental influences, highlighting the positive correlation between introversion and the development of reticence. I will also examine symbolic interactionism and sensemaking theories and their implications for the reinforcement of reticent behaviors, and conclude with a brief summary of main points, rationale, and research questions.

Philosophical Assumptions

This study is rooted in the phenomenological tradition of communication theory. Phenomenology upholds the validity and importance of individuals’ perceptions of their own experiences (Griffin, 2009). It suggests that self-knowledge and deep relational connections are possible primarily through the acceptance of these perceptions at face value (2009). A main component of phenomenology is the concept of unconditional positive regard. Unconditional positive regard is a central supporting philosophy of this study.

Unconditional positive regard was developed in the field of psychotherapy as related to the client-therapist relationship, but has broader implications in terms of human nature and the need for self-determination. According to this theory, no conditions are placed upon acceptance of the person—an individual’s feelings are not regarded in terms of good or bad, but regarded equally as part of that individual’s experience. Furthermore, an individual’s ways of being are not judged or evaluated; they are, again, simply accepted. (Rogers, 1957; 1977). Ultimately, acceptance is not dependent upon performance (Griffin, 2009). Those who receive adequate
amounts of unconditional positive regard from caretakers and in other significant relationships are those who develop healthy self-perceptions (1977).

Additionally, Rogers believes that when an individual is allowed to “flow” with their natural tendencies, they thrive. When they become conscious that their natural tendencies are in conflict with what is present or expected in the environment, they will tend to want to avoid or eliminate those things that cause him or her to be forced into this kind of “sharp” self-consciousness (Rogers, 1977, p. 245). When individuals’ internal tendencies and external environment are not in sync, they seek to either modify the environment or change their own behavior. (1977). Therefore, in the absence of unconditional positive regard, when introverts absorb the message that they are less valued because of how they communicate, they are likely to either avoid entering into communicative activities or to change their natural communication behaviors to fit the more culturally endorsed style. However, attempting to be something one is not is unsustainable, and threatening to an organism’s sense of balance and coherence. When introverts behave more like extroverts to feel accepted or validated, they report feeling disconnected from themselves, even fraudulent (Cain, 2012). Therefore, we can conclude that when introverts feel forced to behave as extroverts in order to be accepted, they will ultimately begin to adopt the belief that it is better to avoid communication and remain silent.

**Theoretical Framework**

As Rogers asserts, organisms naturally press toward actualization (1977). This arises out of drive to exist in harmony with biologically determined attributes. Communication style is one of those attributes. According to Beatty, McCroskey, and Valencic (2001) communication is “trait driven” (p. 3). Traits, as define by Beatty, et al. (2001) in reference to communication, are
“enduring tendencies to behave, think, or feel in response to communication situations” (p. 43). They adopted the term communibiology to refer to the study of the neuro-biological processes that shape and drive communicative functioning in individuals, and as such, provide a scientific theoretical perspective on communication (2001). Therefore, the communibiological perspective is cornerstone of this study because it explains and provides a solid rationale for the biological nature of individual communication traits. Communibiology will be further discussed in the next section.

While biological factors may lay the groundwork for the development of reticence, social and interpersonal factors, viewed through the lens of symbolic interactionism, may serve to reinforce reticent behaviors. Symbolic interactionism is an interpersonal theory based upon the research and teachings of George Herbert Mead (Griffin, 2009). The theory was furthered and published after his death by his students, primarily Herbert Blumer (2009). Blumer’s (1969) account of symbolic interactionism is based in three main premises: 1. we act toward people or things based upon the meaning we assign to them; 2. the meanings we adopt for people or things are created from social interactions; 3. the way we choose to act upon meaning is determined through an “interpretive process” whereby we ascertain the intent of another’s words or actions and align our own actions accordingly (p. 2).

Mead’s concept of the self dictates that the way we see ourselves is strongly influence by our perceptions of how we imagine others see us (1969). Essentially, Mead and his colleagues propose that the self is socially constructed. This method of developing a sense of self may be either edifying or damaging to the individual. Those who enjoy supportive social environments both at home and in the world, and use unflattering reflections to course correct have a reasonable chance of developing a realistic, balanced sense of self. Those who receive and
interpret negative reflections in an unsupportive environment are inclined to develop a variety of dysfunctions (Harter, 1999). Harter (1999) cites the incorporation of unfavorable reflections as a “liability” in the construction of self. From parents as the earliest mirrors through peer contact in school, individuals who do not gain an overall sense of approval will interpret the self as inadequate and experience diminished sense of worth (1999). Harter, Stocker, and Robinson (1996) studied the directionality of approval in adolescent sense of self and found that most reported that if their peers approved of them, then they felt good about themselves, indicating that their self-esteem was dependent upon external approval. Harter refers to this phenomenon as the “looking-glass self-orientation” (p. 686). This orientation is based on Meads concept of the “looking glass self” which essentially says that we see ourselves in part the way we imagine others see us (Griffin, 2009). Harter (1999) postulates that the looking glass self orientation becomes dysfunctional when caregivers provide only conditional or inconsistent approval and hold a child to unrealistic expectations; in this way, instead of incorporating and internalizing messages that inform actions and decisions, a child becomes preoccupied with looking outward for approval among peers (which can be characterized as fluctuating), which represents a maladaptive approach to self-evaluation. Likewise, Hazel, Keaten, and Kelly (2014) observe that reticent individuals defer a significant amount of power to others when it comes to defining themselves socially.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, it appears that a reticent will find social reinforcement for his or her already diminished view of self, as fear of negative evaluation is the primary driving force behind reticent communication avoidance behaviors. Mead (1934) supports this likelihood in the statement that “self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behavior controlled by self-criticism is essentially behavior controlled socially” (p. 255).
Just as symbolic interactionism has implications for reticent self-worth and continued communication avoidance, sensemaking theory has implications for how reticents view their worth and contributions in organizations. According to Weik (1995) people have both conscious and unconscious expectations of how processes or events will unfold in a given context. When features of a process or event fail to meet expectations or support assumptions, this “shock” triggers the individual’s effort to fit the surprising turn of events into an explicable framework, or to make sense of it (1995). This is the essence of sensemaking theory. And as “sensemaking begins with sensemaker,” we construct our frameworks in the context of our own identities (p. 18). We alter and adjust how we see ourselves based upon social situations or circumstances. As our perceptions of self change, the ways in which we make sense of events changes (1995). In other words, sense making not only facilitates our understanding of exogenous events, it helps us to confirm our sense of who we are (1995). This process becomes especially significant to a reticent individual in the organizational context because this in an arena where reticents and even introverts often find themselves marginalized. Richmond (2009), in her work with communication apprehension observes that “in general, organizations tend to reward highly verbal individuals and either ignore quiet people or dismiss them” (p. 236). She also observes that less communicative individuals are often “relegated to the lower levels” within organizations where they absorb the persistent message that they “belong” there (p. 238).

The Literature

Biology and Temperament

Beatty, McCroskey, and Valencic (2001) assert that inherited biological factors play the most prominent role in communication behaviors. Temperament is central to their
communibiological perspective precisely because it is both a function of brain activity and because it represents the “affective nature” of communication (p. 80). They assert that any communication event is a direct result of brain activity observing that “all communicative acts are preceded by a neurological event” and that the structures responsible for these acts or behaviors are inherited (p. 73). Concerning it’s affective nature, we all bring to any communication event varying levels of feeling and expression common to the human experience: “attraction and liking, loving, joy, excitement, anger, fear, and anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, sadness, grief, depression, and boredom” to name a few (p. 80). However, while we share a common human experience, Beatty et al. (2001) observe that “across all social contexts, people differ from one another in the way they respond to the same set of stimuli. These differences are attributed to individual differences in the sensitivity of neurobiological systems” (p. 81). Researchers define temperament variously as a combination of behaviors and preferences for responding to stimuli, personality traits, and neurobiological functions (2001).

The primary aspect of temperament that will be the focus of this study is introversion and extroversion. Opt and Loffredo (2000) studied communication behaviors pertaining to introversion and extroversion within the framework of Jungian psychological typology. Over thirty years prior to Beatty et al’s (2001) work, Jung (1964) based his typology theory on years of patient observations that lead him to the conclusion that temperament traits are inborn. One of the four main indices upon which he based his psychological types is introversion-extroversion, for which he observes that introverts direct their energy internally and extroverts direct energy externally (1964; 2000). Myers (1980) categorizes and defines the bipolarity of the two types. She observes that introverts are drawn primarily to an inner world of thoughts and ideas. They are “reserved,” “questioning” and internally motivated (p. 56). They have a need to understand
things and as such are capable of deep complex thought. However, they are often seen as intense, laconic, and hard to read, especially by extroverts who label their tendency to pause and reflect before taking action as “hesitation” (p. 54). At the other end of the spectrum, extroverts are relaxed and confident, focusing on the outer world of people and things. They tend toward more breadth than depth, and as a result can seem superficial (p. 56). They are at their best when doing and accomplishing. They are typically more vocal and are generally viewed as more “understandable and accessible” than the introvert (p. 56). Despite the distinctive strengths and weaknesses inherent in each type, extroversion has enjoyed a favored status.

Introversion has been positively correlated with a variety of communication avoidance conditions such as reticence, unwillingness to communicate, communication anxiety, and communication apprehension (McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009; Keaten et al., 2009). Opt and Loffredo sought to demonstrate the connection between introversion and communication apprehension, a construct closely related to reticence. Using the Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBPT), designed around Jung’s theory, and McCroskey’s Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA), they surveyed 200 college students of varying ages, genders, and majors. The results supported their hypothesis that communication apprehension is positively correlated to introversion in four contexts of group, dyadic, meeting, and public communication (2000).

McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey (2009) underscore both the in-born nature of communication traits and cultural preferences for extroversion by looking at communication apprehension’s antithesis. They observed compulsive communicators, or people who do a considerable amount of talking. They define compulsive communicators, in part, as those who are inclined to consistently over-communicate (2009). They identified compulsive
communicators as having high levels of extroversion, assertiveness, and willingness to communicate (2009). Furthermore, they referenced studies that found that even in group settings where frequent talkers dominated conversations, they were positively evaluated by group members regardless of their excessive talking (2009). They note that the positive evaluation suggests that in this culture, people who talk frequently are more valued than people who talk less frequently (2009). McCroskey et al. imply that just as some individuals have an inborn tendency (2009) to communicate less, compulsives have a drive to communicate often.

**The Role of Environment**

Early research on communication reticence and related constructs was carried out within the paradigm of social learning theory. Social learning theory has fallen out of favor etiologically since research on neurobiological influences have been shown to play a central role in the development of reticence. However, social learning theory does have its place in the complex system of human behavior and is arguably influential in the persistence of reticent behaviors.

From Bandura’s (1977) social learning perspective, learning employs a set of psychological functions that result from a “continuous reciprocal interaction” of internal and environmental stimuli (p. 11). According to social learning theory, children learn social behaviors by observing them and their consequence and choosing which behaviors to imitate (Bandura, 1977; Kelly, Keaten, Finch, Duarte, Hoffman, & Michels, 2002). The imitated behavior is either reinforced or rejected by significant figures, such as parents and teachers, called models (McLeod, 2011). Behavior that is affirmed and reinforced by models provides both internal and external rewards (2011). The external rewards are the affirmation and approval the child receives, and internal rewards refer to the sense of happiness or satisfaction that comes
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with affirmation. Reinforcement can also be negative in cases where models reject undesirable behaviors (2011).

This pattern of observation and reinforcement was long thought to be a primary force in shaping communication behaviors in children. However, not all reticence researchers agree on the weight that social learning theory’s carries. Beatty, et al. (2001) note that the “learning variables that were most potent in the prediction of communication apprehension consisted of reinforcement and punishment of the respondents’ communication,” yet while “statistically significant,” these influences were not powerful enough to rise to the level of primacy (p. 32). They also argue that the “individual’s reaction to the environment” which is highly subjective, shapes communication behaviors more so than the environmental factors, such as models, who act to “force” behaviors (p. 37).

Although Beatty et al’s (2001) communibiological perspective marginalizes environment, specifically as presented in learning theories, they do not refute its influence in general. Environmental factors, such as family dynamics, have been shown to play a plausible role in the development of reticence. Kelly et al. (2002) examined the relationship between reticence and family communication problems. They based their research on two definitive characteristics of reticent individuals: they are especially fearful of negative evaluation in social contexts, and they believe “it is better to avoid communicating than to risk appearing foolish” (Keaten, et al., 2009, p. 159). Based on the nature of these characteristics, they hypothesized that negative family communication experiences could lead to fear of negative feedback and communication withdrawal. Using an instrument designed to measure family communication patterns, they evaluated conversation orientation (the extent to which families encourage open communication)
and expectations for conformity (the extent to which members are permitted to differentiate), among other factors.

The study revealed that reticent individuals reported significantly less daily parent-child communication (dealing with thoughts, feelings, emotions, opinions, the future) than their non-reticent counterparts (Kelly et al., 2002). Conformity expectations did not seem to play a significant role in the development of reticence. They concluded that, in addition to the fact that children model their parents’ communication practices, children who interact little with parents have less of an opportunity to express and cope with negative emotions such as fear (2002), a main ingredient in reticence.

In a later study, Keaten and Kelley (2008) took it a step further, building upon the 2002 study linking familial messages to reticence. Using conversation orientation and its relationship to reticence, they tied low family conversation orientation to the inability of children to develop emotional intelligence, which they hypothesize is a mediating factor in reticence (2008). Using the results of three different instruments, they found that conversation orientation is an important factor in the development of emotional intelligence and that families with higher levels of conversation orientation raise children who develop higher levels of emotional intelligence (2008). Specifically, families who are not conversation oriented might make a child feel unwelcome to discuss thoughts and feelings because such discussions runs contrary to the families typical patterns and norms; therefore, the child learns to avoid communicating thereby avoiding the negative feedback. This avoidance limits the child’s ability to develop emotionally and to furthermore develop the emotional intelligence needed to maintain healthy relationships and communication skills (2008).
Additional environmental factors such as those found in the schools can further reticent behaviors. School environments that require oral performance and group work, and grade on class participation can be especially overwhelming for the introvert who processes information internally and who are hyper-aroused by socially oriented stimuli (McCroskey, 1980; Beatty & McCroskey, 2009). Furthermore, in his work with teachers, McCroskey (2009) notes a subconscious bias in teachers’ expectations of students in that they consistently have lower expectations of quieter children and higher expectations for their more verbal counterparts. This would seemingly send a damaging message to less verbal students. Compounding this message, some teachers try to force shy or quiet children out of their shells, but do more harm than good by escalating their apprehension and compromising their self-esteem (1980). Overall the literature supports that children who are born introverts, genetically predisposed to reticence, who live within family dynamics that are unsupportive or critical of their communication efforts, and who receive negative messages about their ability to communicate by teachers in over stimulating socially-geared school environments are those who develop reticence.

As these children progress into higher education, they will be expected to take speech courses and give presentations. Colleges and universities have studied and employed ways to help reticent students. Penn State University’s treatment program designed to help reticent students resolve beliefs that contribute to reticence and to abate reticent behaviors has been successful in many ways (Keaten, Kelly, & Finch, 2000). However, studies done to measure the program’s effectiveness did not take into account which parts were most helpful. Their follow-up study to measure the most helpful components revealed standout elements (Keaten, Kelly, & Finch, 2003). Students rated the activities that allowed opportunities for public speaking practice as most helpful, and rated the supportive classroom environment as significantly helpful.
Specifically, non-graded assignments were formatted in a way that allowed for gradual exposure, so that students were starting with low-risk verbal responses in smaller groups, and then built up to longer speaking assignments. Students felt that this was effective. Additionally many commented that the instructor and other students created a caring, supportive environment that increased their comfort level (2003). This ties directly with previous findings that state that fear of negative evaluation, a hallmark of reticence (2000), is attenuated in an accepting environment, the very environment that was lacking in the formative years for reticent individuals. The practice is also reflective of Carl Rogers’ theory of unconditional positive regard which says that when individuals are accepted unconditionally, they are free to explore lost or subverted parts of themselves, regain a positive self-concept, and work their way toward resolution (Nye, 2000).

Myers (1980), in her work with Jungian based personality typology, also cites the potential impact of environment. She cautions that environmental influences can compromise a child’s self-development noting that especially in the case of introverts, parental understanding and acceptance provides a solid base for self-development (1980). Children adapt most successfully when they are not dissuaded or prevented from following their own natural, type-based trajectory, an interference which will directly impact an individual’s effectiveness, abilities and ultimate happiness (1980).

**Rationale, and Research Questions**

As reflected in the literature, temperament is inborn and strongly influences communication behaviors. Studies in temperament have long shown that individuals with introverted temperaments are naturally more internally focused and less verbally communicative than their extroverted counterparts. Furthermore, introverts tend to be more susceptible to
communication avoidance problems such as reticence, which is tied to environmental factors. Viewed from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, we can come to the conclusion that when reticent individuals observe their non-reticent or extroverted counterparts being rewarded with social esteem, visibility, and leadership opportunities, and recognize that they themselves receive no such rewards, they are likely to see themselves as lacking. Furthermore, it is also likely that since they are not held in the same esteem as those who receive the rewards, they imagine that others also see them as lacking. Since reticent individuals fear this sort of negative message, they tend to retreat into avoidance behaviors. Therefore, it appears that that the idealization of the extroverted personality type and concomitant devaluation of the introverted personality type is a factor in the development and reinforcement of reticence.

This hypothesis will be explored in the context of organizational life, which reflects broader cultural ideals concerning temperament trait preferences as observed in the literature (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Cain, 2012; McCroskey, 2009). The purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which organizational temperament preferences influence reticent behaviors. Specifically it will examine how reticents perceive their level of recognition in their organizations, how they use these perceptions to make sense of their value within the organization, and how both influence communicative acts. Organizational influence on reticent behaviors is an area of reticence research that has received little attention. Knowledge of these influences and perceptions may further inform our understanding of the persistent nature of reticence and shape future interventions.

The following research questions will explore the probability of organizational influences on persistent reticence behaviors:
RQ #1: Do reticent individuals feel less valued than their non-reticent counterparts?

RQ #2: Do reticents feel that they are recognized less than others in their organizations?
CHAPTER 3: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope

McCroskey (2006) asserts that culture attempts to “acculturate individuals’ communication orientation” often with great success (p. 35). As a segment of culture, organizations shape the ways in which we express temperament. They also influence how, or whether, we choose to express temperament traits; in essence, they send messages about what is considered appropriate (McCroskey, 2006). As the literature reveals, we often receive clear messages from those around us about what communication style is preferred or favored (Allik & McCrae, 2004; McCroskey et al., 2009; Richmond, 2009). This study examines the impact of organizational messages concerning preferred communication styles on reticent behaviors. It will look to gain support for the hypothesis that organizational messages that idealize the extroverted personality type and concomitantly devalue the introverted personality type reinforce reticent behaviors. This study will focus specifically on messages that reticent individuals receive in colleges and workplaces, from people such as classmates and professors, colleagues and supervisors.

Sample

The sample group included 196 students taking communication related courses at a four year college of technology in the northeastern part of the country. However, after eliminating survey non-completers, 129 were retained for analyses. Of those retained, 56% were female and 44% were male. Respondents were first year through fourth year students, with 37% between the ages of 18 and 24, 24% between 25 and 30, and the remaining 39% 31 years of age and older. As the institution’s mission includes a commitment to applied technology education, it draws a large
population of hands-on learners. Sampled courses included the basic speech communication course, small group, interpersonal, organizational, and intercultural communication, and composition II and technical writing. The courses were chosen primarily for the diversity represented in their populations. Specifically, the courses are required in a broad spectrum of academic programs including industrial and computer engineering, construction and design technologies, transportation and natural resources technologies, business and hospitality, health sciences, and art, design, and visual communications. Permissions and access to this group were granted by the college’s English and speech communication department-head and the provost.

**Methodology**

This quantitative study employed a two-part self-report measure. Part one, the Reticence Scale (Keaten, Kelly, & Finch, 1997), is a survey tool developed by researchers to measure reticence. Part two is an open-ended question developed to gain information from a sensemaking theoretical perspective on how participants believe their communication skills affect their levels of recognition in an organizational setting. The survey was e-mailed to the students and completed online using a survey program called Qualtrics.

The self-report approach is standard in the study communication avoidance and its constructs. For example, the Reticence Scale was conceptualized in accordance with Phillips’ argument that, if individuals perceive themselves as having deficient skills, their communication behaviors are likely to reflect incompetencies, regardless of their true skill levels; therefore, capturing an individual’s beliefs through self-report is essential to measuring reticence (Keaten, et al., 1997). From this perspective, a quantitative measure was determined to be the most effective approach to this study.
Instruments

The Reticence Scale, the first instrument created to measure reticence, was designed by Keaten, Kelly, and Finch (1997) as a self-assessment of an individual’s skills and feelings “regarding communication in social settings” (p. 42). The scale was developed with a focus on social conversation context because people who have difficulty communicating socially typically have difficulty in most communication contexts such as public speaking and small group interactions (1997). The Reticence Scale measures six dimensions of communication skill deficiency including anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, memory, and delivery (1997). There are four questions for each of the six dimensions, for a total of 24 questions. Questions are answered using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree through (6) strongly agree.

The second part is an open-ended question designed from the sensmaking perspective and modeled after a Bisel and Arterburn (2012) study. Sensemaking theory has implications for how reticent individuals view their worth in an organizational setting. Sensemaking occasions arise among organizational members when what they think should happen and what does happen are two different things (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012; Weick 1995). For example, asserting behaviors that demonstrate a strong work ethic, professionalism, integrity, trustworthiness, initiative, and persistence are often cited as main ingredients for advancement in an organization (Maye, 2013). However, when individuals believe that they’ve maintained this repertoire of behaviors and strategies but are not reaping tangible benefits, they begin to wonder why. This represents a sensemaking occasion (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Recognizing contributions is one of the main ways that people feel valued in the workplace (Biro, 2013). With that in mind, the following question was posed to participants asking them to explain whether or not they believe they are
recognized in their organizations: “It seems that other people in my organization (i.e. college, work) receive more recognition (i.e. praise or other positive attention, input, opportunities for advancement) than I do. Explain why you think this statement is either true for you or not true for you. Please also provide an example (if you have one) to help explain your answer.” The open ended question itself will serve to answer RQ #2: Do reticents feel that they recognized less than others in their organizations?

Data Analysis

Participants’ overall levels of reticence were calculated by deriving an overall score as per the recommended calculations (Keaten et al., 1997). Additionally, each of the six dimensions was calculated using an established key that indicates which questions correspond with each dimension. The total scores ranged from 7 – 116, with lower scores indicating lower levels of reticence and higher scores indicating greater level of reticence (1997). The Appendix contains the Reticence Scale and the scoring formula. Using a median-split, respondents were divided into two categories: high and low reticent.

For the open-ended question an open coding system was used to identify and categorize main themes. Categories were not presumed ahead of time, but were revealed over several readings of the responses. Two coders (one being the researcher) collaborated to develop the categories. Ten categories emerged. Coders independently coded the data, considering each statement individually. A total of 168 statements were assigned codes. Each respondent’s level of reticence, high or low, was compared to their individual responses to the question in an effort to determine the relationship between level of reticence and beliefs about perceived level of recognition within their organizations. The results of the comparison serve to answer RQ #1: Do
reticent individuals feel less valued than their non-reticent counterparts? Results are discussed in a later section.

**Reliability and Validity**

The Reticence Scale has been tested and determined a reliable and valid tool for measuring reticence (Keaten et al. 1997). The Scale’s overall reliability was .95 as measured by Ketaten et al., with other studies reflecting similar estimates “supporting the reliability of the Reticence Scale and its dimensions” (1997, p. 42). A study assessing its validity by correlating it to three other instruments provided “satisfactory construct and concurrent validity of the Reticence Scale” (p. 49).

The open-ended question was modeled after a Bisel and Arterburn (2012) study using an open coding system (using two coders) where categories were established after several passes through the data, as described in the previous section. Twenty-three percent of the data was subjected to a reliability check, yielding a 64% reliability rate. The low inter-coder reliability coefficient presents a limitation and will be acknowledged at the conclusion of the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

The e-mail message that introduced the survey included informed consent stating that participation is voluntary and anonymous, and that participants are not obligated to answer questions that they do not want to answer and are free to conclude participation at any point. Additionally, I agreed with the English and speech communication department to avoid references to specific courses in the e-mail message, so that participants would not connect their participation to their enrollment in a specific course. Furthermore, I have chosen not to use the name of the institution when discussing methodology or reporting survey results for this study.
CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY

The study identified and compared two groups of communicators, high and low reticents, and assessed how each group perceived their level of recognition within their organization. In analyzing their perceptions, out of the ten established categories, four categories were identified as significant and their relevance is discussed below.

Results

Respondents were asked to complete the Reticence Scale and respond to an open-ended question. The Reticence Scale was scored and data was sorted into two groups: low reticent and high reticent. With a 49.5 median, those who scored at 49.5 and below were categorized as low reticent and those who scored at 50 or above were categorized as high reticent. For the open ended question, responses were read and coded and separated into 10 distinct categories. The question is as follows: *It seems that other people in my organization (i.e. college, work) receive more recognition (i.e. praise or other positive attention, input, opportunities for advancement) than I do. Explain why you think this statement is either true for you or not true for you. Describe how it makes you feel, either way. Please also provide an example (if you have one) to help explain your answer.* Level of reticence was compared to question responses and discussed below.

Of the two groups, 47% were identified as low reticent and 53% as high reticent. Each group was further distilled to capture those who answered either true or not true to the posed question. In the low reticent category, 6.5% believed the statement was true for them. While in the high reticent group, 51% responded that the statement was true. See Figure 1.
Main findings

Coding revealed ten categories representing reasons and reactions to the open ended question. See Appendix B for all 10 categories. In comparing open-ended question responses to level of reticence, distinct patterns emerged for each group. Four categories proved most significant and will be discussed here: verbal infrequency, feeling overlooked, equity, and merit.

Verbal infrequency

Verbal infrequency was a significant category for highly reticent respondents. Verbal infrequency describes responses that reference participants’ tendencies to speak infrequently, stay in the background, and verbally contribute less than others. They admit to not “putting themselves out there” (a frequent refrain) as easily or willingly as others. Overall, 29% of high reticents cited verbal infrequency as a reason they believe others are more recognized in their
organizations. Of those high reticents who answered “true” to the statement, 40% cited verbal infrequency. Simply stated, they talk less. They refer to themselves as “quiet,” “shy” “introverted” and “in the background.” They acknowledge that they offer less information or are less open than others. For example: “People receive more recognition because they make themselves known, unlike me. I don't feel especially good, but I'm fully aware that I don't really discuss my achievements with people” [15] (respondent number). “This statement is true because other people put themselves out there more, they make themselves noticed” [16]. Only 5% of low reticents felt they didn’t talk enough and interestingly, only 6.5% felt that the amount of talking they did (verbal frequency) related to their level of recognition.

Figure 2. Comparison of respondents reporting verbal infrequency as a contributing factor to lack of organizational recognition

Feeling Overlooked

Feeling overlooked was a second significant reason provided by high reticents for being less recognized than peers. Overlooked respondents feel unappreciated and left out. They believe their achievements go unacknowledged and that they received more negative than positive
feedback. They additionally noted that their shortcomings are more readily commented upon than their accomplishments. One participant responded to the question (It seems that other people in my organization receive more recognition than I do) saying “Yes they do and it makes me feel unwanted and worthless” [25]. Others had the following reactions: “I believe this statement is true pertaining to me. Whenever I speak in class no one really understands what I'm [talking] about because I am all over the place because I am so nervous. It also seems that whenever I do something good, it goes completely unnoticed and everyone only ever noticed the bad things I do or my occasional work of poor quality” [8]. “I feel that this statement is true for me because I feel that people are constantly telling me what I do wrong versus what I do that is right” [63]. Of high reticents, 22% overall cited feeling overlooked, while 43% of those who indicated that the statement was true for them perceived themselves as being overlooked. Only 3% of all low reticents felt overlooked.

Figure 3. Comparison of respondents who report feeling overlooked in their organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling overlooked</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Reticent</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Reticent</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equity
Low reticents cited equity as a main underlying factor in organizational recognition. Participants who cited equity perceived that all members were recognized equally. They did not feel that they were less or more recognized than others, as evidenced in statements such as the following: “I disagree with this statement, simply because the people I am around seem to all get the same amount of attention I do [35]. “I disagree. I get just as much as everyone else [61]. “I do not think this true because I think we all receive some level of recognition. I think this is a good thing because it avoids favoritism” [26]. Of all low reticents, 26% perceived equitable recognition while of those who answered “not true” to the statement, 38% noted equitable recognition. For high reticents, 16% overall believe they were recognized equally while for those who answered true to the statement only 3% perceived equitable treatment.

![Respondents report equitable recognition](figure.png)

**Figure 4.** Comparison of respondents who report that the amount of recognition they receive is equal to the amount others receive

### Merit

Low reticents cited merit is a significant factor contributing to organizational recognition. Respondents who cited merit believed that individuals receive recognition in proportion to the
quality of their work and level of achievement. The general sentiment was that you earn recognition and get what you deserve, as illustrated by the following responses. “I do not think that others receive more recognition than I do because people are recognized for what they do when they do it. If I do not do something that deserves recognition then I do not expect it. However those who do something that should be recognized deserve it.” [16]. “I do not feel that anyone receives more recognition that I do. I feel that when I deserve recognition I receive it. It makes me feel good when I am praised for something (but it is not expected). I always do my best and as long as I know I've done my best that is all the recognition needed” [22]. “I don't believe this is a true statement for me. I believe the effort put into something should reflect on who you are. You get what you earn. Nothing is going to be handed to you” [53]. Of the total number of low reticents 38% percent named equity as a reason for recognition, and of low reticents who stated that the statement was not true for them, 50% believed in merit-based recognition. In the high reticent group, 16% overall indicated merit as factor, while of the category who believed the statement was true, 9% respondent cited merit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merit</th>
<th>Low Reticent</th>
<th>50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hight Reticent</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Comparison of respondents who report that organizational recognition is merit based
**Discussion**

The objective of this study was to determine whether or not reticent individuals believe they are less recognized in their organizations, and whether or not they feel less valued than non-reticents. Addressing these questions was intended to help determine the impact of negative cultural messages concerning temperament, specifically introversion, on persistent reticent behaviors. Analyses revealed a significant relationship between high reticence and perceptions of less organizational recognition. While 51% of high reticents felt less recognized than others in their organizations, only 6.5% of low reticents felt less recognized. High reticents made sense of their perceived lack of recognition by invoking both innate biological functioning and environment as causes. They cite temperament, specifically their tendency to talk less than others (verbal infrequency), as a reason for being less recognized. They also point to exogenous factors, (i.e. teachers and supervisors) believing that they are often overlooked, unappreciated, or negatively regarded by authority figures.

The dichotomy between low and high reticent perceptions of merit is also telling. Only 16% of all high reticents attributed merit to level of recognition while of high reticents who answered true to the statement (It seems that other people in my organization receive more recognition than I do.), 9% attributed merit to level of recognition. At the other end of the spectrum, 38% of all low reticents attributed level of recognition to merit, while 50% of low reticents who answered not true to the statement attributed their level of organizational recognition to merit. According to their responses, high reticents seemingly do not feel that they haven’t earned recognition, but believe that they simply are not acknowledged for their achievements, as evidence in the following response: “I have sometimes felt that this statement is true for me because there have been cases where I feel that my successes are overlooked when compared to
the successes of others. I often feel invisible, like my accomplishments never happened and no one can see me as successful” [48]. According, Bisel and Arterburn (2012) and Weik (1995) a sensemaking occasion arises when individuals’ identities within an organization are muddled or misaligned with expectations. High reticents are forced to question their own identities and to evaluate their sense of value in an organization when they sense that it fails to recognize what they have to offer. As a result, in line with symbolic interactionism, high reticents are likely to feel devalued in an organization if they believe others view them as unworthy. Low reticents on the other hand did not seem to grapple with these issues, but were more likely to believe that not only is recognition earned, but that it’s distributed equitably among the deserving.

These findings offer a notable contribution to understanding the causes of persistent reticent behavior. High reticents face a daily struggle in organizational life. Feeling left out and unappreciated is arguably a form of negative evaluation, as noted previously by Richmond (2009) who observed that quiet types are often ignored or dismissed. While it is also arguable that reticents tend to avoid the spotlight, only 12% reported indifference to their perceived lack of recognition. We know that fear of negative evaluation is a primary force behind communication avoidance behaviors (Keaten, Kelly, & Phillips, 2009). We also know that, according to symbolic interactionism, individuals tend to see themselves as they believe others see them (Blumer, 1969, Harter, 1999). Therefore, if reticents believe they are overlooked and unappreciated in their organizations they are likely to see themselves as inadequate or unworthy (1999). If organizational members seemingly punish reticents or withhold rewards because of their style of communication, reticents will manage this antagonistic environment by avoiding verbal communication activities, which both protects them from further negative evaluation and is true to their neurobiological functioning (Rogers, 1977; Keaten et. al, 2009).
Overall the study indicates that reticent individuals feel less recognized and therefore less valued in organizational settings. These findings are also represented in broader cultural ideals where introverts, who speak less frequently, are seen as hesitant, disinterested, disengaged, and hard to read (Myers, 1980). Teachers and other authority figures question their potential, admitting higher expectations of the more verbal, and in the workplace they are less like to occupy leadership positions (McCroskey, 2009; Cain 2012; Richmond, 2009). Whereas extroverts are generally more commended, viewed as more confident, rewarded with positive feedback, visibility and opportunities, and regarded as the ideal student in the classroom (Myers, 1980; McCroskey, 2009; Cain 2012). It is not surprising then that the study revealed that high reticents, many of whom characterized themselves as infrequent verbal contributors, feel overlooked in organizational settings while low reticents believe that they are recognized equally and deservedly for their achievements. It is plausible that these dichotomous messages (both in contrast and separately), inherent in organizational cultures, fuel persistent communication avoidance behaviors. Social interactionism and social learning theory both support the connection between organizational attitudes and the persistence of reticent behaviors.

**Social Interactionism**

Social interactionism informs the perspectives of both groups. As discussed in a previous chapter, for high reticents, cultural messages received from social interactions are often unfavorable, equating a liability to self-perception (Harter, 1999). Reticents interpret this lack of approval as a measure of their worth, and seeing themselves through the eyes of others, also view themselves unfavorably (Harter, 1999). In situations that require verbal interaction, reticent fear of negative evaluation causes anxiety that leads to disfluencies, confusion, physical symptoms (shaking, sweating), and other disruptions. Ultimately reticents enter into a cycle of external and
internal negative evaluation and soon see themselves as “helplessly incompetent” communicators (Keaten, et. al, 2009, p. 158), which increases avoidance behaviors. However, in reference to communication avoidance, McCroskey et. al. (2009) note that, “it may well be that it is not a person’s actual communication competence or skill that determines their willingness to communicate, but rather it may be the individual’s self-perception of that competence or skill” (p. 125). It appears that this perception of incompetence for high reticents is acquired from the “looking glass” and perpetuated by fear. At the other end of the spectrum, low reticents, who display more competent communication skills, especially those who exhibit the more favored extroverted behaviors, receive positive feedback from the social looking glass reinforcing their sense of worthiness (1999). It is not surprising then that low reticents report that organizational recognition is earned and therefore deserved.

**Social Learning Theory**

Closely aligned with social interactionism is social learning theory, which provides an additional plausible explanation for persistent reticent behaviors. While researchers debate its role in reticence etiology, (Beatty, et al, 2000) it certainly has a role in reinforcement. According to social learning theory, as individuals develop they look to models for information on appropriate acceptable behaviors, learning which to imitate and retain and which are likely to be considered undesirable bringing negative feedback and consequences (Bandura, 1977; McLeod, 2011). It would seem then that less verbal individuals would seek to adopt and practice extroverted communication behaviors since those behaviors are more rewarded. However, reinforcement will only impact behavior inasmuch as it matches a need (2011). Therefore, we can postulate that while those who communicate less frequently may well receive negative feedback for failing to conform their behaviors to those of the culturally favored temperament,
the negative feedback will not cause frequency of communication to change, because it does not meet the individual’s temperamental need for internal reflection and silence. This is also supported by Rogers’ (1977) assertions that individuals strive toward fulfilling needs that are biologically innate to their own organism. Therefore, reticents will manage environments that pose a threat to their organism by avoiding communication.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Limitations

There are two main limitations to this study. First the inter-rater reliability co-efficient was low. Co-efficients between .70 and .90 are typically considered acceptable (Lombard, 2010). Two coders independently coded the data. A sample of 23% of the data was selected for analysis, revealing an inter-coder reliability of 64%.

Second, the structure of the open-ended question seemed to have allowed for some ambiguity in interpreting and coding the responses. This ambiguity might have also contributed to a lower than average inter-rater reliability. The question posed is as follows:

*It seems that other people in my organization (i.e. college, work) receive more recognition (i.e. praise or other positive attention, input, opportunities for advancement) than I do. Explain why you think this statement is either true for you or not true for you. Describe how it makes you feel, either way. Please also provide an example (if you have one) to help explain your answer.*

Some respondents directly addressed the first request, indicating whether or not the statement was applicable. Others did not make a specific indication. The lack of a direct indication caused some ambiguity that resulted in a number of responses falling into the “unclear” category. This could be corrected by isolating it as a single question. A clearly stated answer to this question would have allowed for a clearer understanding of responses to other parts of the question, lessening the number of unclear statements and contributing more to the data set, and potentially allowing for an increased percentage of agreement between coders.
Implications for Future Research

Organizational influences on persistent reticent behaviors is a little researched area within the reticence construct. This study focused on high and low reticent perceptions of organizational recognition from a sensemaking perspective. Findings indicated that a significant number of high reticents feel that they are less recognized than other organizational members. Further research is needed to more deeply explore both organizational messages concerning temperament preferences and reticent perceptions of these messages. Studies in this area will facilitate a greater understanding of the role that organizational messages play in reticent self-perception and the impact of these perceptions on the persistent nature of reticence. Additional research will also serve to inform and refine interventions.

Future interventions should take into account the messages imbedded in organizational life concerning introversion and communication avoidance behaviors and reticent perceptions of these messages. Educating program participants about the existence of these messages and how they affect self-perception will help attenuate the impact of looking glass liabilities. For example, Penn State’s reticence program provides participants with an opportunity to address issues related to fear of public speaking. An evaluation of the program revealed that participants found that the two main features of the program they found most helpful were the opportunities to practice, and practicing in a supportive, accepting environment where they did not feel judged (Keaten et al, 2003). While an environment of unconditional positive regard goes a long way in building confidence, participants also need to understand how their basic temperament feeds their tendency for reticence and the manner in which organizations typically view those who verbally communicate less frequently. While interventions are likely to improve or resolve reticent behaviors, they are not going to change an individual’s temperament and they are likely
to continue to encounter temperament biases in future. Reticence intervention programs should consider incorporating both education about these messages and assessments of personality type or temperament (i.e. Myers-Briggs personality type indicator). Self-knowledge will allow for self-acceptance as it will help participants understand the nature of their temperaments and its strengths and limitations. This knowledge will also allow participants to capitalize on their strengths, increasing their opportunities for influence and achievement (Kahnweiler, 2013). This self-knowledge and acceptance is likely to increase the efficacy of the program and allow for enduring results.

**Conclusion**

Organizations ask introverts, at great psychological expense, to either adapt to an extroverted orientation or risk being overlooked. Cain (2012) observes that introversion has become “a second-class personality trait, somewhere between a disappointment and a pathology” (p. 4). Research has strongly linked introversion to the potential to develop reticence (Beatty, et al., 2001; McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009; Keaten et al., 2009). While biological factors lay the groundwork for reticence (Beatty, et al., 2001), this study supports the probability that organizational life plays a significant role in its persistence, with 51% of high reticents reporting receiving less recognition than other organizational members, and 43% feeling overlooked, unappreciated, and left out. This form of negative evaluation is likely to result in continued communication avoidance behaviors. While organizations uphold extroversion as the ideal personality trait, this idealization has seemingly marginalized approximately half of the population and has, according to Cain (2012), caused a considerable amount of “psychic pain” to those less verbal types who have gone through life feeling deeply flawed as a result of messages received from teachers, peers, and supervisors (p. 6). While we cannot change biology or history,
continued research will broaden our understanding of reticent perceptions of organizational messages and the roles these messages and perceptions play in reticence persistence, and will inform the development of targeted interventions.
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Appendix A

DIRECTIONS: This assessment instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning your skills as a communicator. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) mildly disagree, (4) mildly agree, (5) agree, or (6) strongly agree. These statements refer to your communication skills when meeting a stranger at a social gathering. Please work quickly; just record your first impression.

1. I am nervous when talking.

2. I know what to say.

3. I wait too long to say what I want to say.

4. I organize my thoughts when talking.

5. I stumble over my words.

6. I remember what I want to say when talking.

7. I am relaxed when talking.

8. I am unaware of what to say.

9. I say things at the time I want to say them.

10. My thoughts are disorganized.

11. I clearly say what I want to say.

12. I forget what I want to say when talking.
13. I feel tense when talking.

14. I know what to discuss.

15. I hesitate too long to say what I want to say.

16. I arrange my thoughts when talking.

17. I muddle my words.

18. I recall what I want to say when talking.

19. I am comfortable when talking.

20. I am unfamiliar with what to say.

21. I say things when I want to say them.

22. My thoughts are jumbled.

23. I fluently say what I want to say.

24. I lose sight of what I want to say when talking.


**Part 2**

Directions: Read the statement below and respond.

It seems that other people in my organization (i.e. college, work) receive more recognition (i.e. praise or other positive attention, input, opportunities for advancement) than I do. Explain why you think this statement is either true for you or not true for you. Describe how it makes you feel,
either way. Please also provide an example (if you have one) to help explain your answer.

Explain why you think this statement is true for you or not true for you.
Appendix B

Ten categories representing reasons and reactions to the following question: It seems that other people in my organization (i.e. college, work) receive more recognition (i.e. praise or other positive attention, input, opportunities for advancement) than I do. Explain why you think this statement is either true for you or not true for you. Describe how it makes you feel, either way. Please also provide an example (if you have one) to help explain your answer.

1. Verbal infrequency describes responses that reference the participant’s tendencies to speak infrequently, stay in the background, and verbally contribute less than others.
2. Lack of confidence was ascribed to responses that expressed fear, anxiety, or apprehensions about communication skills or verbal communication in general.
3. Overlooked refers to participants who describe feeling left out, unappreciated, feel that their achievements go unacknowledged, or believe they receive mostly negative attention, being recognized primarily when they have made mistakes or have not met expectations in some way.
4. Verbal frequency refers to those who cite frequent verbal contributions and group interaction.
5. Confidence refers to statements that describes feeling generally comfortable and confident around others and in communicating verbally with others or within groups.
6. Equity refers to responses that state participant beliefs that they are recognized as much as anyone else and who demonstrate a general belief that organization members are equally recognized.
7. Merit refers to those responses that state that individuals receive that amount of recognition they deserve based upon the quality of their work or the level of their achievements. It reflects the general sentiment that you get out what you put in.

8. Social connections refers to being a member of a specific group, being involved in certain activities or being a “favorite”

9. Indifferent was ascribed to statements that described being either disinterested in recognition or not caring whether or not one is recognized.

10. Uncertain is a category assigned to statements that either were non-committal (they didn’t know if the statement was true or not true for them) or did not provide an understandable answer to the question or reason for their response.