Communication Research Measures

A SOURCEBOOK

Edited by Rebecca B. Rubin,
Philip Palmgreen, and Howard E. Sypher

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Editors

Rebecca B. Rubin
Philip Palmgreen
Howard E. Sypher

Associate Editors

Michael J. Beatty
Sue DeWine
Cal W. Downs
Elizabeth E. Graham
Howard H. Greenbaum
Patricia Kearney
Elizabeth M. Perse
Alan M. Rubin

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About the Editors

Michael J. Beatty (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 1976) is Professor of Communication at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio. His research focuses on communication apprehension, anxiety, persuasion, nonverbal communication, decision making, teacher credibility, and, most recently, relationships between adults and their parents. In addition to books and chapters, he has published numerous articles in journals such as *Communication Monographs, Communication Education, Communication Quarterly, Human Communication Research*, and *Journal of Applied Communication Research.* He serves on several editorial boards and is past editor of *Communication Research Reports*.

Sue DeWine (Ph.D., Indiana University, 1977) is Professor and Director of the School of Interpersonal Communication at Ohio University, Athens. Besides publishing several books and chapters, her research in organizational communication has appeared in *Communication Yearbook, Communication Research Reports, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Communication Education, Journal of Business Communication*, and elsewhere. She has coedited the Instrumentation section of *Management Communication Quarterly*, chaired the Organizational Communication Division of the International Communication Association (ICA), and chaired the Task Force on Instrumentation. In 1990, she was awarded the Outstanding Member Award of the ICA Organizational Communication Division and was named Mentor of the Year by Women in Communications. Her most recent book focuses on her organizational consulting.

Cal W. Downs (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 1963) is Professor of Communication Studies at University of Kansas, Lawrence. Besides publishing several books, his research on communication audits, interviewing, and internal communication has appeared in *Communication Monographs, Management Communication Quarterly, Journal of Business Communication, Personnel, Communication Yearbook,* and *Australian Journal of Communication.* He has served as chair of the Organizational Communication Division of the Academy of Management and ICA. He has been a reviewer for several jour-

nals and has headed the ICA Organizational Communication Division Task Force on Instrumentation. He also has consulted with organizations about their internal communication processes and has conducted research internationally.

Elizabeth E. Graham (Ph.D., Kent State University, 1987) is Associate Professor in the School of Interpersonal Communication at Ohio University, Athens. Her research interests include instructional and organizational communication skill development, measurement of communication behavior, and the use of humor in interpersonal conversation. Recent publications have appeared in *Communication Education, Western Journal of Communication,* and *Communication Quarterly*. She serves as the course director for interpersonal communication and teaches interpersonal communication, measurement and statistics, and communication theory. She has served as research committee chair for the Instructional Development Division of the Speech Communication Association (SCA).

Howard H. Greenbaum (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1952) is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Business at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York. Earlier, he was senior executive for an industrial organization and served on the financial research staff of the National Bureau of Economic Research. His research on organizational group behavior, measurement and instruction, and communication audits has appeared in the *Academy of Management Journal, Group and Organizational Studies, Journal of Business Communication, Journal of Applied Communication Research,* and *Management Communication Quarterly*. He has served as chair and secretary of the Organizational Communication Divisions of the Academy of Management and ICA, respectively, and serves on several editorial boards. He has received awards by associations for his service to the discipline.

Patricia Kearney (Ed.D., West Virginia University, 1979) is Professor and Deputy Chair of the Speech Communication Department at California State University, Long Beach. Her teaching and research focus on instructional communication, interpersonal communication, and communication theory. Besides publishing books and chapters, her research has appeared in *Communication Education, Human Communication Research, Communication Yearbook, Communication Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Her record of scholarship ranks her as one of the most prolific women researchers in the profession. She has received many awards for her teaching and research. She serves on numerous editorial boards, and recently served as chair of the Instructional Division of ICA.

Elizabeth M. Perse (Ph.D., Kent State University, 1987) is Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Delaware, Newark. Her re-

search focuses on the uses and effects of mass media and newer communication technologies. She has recently investigated the role of gender differences in uses and ownership of communication technologies. Her research has been published in such journals as *Human Communication Research, Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Communication Research, Journalism Quarterly,* and *Communication Quarterly*. She serves on editorial boards and on the SCA's Mass Communication Division Research Committee. She recently was named among the most productive women scholars in communication.

Philip Palmgreen (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1975) is Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Kentucky. He is primarily interested in mass media use and consumption, with particular attention to public communication campaigns. He currently is co-principal investigator on an 8-year project funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse examining the targeting of televised antidrug public service announcements to at-risk groups, especially high-sensation-seeking young adults. He has published in and served as reviewer for most major communication journals.

Alan M. Rubin (Ph.D., University of Illinois, 1976) is Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Communication Studies at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. He has studied the uses and effects of the mass media, including TV and radio news and entertainment, personal and mediated communication, communication and aging, and children and TV. Besides books and chapters, his research has been published in such journals as the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* (JOBEM), *Journal of Communication, Communication Research, Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Journalism Quarterly, Communication Monographs,* and *Human Communication Research*. He is past editor of the JOBEM and a former chair and secretary of the Mass Communication Division of SCA and ICA, respectively. He serves on numerous editorial boards and as a consultant to media, education, and industry.

Rebecca B. Rubin (Ph.D., University of Illinois, 1975) is Professor and Director of the Communication Research Center at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. Her research has focused on interpersonal relationship development, communication competence, and personal and mediated communication. Besides having written or edited several books and chapters, her research has been published in journals such as *Human Communication Research, Communication Monographs, Communication Research, Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Communication Education,* and *Communication Quarterly*. Her research has placed her as one of the most prolific women

researchers in the discipline. She is a past chair of the SCA Instructional Development Division, serves on numerous editorial boards, and is a consultant to government and education in the area of assessment.

Howard E. Sypher (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1977) is Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas. His research, focusing on interpersonal communication and social cognition, has been published in *Communication Monographs, Human Communication Research*, and *Communication Research*. He currently serves as division head of the Interpersonal Communication Division of ICA and serves as coeditor of The Guilford Communication Series.

Preface

Most of us involved in quantitative communication research have at one time or another found that our research required the use of a scale to measure some communication variable we were thinking about including in our theoretical model. But we did not have such a scale, had only dim recollections of "seeing a scale like that somewhere in a journal a few years back," and certainly did not want to go to the trouble of developing and validating such a scale ourselves. Because no sourcebook of communication research measures existed, many of us were forced to do exhausting searches, write other scholars for help, or in some cases reinvent the wheel in order to explore some communication construct. In short, communication scholars have desperately needed a sourcebook of scales on the order of Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman's *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes*.

This is especially true today, because the development of communication as a discipline has resulted in an explosion of scales tapping various aspects of interpersonal, mass, organizational, and instructional communication. These scales are scattered across a bewildering array of journals, books, dissertations, and research reports, a situation that often hinders awareness of and use of particular measures.

This sourcebook is intended as a partial remedy to the situation, bringing together in one place a variety of scales that measure a number of important communication constructs. In the tradition of the Robinson et al. classic, this volume includes the scales themselves, instructions for administration and scoring, and information on validity and reliability. The scales presented here are drawn from the areas of interpersonal, mass, organizational, and instructional communication—areas in which the use of formal, quantitative scales is particularly well developed. Even with this narrowing of the communication horizon, the profusion of scales available forced us to be selective in deciding which scales to include. This selection was based on stringent criteria of validity, reliability, and use as outlined in the Introduction. However, where space limitations preclude the inclusion of an important or promising scale, we reference it in the appropriate overview chapter discussing the state of formal measurement in a particular area.

Attempts at building a quantitative science in any discipline are, in the final analysis, based on the quality of measurement undergirding the theories and constructs in that area. This book, along with others discussed in the Introduction, reflects the recent important emphasis on developing and improving the measurement base of the communication discipline. None of the editors or associate editors envisioned just how difficult and intimidating the process of producing a sourcebook of this nature would be. But we are satisfied that the hard work over the past four years has been well worth it. We hope that this effort will result in at least an equal amount of labor saved on the part of the scholars, students, and practitioners who find this book useful, and that it will contribute in significant ways to your research efforts.

Philip Palmgreen
Rebecca B. Rubin
Howard E. Sypher

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Contents

Introduction 1

Part I
MEASUREMENT TRENDS AND ISSUES

Measures of Instructional Communication 7
Patricia Kearney and Michael J. Beatty

Measures of Interpersonal Communication 21
Rebecca B. Rubin and Elizabeth E. Graham

Measures of Mass Communication 37
Alan M. Rubin and Elizabeth M. Perse

Measures of Organizational Communication 57
Cal W. Downs, Sue DeWine, and Howard H. Greenbaum

Part II
MEASURE PROFILES

Affective Learning 81

Affinity-Seeking Instrument 86

Argumentativeness Scale 89

Attributional Confidence Scale 94

Audience Activity Measures 99

Behavior Alteration Techniques 103
Communication Anxiety Inventory 109
Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire 114
Communicative Adaptability Scale 120
Communicative Competence Scale 125
Communicator Competence Questionnaire 130
Communicator Style Measure 134
Compliance-Gaining Techniques 142
Conversational Appropriateness/Effectiveness Scales 149
Cultivation Index 154
Family Communication Patterns Scale 159
Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding Scale 165
Generalized Immediacy Scale 169
Gratifications Sought and Obtained Scales 173
Group Behavior Inventory 178
Individualized Trust Scale 184
Interaction Involvement Scale 187
International Communication Association Audit 193
Interpersonal Attraction Scale 206
Interpersonal Communication Motives Scale 211
Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory 217
Interpersonal Solidarity Scale 223
Mean World Index 226
Mentoring and Communication Support Scale 230
News Credibility Scale 234

Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument 238

Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument 242

Organizational Communication Development Audit Questionnaire 247

Organizational Communication Scale 254

Organizational Culture Survey 263

Organizational Identification Questionnaire 268

Parasocial Interaction Scale 273

Perceived Homophily Measure 278

Perceived Realism Scale 282

Personal Involvement Inventory 286

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension 292

Political Media Gratifications Scale 296

Quality Marriage Index 301

Receiver Apprehension Test 304

Relational Communication Scale 308

Relational Dimensions Instrument 314

Revised Self-Disclosure Scale 322

Source Credibility Scale—Berlo 327

Source Credibility Scale—McCroskey 332

Speakers' Perceptions of Situational Causes of Anxiety 340

Student Motivation Scale 343

Student Resistance Strategies 347

Teacher Credibility 352

Teacher Satisfaction Scale 356

Teacher Self-Disclosure Instrument 359
Team-Review Questionnaire 363
Television Affinity Scale 367
Television Viewing Motives Scale 371
Three-Dimensional Communication Load Scale 377
Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale 382
Verbal Aggressiveness Scale 387
Verbal Immediacy Behaviors 393
Index 397

Introduction

Part I of this volume contains summary chapters about four facets of the communication discipline that use quantitative measures. The authors describe the scales and indexes researchers commonly use, identify new or untried measures that may have potential, and comment on measurement issues peculiar to their section. The chapters identify how the editors made their decisions to profile measures. Often these decisions were based on the established validity/reliability track record of the measure. Another criterion was that the measure be developed and used primarily in the communication discipline. New instruments that have great potential for use are also included. (Measures that are profiled in this volume are typed in capital letters when cited in the text and tables.)

Part II includes summaries (what we call profiles) of measures commonly used in communication research. The profiles are organized alphabetically by measure name rather than in categories, not only to facilitate finding specific measures, but because some measures would fall into more than one category. Profile authors (identified on the first page of each profile) have adhered to a standard format for their descriptions. First they describe the background of the measure and what it now looks like. Then they assess the reliability and validity of the measure, providing commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of it. They then give the location of the measure and references used in the profile. And last they provide the actual measure; if the measure was revised since first publication, measure authors provided the most recent version for this volume. In a few cases, the actual measure was not available, so readers are referred to the reference providing the location.

The authors use standard definitions of validity and reliability in their profiles. Kerlinger (1986) and Babbie (1992) provided the definitions and distinctions used here: *Reliability* is the dependability, predictability, stability, or precision of a measure. *Intercoder reliability* is computed for some nominal-data judgments to test the stability of a coding system; two coders assign communication behaviors to categories to see if the two agree. *Interrater reliability* does the same for interval- or ratio-data judgments; evaluations are made about the communication on a scale or index. *Test–retest reliability* tests the stability of a measure by correlating scores from two administra-

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