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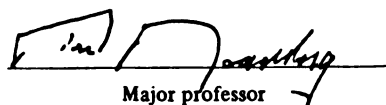
The Role of Competence, Perceived Heterophily,
and Satisfaction in the Context of University-
Community Collaborative Relationships

presented by

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THE ROLE OF COMPETENCE, PERCEIVED HETEROPHILY, AND
SATISFACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY
COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

By

Mikayla Hughes

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF COMPETENCE, PERCEIVED HETEROPHILY, AND SATISFACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

By

Mikayla Hughes

A growing emphasis on outreach scholarship and emerging disciplines such as Community Psychology and Applied Developmental Science have yielded an increase in institutional and intellectual support of university-community collaborative efforts. Increasingly, researchers are moving away from treating community members as just study participants and are starting to view community members as partners in university-community research collaborations. The extent to which graduate student liaisons communicate competently with community-affiliated individuals will have important impact on the success of university-community collaborative relationships. Thirteen graduate student liaisons participated in a preliminary study of a model that posits self-perceived communication competence and perceived heterophily interact to affect conversational satisfaction. While this study provides very little insight on the hypotheses, this preliminary study provided valuable insights on how to better measure communication competence in the context of long-term collaborative relationships. Also, logistical barriers encountered in the process of data collection indicated that expansion of the potential participant criteria may be necessary for future studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Institutional changes and intellectual shifts have heralded a boom in university-community collaborative relationships. Several scholars have indicated that there is a current trend among institutions of higher education of placing a greater emphasis on outreach scholarship (Harkavy, 1996; Lerner & Simon, 1998; Votruba, 1996). Outreach scholarship occurs when the scholarship activities of knowledge generation, transmission, and application are carried out in concert with communities in a manner that directly benefits these communities (Lerner & Simon, 1998). The idea of academia pursuing scholarly endeavors to benefit society is not new. Universities have always generated, transmitted, and applied knowledge in order to contribute to the public good, however instead of adhering to academia's standards of what are pressing societal issues, universities must subject themselves to communities' and to the general public's opinion of what is the public good and what is success in outreach endeavors (Chibucos & Lerner, 1999; Harkavy, 1996). This trend towards an emphasis on outreach scholarship has yielded an increase in institutional support of university-community collaborative efforts.

Some scholars have come to acknowledge the importance of studying the influence of contextual and ecological factors, or a systems approach, on human behavior (Chibucos & Lerner, 1999; Kelly, 1986). Areas of study, such as ecological psychology, community psychology, and applied developmental science, have emerged that investigate the impact of social systems on individual or group behavior. Even researchers in fields that traditionally value theory that is largely independent of context have come to acknowledge the importance of context in human behavior. For example

health communication and health psychology researchers must take community culture into account when researching the efficacy of preventative health messages (Schensul, 1999).

These institutional and intellectual changes are evident in the way community based research is conducted. Increasingly, community members are no longer simply study participants and are educating researchers about the culture of their community. Researchers at Iowa State University, extension personnel, and community participants collaborated on Project Family. The goals of Project Family were to generate knowledge that furthers the area of family-focused competency building and to increase the well-being of program participants (Spoth & Molgaard, 1999). Partners were interested in discerning which strategies were most effective in disseminating empirically-supported family and youth-focused preventative interventions. An independent evaluation team assessed the effectiveness of a formalized curriculum for custodial grandparents that was created through collaborative efforts among Western Michigan University researchers from various disciplines, extension agents, representatives of government agencies serving grandparents, and custodial grandparents (Smith & Dannison, 1999). Before this collaborative effort, no such resource existed for custodial grandparents. Now this curriculum serves as a valuable resource because many custodial grandparents had been frustrated, isolated from community support networks, and some had poor parenting skills.

Schensul (1999) defines community-based research as research that is conducted in naturalistic settings and attempts to understand issues and problems within the context of the community (Schensul, 1999). However, conducting research within communities

can yield a plethora of problems. Community-based researchers face problems of difficulty in soliciting participants, ignorance concerning community context, cultivating trust within the community, and promoting sustainable outcomes. In order to solve these problems, community members or representatives should be fully involved in the research process (Altman, 1995; Kelly, 1986; Schensul, 1999).

Community based research can function not only to serve communities and bring about solutions and new ways to approach societal issues but also further academic goals of theory building and knowledge accumulation (Kelly, 1986). Ultimately, a good community-researcher partnership will yield sustainability and empowerment for the community and knowledge and insights into new methods, exposure to differing views concerning constructs and relationships, long-term research partnerships, and new research questions. By sharing their knowledge concerning the community and their anecdotal observations of the social processes that are the focus of the project, community-affiliated individuals provide researchers with information that may inform the research process, methods, or even theory.

One would think that since there are so many potential benefits for all the constituents involved in university-community research partnerships that the prospect of conducting community based research endeavors would be viewed as a win-win proposition for all involved. While ideally all involved parties stand to benefit from community based research efforts, misconceptions of their counterpart's abilities and capacities diminish the likelihood of positive outcomes.

These misconceptions stem in part from a difference in view on how to approach social issues facing a community. Chavis, Stucky, and Wandersman (1983) assert that

there is a basic philosophical difference between university researchers and citizens concerning how to approach issues. They point out that leaders in the community or community members are expected to solve complex problems as soon as possible with incomplete information while researchers approach problems systematically and wait to make any conclusions until all data have been collected and analyzed. Communities view researchers as a source of expert knowledge that will provide solutions for their problems. However, the ways of knowing and knowledge generation methods utilized by researchers cannot provide the immediate results and changes expected by communities.

Chavis, Stucky, Wandersman (1983) assert that there are differences in the research questions posed by researchers and the questions valued by communities. According to the authors, these differences may make researchers reluctant to relinquish intellectual control over the research. Hesitancy on the part of researchers to share control of the research process and community misunderstanding and doubt concerning the benefits that community based research can produce can hinder the formation of community-researcher partnerships of abilities and capacities.

These misconceptions are evident in the unidimensional influence models that have been utilized in a good portion of community based research efforts (Tyler, Pargament, & Gatz, 1983). Under a unidimensional influence model, researchers work on or in the community as opposed to working with the community. Researchers may on occasion come into a community, with little if any previous communication with the community, to conduct a study with fully developed research questions and protocol (Kelly, 1986). When researchers approach community-based research in this manner

there is little regard for preexisting community based knowledge that might inform research questions or protocol.

Also, much of community-based research has been approached from a person-centered approach (Altman, 1995; Tyler, Pargament, & Gatz, 1983). Under a person-centered approach, or deficit model, researchers conceptualize social ills with a focus on person centered variables. People that are to be helped are viewed as lacking in some characteristic (Caplan & Nelson, 1973; Tyler, Pargament, & Gatz, 1973). This characteristic may be valued in the realm of academia but may be viewed differently in the context of the community's culture.

Unfortunately, the very benefits and positive outcomes that both communities and researchers stand to gain from successful community based research endeavors are stifled by the unidimensional approach and deficit models. Researchers with the intent of developing expertise and independence among community members realized that unidirectional influence models promote dependence instead of fostering empowerment (Tyler, Pargament, & Gatz, 1973). Several researchers assert potential benefits of community-researcher partnerships can best be achieved by way of a co-learning model (Altman, 1995; Kelly, 1986).

The term collaboration is often misused to describe more unidimensional influence relationships. There are few instances of community wide partnerships, or collaborations, in which all constituents had equal status (Lerner, Simon, & Mitchell, 1998). True collaborative relationships are consistent with a co learning model. Under a co learning model, or models of mutual influence, both researchers' and communities' goals, knowledge, and capacities are equally valued (Tyler, Pargament, & Gatz, 1983).

Ultimately collaborators become a learning community. A learning community is a group, whether it is university-based researchers and community-affiliated individuals or a group of working mothers sharing parenting tips, that shares and utilizes information as part of a social experience (Walshok, 1995). Parties involved in a learning community focus on the strengths and assets of other members and their environments and attempt to harness those strengths and assets to learn and grow together (Casto, Harch, & Cunningham, 1998). Ideally, collaborating communities and researchers will become a learning community. In order to achieve this goal, researchers and community affiliated individuals must become knowledgeable and sensitive to the mores, values, and practices of the other (Lerner & Simon, 1998). Socialization among parties, in the context of a learning community of researchers and community-affiliated individuals, is a vehicle for development of empathy, mutual respect and interest, and a shared agenda (Walshok, 1995).

Lack of understanding of the other parties involved in the collaborative relationship is a severe barrier to the establishment and maintenance of co learning and the resulting collaborative efforts (Lerner & Simon, 1998). Competent communication among collaborators promotes understanding among collaborators. Individuals in a collaborative need to establish common goals, communicate their own assets and limitations, and acknowledge their partner's assets and limitations (Foley, 1998). Collaboration should not only yield benefits specific to the research project but also promote sustainability of projects and empowerment of community constituents. Altman (1995) defines sustainability as the infrastructure that is left to maintain a project after the researchers leave and community capacity to maintain the project. Sustainability is more

likely when communities are fully involved. Empowered communities feel an ownership over the project and are able to acquire the necessary resources (Altman, 1995).

There is little published empirical research investigating the impact of quality communication on outcomes, such as research findings and project sustainability, from university-community collaborations. However, there are countless published antidotal accounts written by community-based researchers concerning how to promote more successful and lasting university-community collaboration (see Chibucos & Lerner, 1999; Lerner & Simon, 1998). A common theme among these antidotal accounts is the central role that quality communication plays in the collaborative process. Skills necessary for successful collaboration include: effective communication, constructive conflict resolution, and negotiating mutual benefit (Foley, 1998; Kelly, 1986; Schensul, 1999).

If effective communication and promoting mutual benefit is vital to the initiation and maintenance of university-community collaborative relationship, then one might suggest that representatives for potential collaborating entities be selected on the basis of their competence as communicators. However, while research teams may be able to select a team representative based on the potential representative's interpersonal competence, community representatives are usually selected on the basis of their knowledge and connections within the community.

Beyond selecting research team representatives based on their interpersonal competence, it may be useful to incorporate communication competence training into the curricula for graduate students in disciplines that may conduct some amount of community-based research. Votruba (1996) suggests that future faculty should receive some training in how to effectively communicate with individuals with differing values

and cultural backgrounds. It is not uncommon for graduate students to serve in the role of representative for the research team. While faculty members may initiate communication between the research team and a community, graduate students usually conduct the majority of communication with the community once a collaborative relationship has been established. As mentioned earlier, co learning collaborative models may be valued in theory by several disciplines; however, community-based research endeavors that are truly collaborative in nature are few in number. While graduate students may come to value the ideal of a co learning model, they may simply view it as an unobtainable ideal. By giving graduate students an opportunity to learn and practice the skills necessary to build and maintain a co learning relationship with a community, these future faculty members may be more likely to exhibit communication behaviors that are consistent with a co learning model and approach community based research endeavors as a partnership instead of a project in need of community members to serve as participants.

The purpose of the proposed preliminary study is to test a model of interpersonal competence, perceived heterophily, and conversational satisfaction in the context of collaborative relationships (see Figure 1). If communication is an integral aspect of collaborative relationships, then collaborators should experience greater conversational satisfaction when they perceive their own interpersonal behavior as competent. Researchers have found a positive relationship between interpersonal competence and satisfaction (Spitzberg & Brunner, 1991; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1984). Conversational satisfaction is of interest as an outcome variable because a positive relationship between conversational satisfaction and relationship maintenance has been established in various

relational contexts. There is likely to be some difference in values, cultural background, and education between researchers and community-affiliated individuals. Collaborators' perceptions of heterophily between self and their fellow collaborator should interact with perceptions of their own interpersonal competence to impact perceptions of conversational satisfaction.

CHAPTER 1

A MODEL OF INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE, PERCEIVED HETEROPHILY, AND CONVERSATIONAL SATISFACTION

A collaborative relationship between researchers and communities can yield positive benefits for both parties. Researchers can gain insight different from their own concerning constructs and relationships of interest, better access to community resources, assistance with research tasks, and an ongoing dialogue with the community concerning future research projects. Communities can have access to empirical knowledge that has the potential to increase the quality of life of community residents. However, it takes an established rapport and trust between communities and researchers to reap these possible benefits.

Both factions, which are likely to be heterogeneous to some extent, must negotiate their differences and find a means to build a collaborative relationship. While researchers may be willing to make changes and sacrifices to collect data, community members may be extremely hesitant to make even small changes for a research project. The impetus to develop and maintain successful a collaborative relationship often rests upon the graduate students who serve as liaisons between the communities and research teams. Graduate student liaisons must be able to adequately communicate the abilities and limitations of the research team and understand the context, desires, and concerns of the community. The demonstration of interpersonally competent behavior by graduate student liaisons in their conversations with community representatives is integral in the development and maintenance of a collaborative relationship.

The purpose of the proposed study is to test a model, as shown in Figure 1, that posits interpersonal competence and perceived heterophily interact to affect

conversational satisfaction. First, the construct of interpersonal competence and its relevance concerning collaborative relationships will be presented. Second, issues concerning how to conceptualize and measure competence will be discussed. Third, evidence supporting the relevance of conversational satisfaction as an outcome measure will follow. Next, the role of heterophily among groups or dyads on resulting outcomes is explored. Finally, the impact of the interaction of perceived heterophily and interpersonal competence on conversational satisfaction is discussed. For the purpose of the proposed study, self-perceived interpersonal competence, perceived heterophily, conversational satisfaction will be measured among graduate students who serve as liaisons on a research team conducting community-based research.

In order for the positive benefits of co learning, sustainability, and empowerment to come about, collaborative partnerships are best conceived as a long-term relationship between researchers and communities (Altman, 1995). Quality communication plays a critical role in relationship maintenance. The extent to which competent communication occurs in a relationship impacts the success or failure of the relationship (Spitzberg, 1993). Competence is essential to the maintenance of all relationships (Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000; Prisbell, 1995; Spitzberg & Cupach, in press).

Communication Competence

Competence is an impression inferred from behavior. Perceptions of communication competence reside in the individuals engaged in the conversation (Duran, 1983). Judgements of competence can be formed about self and also conversational partners. Individuals' perceptions of their conversational partner's communication competence are inferred from their observations of their conversational partners' skills

(Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001). Perceptions of one's own communication competence can impact behavior. Perceptions of one's own communication competence affects one's willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). Thus impressions of communication competence are influenced by perceptions of self and other's interpersonal behavior.

Communication competence is frequently conceptualized as appropriate and effective communication behavior (Spitzberg, 1984). Competent communicators exhibit communication behaviors that are appropriate for the particular conversation in which they are participating. Appropriate communication behaviors meet the social demands of the situation in which a conversation occurs and do not violate social norms held by either participant in the conversation (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978). Competent communicators are often effective in their communicative endeavors. Communication is viewed as effective when participant goals or desired outcomes are achieved. Yet, effectiveness is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for behavior to be considered competent (McCroskey, 1982). The extent to which participants' efforts in conversations are viewed as effective is limited by the circumstances present in the situation that conversations take place (Spitzberg, 1984). In situations for which the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes are extremely limited, participants may still view their communicative efforts as competent even if they are not effective in achieving desired outcomes.

Communication competence has been investigated as both a trait and as a situational variable. Conceptualized as a trait, communication competence is enduring and stable across situations. Individuals high in communication competence demonstrate

competent communicative behavior regardless of time, situations, or conversational partner. When conceptualized as a situational variable, communication competence may vary across contexts for the same individual. For example, individuals may demonstrate high levels of communication competence at work but exhibit low levels of communication competence at home. Context is not limited to settings and can include different types of relationship. Perceptions of what is considered competent communicative behavior may differ depending on the type of relationship.

Communicative behaviors that are competent in the context of a romantic relationship may be totally incompetent in the context of a professional relationship at the workplace.

Some researchers have defined communication competence as a trait (Anderson & Martin, 1995) and have investigated the relationship between competence to various psychosocial constructs including willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) and cognitive flexibility (Martin & Anderson, 1998). Competence is not a trait (Parks, 1984; Spitzberg, 1988; Spitzberg, 1991). Spitzberg (1989) asserts that because competence is the ability to change as social circumstance dictates it is best not to conceptualize competence as a stable disposition. He goes on to suggest that a multiplicity of traits is more likely to accurately portray the complex nature of the competence construct. Parks (1984) states that the issue of if competence is better conceptualized as general across situations and/or interactants or specific to situations and/or interactants is of an empirical nature.

Both molecular and molar behaviors can be the basis of judgments of communication competence (Spitzberg, 1984). Molecular behaviors are specific behaviors that happen during a specific conversation such as eye contact, rapid speech, or

fidgiting. Molar behaviors are more abstract and are impressions based on complex combinations of molecular behaviors. The behaviors that are the source of impressions of competent communication can be described in terms of molar behaviors, molecular behaviors or at various points along the molar-molecular continuum. Both Parks (1984) and Spitzberg and Cupach (2001) attempt to organize competent behavior along the molar-molecular continuum.

There is some conceptual overlap concerning interpersonal competence and the communication behaviors necessary for fruitful collaborative efforts. Competent interpersonal behavior is goal driven, adaptive, and interdependent (Parks, 1984; Spitzberg, 1984). This is consistent with the notion that parties in a collaborative relationship must negotiate mutual benefit, possess empathy, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity. Interpersonally competent individuals utilize communicative behaviors appropriate to the context of the interaction in order to attempt to meet their goals.

Competent communication is adaptive (Duran, 1983; Parks, 1984). Situational constraints dictate what is considered appropriate and effective behavior (Spitzberg, 1984). There are six contextual dimensions that influence perceptions of competence: culture, time, relationship, place, and function (Spitzberg & Cupach, in press). Research concerning intercultural communication competence emphasizes contextual factors, especially culture (Chen & Starosta, 1996). According to Chen and Starosta, competent communicators that interact with individuals who have cultural identities different from their own understand how to accomplish their own interpersonal goals as they respect the cultural identities of their conversational partners. Because it is likely that collaborating researchers and community-affiliated individuals will have differing cultural identities, it

is crucial that each party cultivate a knowledge and understanding of the others' culture. Knowledge and understanding of one's conversational partner's cultural identity facilitates one's ability to determine which conversational goals behaviors are appropriate and which should be avoided.

When measuring competence, researchers must specify the time frame in which competence is being assessed (Spitzberg, in press). As time between a conversation and evaluation of competence increases, competence evaluations become increasingly self-focused, positive and molar (Spitzberg, 1987). The amount of time that conversational partners have been acquainted and the nature of their relationship have a bearing on assessments of competence. According to Spitzberg (1987) it is likely that individuals judge the competence of friends and acquaintances differently from strangers. Also, Spitzberg asserts that differences in status between conversational partners may influence how individuals perceive the competence of their partners. Competent communication is interdependent (Parks, 1984; Spitzberg, 1984). Competent communicators must take the needs and goals of their conversational partner into account when attempting to meet their own goals. Attempts to negotiate mutual benefit will be viewed as more interpersonally competent behavior than simply seeking to achieve one's own conversational goals (Wiemann & Kelly, 1981).

Measuring and Conceptualizing Interpersonal Communication Competence

The construct of communication competence has been explored in variety of diverse literatures. Researchers have examined the nature of competent communication in the workplace (Goodall, 1982), the classroom (McCroskey, 1982), and in cross-cultural situations (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Also, researchers have examined the

relationship between incompetent communication behaviors and relational conflict (Spitzberg, 1989).

Exploration of communication competence in a variety of areas has led to an abundance of differing measures of competence (Spitzberg, 1989). Some of these measures are limited to a specific context. For example, Spitzberg (1988) points out that there are measures that assess competence in educational situations, such as classroom performance. Other measures conceptualize competence as a trait or stable disposition that may be assessed by way of competence on the basis of individuals' answers to various scenarios (e.g., Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988; Rubin & Martin, 1994). There are another group of competence measures that ask individuals to assess their own and/or their conversational partners competence at the episodic level (e.g., Eadie & Paulson, 1984; Spitzberg, 1997).

In an attempt to incorporate notions of communication competence that had been developed in diverse contexts, Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) present a component model of relational competence. According to Spitzberg and Hecht, competent communication is composed of three components: motivation, knowledge, and skill.

The three components of motivation, knowledge, and skill are combined to yield a measure of communication competence. Perceptions of both conversational partners communication behaviors impact competence judgment. An individual's self-rating of competence is a function of that individual's motivation, knowledge, and skills of the individual and their conversational partner. An individual's rating of his or her conversational partner is a function of that individual's motivation, knowledge, and skills of the individual and their conversational partner. The 3 component model is consistent

with the idea that perceptions of competence are interdependent. While the model does conceptualize competence as being based on perceptions of both conversational partners, several of the predictions refer to relationships between individuals' perceptions of their own or their conversational partners' competence and satisfaction.

Utilizing their component model of relational competence, Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) found a positive relationship between communication competence and satisfaction with the conversation. This positive relationship was found for both self-perceived and other competence. While self-perceived competence ratings do not provide us with a direct account of conversational partners' perceptions of others' competence, self-perceived competence is useful because it is positively correlated with conversational partner ratings of competence (Spitzberg, 1984). Spitzberg (in press) asserts that self-report measures of competence are useful when participants are asked to base their competence ratings on past events.

The measures developed for the 3 component model are episodic in nature, i.e. they ask respondents to evaluate one specific conversation. This is problematic for researchers who may want to assess perceptions of competence that have evolved over a relationship. In an ongoing relationship, impressions of competence are likely to be based on general memories rather than on a single conversational episode (Spitzberg, 1987). Cupach and Spitzberg have developed a self-report measure that assesses self-perceived competence, Self-Rated Competence (SRC)(Spitzberg, 1988). While the SRC was originally intended as an episodic measure, few changes were necessary to make the instrument applicable to assessments of competence based on several conversations.

Individuals who demonstrate competent interpersonal behavior in the context of collaborative efforts attempt to reach their own goals in a manner appropriate to the situation in which the conversations take place; try to understand the goals, culture, and limitations of their partners; attempt to find a means to achieve mutual benefit, and strive to develop a co learning relationship with their partners. Consistent with Spitzberg and Hecht (1984), a positive relationship between perceptions of competence and satisfaction is expected. Individuals participating in a collaborative effort who perceive themselves as behaving in an interpersonally competent manner will have greater conversational satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1 Graduate student liaisons who perceive themselves as high in interpersonal competence will have higher levels of conversational satisfaction than graduate student liaisons who perceive themselves as low in interpersonal competence.

Homophily/Heterophily

Graduate student liaisons may perceive low levels of homophily between themselves and the community-affiliated individuals with which they communicate. Researchers and community-affiliated individuals are likely to be heterogeneous in their values, ways of knowing, communication styles, and lifestyles (Myers-Walls, 2000). Also, researchers and community-affiliated individuals may differ in ethnicity and socioeconomic status. For the purpose of the proposed study, dyad homophily will be limited to perceived similarities in socioeconomic status and background. Many of the communities solicited for participation in community based research projects have residents that are mostly of lower socioeconomic status and of an ethnicity other than Caucasian (Harkavy, 1996) while a good number of researchers hail from middle-class

backgrounds (Kelly, 1986). These differences in backgrounds may also be associated with differences in morals and values. Myers-Walls believes that collaborations between heterogeneous researchers and paraprofessionals affiliated with the community, such as social workers or educators, are likely to become more fruitful when the groups communicate effectively.

Opportunities for innovative ideas to be brought to light multiply when collaboration among parties from heterogeneous economic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds occurs (Blackwell & Stanberry, 1999). Interpersonal communication is not simply a back and forth exchange of messages. Parties involved in communication bring their education, life experiences, and cognitive processing style to the equation. The extent to which communicating individuals are similar can influence the meaning assigned to the messages shared in an interaction and the way the individuals feel about the conversation.

Much research has been conducted concerning the impact of dyadic or group heterophily on resulting outcomes. Heterophily in a group or dyad is simply the extent to which the members are different. Groups and dyads can differ in ethnicity, gender, age, educational background, occupational background, and cognitive processing styles. The qualities that groups/dyads may differ on can be observable or skill based (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Observable differences include ethnicity, gender, and age. Skill based differences include educational background, occupational background, and cognitive processing styles. Individuals may develop values or morals based on either observable differences such as ethnicity or based on skill based differences such as educational background.

In their review of the impact of heterophily on group process outcomes, Milliken and Martins (1996) acknowledge that past research conflicts on whether heterophily inhibits or facilitates positive group outcomes. Some research supports the claim that heterophily leads to decreases in satisfaction among group members and increases in turnover (Jackson et al., 1991; Mueleer, Finley, Iverson, & Prices, 1991). Highly heterogeneous groups are likely to have members who feel less integrated and therefore will have members who are dissatisfied and leave the group (Jackson et al., 1991).

Conversely, dyads that are low in heterophily, or more homogeneous, experience greater satisfaction. This relationship between low heterophily and satisfaction has been found concerning the degree to which dyads are heterogeneous in social-cognitive skills (Martin & Andersan, 1995; Waldron & Applegate, 1998) communication skills (Burleson & Denton, 1992; Burleson & Samter, 1996), and values (Davis, 1981). Millikin and Martins (1996) suggest that skill heterophily leads to greater coordination costs.

However, group or dyad heterophily can have a beneficial affect on group process outcomes. In heterogeneous groups, members are likely to bring their differing experiences and ways of knowing to the decision-making process. These differences can impact how groups discuss and approach important issues or problems or tasks (Hoffman & Maier, 1961; Jackson et al., 1991). Groups that are highly heterogeneous benefit from a greater range of outlooks and knowledge concerning issues, which in turn leads to higher quality group outcomes. Mulliken and Martins (1996) suggest that if heterogeneous groups find a means to get past their differences they will be able to make the most of their differences in order to gain positive outcomes. Watson, Kuman, and Michaelson (1993) found that when groups are recently formed, homogenous groups are

more effective. But, after a few months of working together, heterogeneous groups produced a greater range of perspectives yet were just as effective as homogenous groups

Communication Competence and Heterophily

Interpersonal competent behavior is a means to galvanize the positive outcomes heterophily can yield. Because individuals communicating in a manner perceived as interpersonally competent are aware and respectful of the cultural identities of their conversational partners, individuals who perceive high levels of heterophily between self and their conversational partner and have high self-perceptions of interpersonal competence will generate and be exposed to a greater range of ideas and concerns than individuals who perceive high levels of heterophily between self and their conversational partner and have low self-perceptions of interpersonal competence. In the context of a collaborative relationship, generation of a greater diversity of ideas should lead to greater satisfaction. For the purpose of this study perceived heterophily will be defined as the extent to which a conversational partner is viewed as different concerning values associated with religion, culture, life priorities, and interpersonal preferences concerning how to discuss issues. These particular values were selected because it is likely that these values may have some impact on how individuals approach issues and relationships. In the case of low heterophily, Davis (1981) found that, compared to political opinions or opinions about matters of fact, similarity of interests and values had a greater impact on interactant attraction. The author found that relationship between similarity and attraction was strongest for opinions or values that provides the most information about interactions.

Hypothesis 2 Graduate student liaisons who perceive high levels of heterophily (low levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner and have high self-perceptions of interpersonal competence will have higher levels of conversational satisfaction than graduate student liaisons who perceive high levels of heterophily (low levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner and have low self-perceptions of interpersonal competence and graduate student liaisons who perceive low levels of heterophily (high levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner.

Low competence communicators are expected to have lower levels of satisfaction compared to competent communicators. Yet, because perceptions of homogeneity are positively related to satisfaction, homogeneous low competence communicators should have greater satisfaction than heterogeneous low competence dyads. Among individuals in dyads with perceptions of lower levels of competent behavior, low heterophily, or homogeneity, should lead to increases in satisfaction. Some researchers (Burleson & Samter, 1996; Waldron & Applegate, 1998) have utilized the rewards of interaction model (Berscheid, 1985) to provide a rationale for the relationship between satisfaction and similarity. According to the rewards of interaction model, individuals enjoy interacting with conversational partners that are similar to them. The rewards of interaction model can also provide a rationale for why individuals taking part in interpersonally competent behavior experience greater conversational satisfaction with more heterogeneous partners than less heterogeneous partners. In the context of collaboration, individuals who are motivated to take part in a co learning relationship and are knowledgeable about the value of different opinions in a co learning relationship will

enjoy interacting with conversational partners that bring differing opinions, experiences, and backgrounds to the conversation.

Hypothesis 3 Graduate student liaisons who perceive low levels of heterophily (high levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner and have low self-perceptions of interpersonal competence will have higher levels of conversational satisfaction than graduate student liaisons who perceive high levels of heterophily (low levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner and have low self-perceptions of interpersonal competence but will have lower levels of conversational satisfaction than graduate students who perceive low levels of heterophily (high levels of homophily) between self and their conversational partner and high self-perceptions of interpersonal competence.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants

Thirteen graduate students who act as a liaison between the research teams on which they work and the communities with which they collaborate on community based research projects served as participants. Only graduate students involved in community-based research endeavors that focused on some aspect of human behavior were included in the study. Only one graduate student per research team participated in the study. Only graduate students who have communicated with a community-affiliated individual for a minimum of 6 weeks, had a minimum of 4 conversations with this particular individual, and has had face to face contact with this community-affiliated individual at least twice were allowed to participate. Graduate student liaisons working in research teams conducting community-based research in the disciplines of Children, Youth, and Families, Applied Developmental Science, Education, Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Communication Systems, Social Science will be solicited for participation. These disciplines were selected because it is probable that a fair amount of graduate students involved in community-based research are in the previously mentioned schools and departments.

Recruitment

Initially, the names of potential participants were solicited from faculty involved in community-based research endeavors. Also, emails and fliers were sent to individuals in departments that conduct a good amount of community-based research (i.e. Community Psychology and Resource Development). Unfortunately, this method of

soliciting participants did not yield very many responses. At the outset of data collection individuals from Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Communication Systems were not solicited. However, in order to increase the number of participants, individuals from Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Communication Systems were sought out as potential participants. Of the participants included from Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Communication Systems, all were involved in community-based research that involved some type of human behavioral element.

Design and Procedures

This study is nonexperimental in nature. Participants were asked to identify the community-affiliated individual that serves as their main contact for the community in their collaborative community-based research endeavor. Participants completed surveys that asked about their perceptions of conversations that have taken place with the community-affiliated individual that they identified as their main contact for the community. All the study materials completed by participants were distributed in a packet that included general instructions concerning how to decide which individual they should refer to in the measures, the order in which to fill out the forms, and where to return the materials after they have completed them. First the participants filled out the Participant and Relationship Information Questionnaire. After filling out the Participant and Relationship Information Questionnaire, half of the participants completed the Self-Rated Competence Scale (SRC) before the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory; the other half will complete the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory before the SRC. Then participants completed the Perceived Homophily Measure (PHM).

Measures

Communication Competence

Participants' perceptions of their own competence will be assessed by the Self-Rated Competence scale (SRC), appendix A, (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1981). The SRC was originally developed to measure episode-specific self perceptions of communication competence. Slight changes were made on the wording on some items and the directions the SRC. These changes were made so that the measure would be applicable to self perceptions of competence that are based on communicative behavior in past conversations instead of a single conversation. Scores for negatively worded items are reversed and all answers are added together to yield a single score. Scores on the SRC range from 27 to 135. High scores indicate higher self perceptions of competence while low scores are indicative of lower self perceptions of competence.

Satisfaction

Conversational satisfaction will be assessed by Hecht's (1978) Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory, appendix C. Changes were made on the wording on some items and the directions so that the measure would be applicable to perceptions of satisfaction of past conversations instead perceptions of satisfaction of a single conversation. Scores for negatively worded items are reversed and all answers are added together to yield a single score. Scores range from 19 to 133. High scores indicate higher perceptions of conversational satisfaction while low scores are indicative of perceptions of low conversational satisfaction.

Perceived Heterophily

Perceived heterophily/homophily will be assessed by the Perceived Homophily Measure (PHM) (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975), appendix B. Participants indicate the degree to which they perceive similarity between self and their conversational partner in social class behavior, and background. Scores for negatively worded items are reversed and all answers are added together to yield a single score. Scores range from 8 to 56. Low scores indicate low homophily (high heterophily) and high scores indicate high homophily (low heterophily).

Length and Type of Relationship

Participants will be given a survey (Participant and Relationship Information, see Appendix F) that asks for information concerning the research project and length and type of the relationship they have with their conversational partner. Length of relationship will serve as a control variable

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Prior to examining the hypothesized relationships, the reliability of the scales used to measure competence, homophily, and conversational satisfaction was assessed. The reliability for perceived self competence¹, $M=4.42$, $SD=.37$, $r^{**}=.82$, and homophily, $M=32.69$, $SD=8.89$, $r^{**}=.79$, was deemed adequate. After examining the inter item correlations for the conversational satisfaction and the face validity of the items, items 3, 11, and 17 were dropped. Items 18 and 19 were dropped due to instrumentation error². The resulting 14 item scale, $M=79.23$, $SD=13.85$, $r^{**}=.91$, exhibited high reliability.

The relationship between perceived self competence and satisfaction was statistically significant, $r=.86$, $p<.01$. The relationship was such that increases in perceived self competence were associated with increases in perceptions of conversational satisfaction.

Insert Table 2. Here

Using hierarchical regression, the relationship between competence and satisfaction, partialing out the impact of the length of the relationship, was examined. The model with length of the relationship as a predictor was statistically significant, $F(1, 11)=5.90$, $p<.05$, $r^2=.35$. The model with length of relationship and self perceived competence as predictors of satisfaction was statistically significant, $F(2, 10)=29.29$,

¹ An average score for competence was calculated for each participant. Average scores were utilized for data analysis because one respondent left one of the competence items blank.

² On the satisfaction instrument, the items that are normally numbered 18 and 19 were combined into one item numbered as 18. The resulting item was double-barreled and therefore uninterpretable.

$p < .07$, $r^2 = .85$. The change in r^2 , $\Delta r^2 = .50$, between the model with relationship length as a predictor and the model with relationship length as predictors was statistically significant, $F(1,10) = 33.67$, $p < .01$. The beta weight for self perceived competence, $b = 28.15$, was statistically significant, $t = 5.87$, $p < .01$. Even when the impact of relationship length was partialled out, increases in self perceived competence were associated with increases in satisfaction. Given the extremely small sample size, effect sizes were not calculated because the estimates would not have been stable and would therefore be meaningless.

The hypothesized interaction between self perceived competence and homophily, was examined by way of regression. The beta weight for the interaction, $b = -1.47$, was not statistically significant, $t = -1.31$, $p = .22$. Given that the interaction is not statistically significant and the sample size is very small, little confidence should be placed in the direction of the interaction.

Insert Table 3. Here

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Because of its extremely small sample size, the usefulness of this preliminary study lies not so much in the findings but in the lessons learned from the process of recruiting participants. The small sample means one should place little confidence in the findings. However, some aspects of the data, specifically the restricted range of self perceived competence, have implications for how competence may be better measured in subsequent studies.

Limitations

The results of the inferential statistical manipulations performed in the preliminary study are unstable due to the small sample size. Regardless of whether the analyses yielded a statistically significant result, none of the reported results can, with any confidence, be interpreted as supporting the proposed hypotheses. The estimations of sampling error, specifically the standard error, are not stable. Use of the standard error as an estimate of sampling error is based on the central limit theorem. However, for the central limit theorem to hold, a minimum number of observations are necessary. Given that the number of observations in the data set were below this minimum number, little confidence can be placed in the stability of the estimates of error utilized in the analyses.

Implications for Recruitment

The problem of low sample size is a direct outcome of the unanticipated difficulty in recruiting participants who met the narrowly defined requirements for prospective participants. There are simply a small number of graduate students participating in

community-based research on the campus of Michigan State University. Among this small group of graduate students involved in community-based research, some have yet to or may never have direct contact with the community in which they conduct research. Also, in my communications with potential participants I discovered that even if a student has communicated with the community in some manner it was not in the context of a long-term (i.e. 3 months or more) collaborative relationship.

The issue of participant recruitment can be alleviated in 3 ways. First, collaborative university-community efforts takes place in contexts other than research. Other university outreach activities that involve collaboration between some agent of the university and a community may be an additional context that could be considered, such as service learning. While there are likely to be some differences in the dynamic of community-university collaborations between the contexts of research and non research oriented outreach, it is possible that the hypothesized relationship among self perceived competence, homophily, and conversational satisfaction is functionally equivalent between the two groups. This is an empirical question that can be addressed in subsequent research. Another way to increase the number of eligible participants is to include university-affiliated individuals other than graduate students. While in some situations graduate students may serve as a primary contact between a research team and the community, in other situations faculty may serve in this capacity. By expanding the criterion for potential participant to include university affiliated individuals involved in university-community collaborative outreach endeavors and contexts beyond research, the number potential participants and the generalizability of any potential findings will

increase drastically. Also, recruiting participants from other universities will further expand the number of eligible participants.

Implications for Methodology

A preexisting measure of self perceived competence was utilized for the purpose of this study. The measure, which was initially intended to assess self perceived competence for a single conversation, was altered so that it could be applicable to perceptions of competence that are the result of multiple conversations over a period of time. While, after altering the items, most of the items were consistent with molar impressions of competence formed over a series of conversation (e.g. “I was a likable person”; “I was respectful”). Other items were still consistent with more molecular notions of competence that are likely to vary from conversation to conversation or may not be remembered over a series of conversations (e.g. “My facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained”). Individuals’ evaluations of competence become increasingly molar over time (Spitzberg, 1984). It is likely that over several months of interaction, individuals involved in long term collaborative relationships have perceptions of competence that are not fully captured by more molecular items in the scale. Subsequent investigations of the posited relationships put forth in this paper should attempt to construct a measure of competence that more closely taps into the perceptions of competence that are formed over a series of conversations.

For this study, only self perceived competence was measured. While self perceived competence ratings tend to be inflated, they are usually highly correlated with other rated competence (Spitzberg, 1984). For this study, average competence scores could range from 1 to 5 and the mean score was 4.42. While it is likely that participants

provided inflated ratings of self perceived competence, the range of competence ratings was extremely limited, range=1.11. Given the possibly inflated competence scores and restricted range, future investigation of these hypotheses should solicit competence evaluations from both parties of the dyad. Perceptions of others' competence are likely to yield a less biased, more informative set of responses.

Conclusion

While this study provides very little insight on the hypotheses, the lessons learned in the process of conducting this preliminary study provides valuable insights on how to better measure communication competence in the context of long term collaborative relationships. Also, logistical barriers that were not apparent at the outset of the study require an expansion of the potential participant criterion. Beyond increasing the number of potential participants, expanding the focus of the study beyond the context of university-community community based research collaborations may yield more interesting and possibly generalizable findings.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

SELF-RATED COMPETENCE (SRC)

1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	<i>Regarding</i>
2 = MILDLY DISAGREE	<i>YOUR general behavior</i>
3 = UNDECIDED	<i>in past conversations</i>
4 = MILDLY AGREE	<i>with _____</i>
5 = STRONGLY AGREE	<i>(conversational partner)</i>

- _____ 1. I was relaxed and comfortable when speaking.
- _____ 2. I was a likable person.
- _____ 3. I expressed myself clearly.
- _____ 4. I gave positive feedback.
- _____ 5. I was trustworthy.
- _____ 6. I was assertive.
- _____ 7. I was a good listener.
- _____ 8. I was supportive.
- _____ 9. I showed an interest in our conversations.
- _____ 10. I was sarcastic
- _____ 11. I was awkward in our conversations.
- _____ 12. I was socially skilled
- _____ 13. I was confident
- _____ 14. I found it difficult to express my true feelings
- _____ 15. I ignored the other person's feelings.
- _____ 16. I lacked self-confidence.
- _____ 17. I was an effective conversationalist.
- _____ 18. I talked too much about myself.
- _____ 19. I pretended to listen when I actually didn't.
- _____ 20. I was shy.
- _____ 21. I was nervous during our conversations.
- _____ 22. My facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained.
- _____ 23. I was a competent communicator.
- _____ 24. I was respectful.
- _____ 25. I interrupted too much.
- _____ 26. I understood the other person.
- _____ 27. I was sensitive to the needs and feelings of the other person.

APPENDIX B

PERCEIVED HOMOPHILY MEASURE (PHM)

On the scale below, please indicate your feelings about
_____. Circle the number that best represents your
(main community contact)
feelings. Numbers “1” and “7” indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers “2” and “6”
indicate a strong feeling. Numbers “3” and “5” indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number
“4” indicates you are undecided or don’t know. Please work quickly. There are no right
or wrong answers.

- | | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| 1. Doesn't think like me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Thinks like me |
| 2. From social class
similar to mine | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | From social class
different from mine |
| 3. Behaves like me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Doesn't behave like me |
| 4. Economic situation
different from mine | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Economic situation like
mine |
| 5. Similar to me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Different from me |
| 6. Status like mine | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Status different from mine |
| 7. Unlike me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Like me |
| 8. Background different
from mine | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Background similar to mine |

APPENDIX C

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION INVENTORY

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that each statement describes your past conversations with _____. The 4 or middle position on the scale represents “undecided” or “neutral”, then moving out from the center, “slight” agreement or disagreement, then “moderate”, then “strong” agreement or disagreement.

For example, if you strongly agree with the following statement you would circle 1;

The other person moved around a lot.

Agree: 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : Disagree

1. The other person let me know that I was communicating effectively.
2. Nothing was accomplished.
3. I would like to have more conversations like the ones I have with my partner.
4. The other person genuinely wanted to get to know me.
5. I have been very dissatisfied with our conversations.
6. I generally had something else to do.
7. I felt that during our conversations I was able to present myself as I wanted the other person to view me.
8. The other person showed me that he/she understood what I said.
9. I was very satisfied with our conversations.
10. The other person expressed a lot of interest in what I had to say.
11. I did NOT enjoy our conversations.
12. The other person did NOT provide support for what he/she was saying.
13. I felt I could talk about anything with the other person.
14. We each got to say what we wanted.
15. I felt that we could laugh easily together.
16. In general, our conversations flowed smoothly.
17. The other person changed the topic when his/her feelings were brought into our conversations.
18. The other person frequently said things which added little to our conversations.
In general, we talked about things I was NOT interested in.

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT AND RELATIONSHIP
INFORMATION

Research Project _____

What is your role in the research project/collaboration?

Indicate the conversational partner that you have referred to in the previous questionnaires:

How is this person affiliated with the community?

Indicate approximately how long you have been acquainted with this person
(In years and months)

_____ years and _____ months

What relationship category best describes the relationship to the conversational partner you have referred to in the previous questionnaires:

- ☐ acquaintance
- ☐ friend
- ☐ close friend
- ☐ other, please describe

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Figure 1. Model of collaborative relationship maintenance, interpersonal competence, and heterophily.

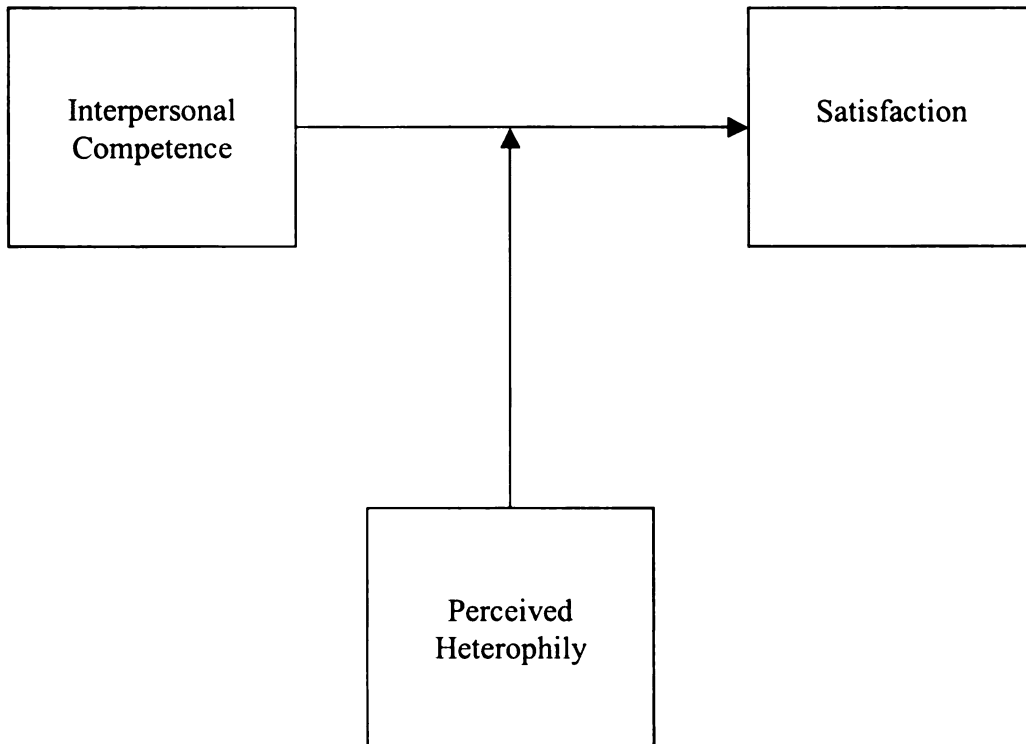


Figure 2. Predicted competence by heterophily interaction

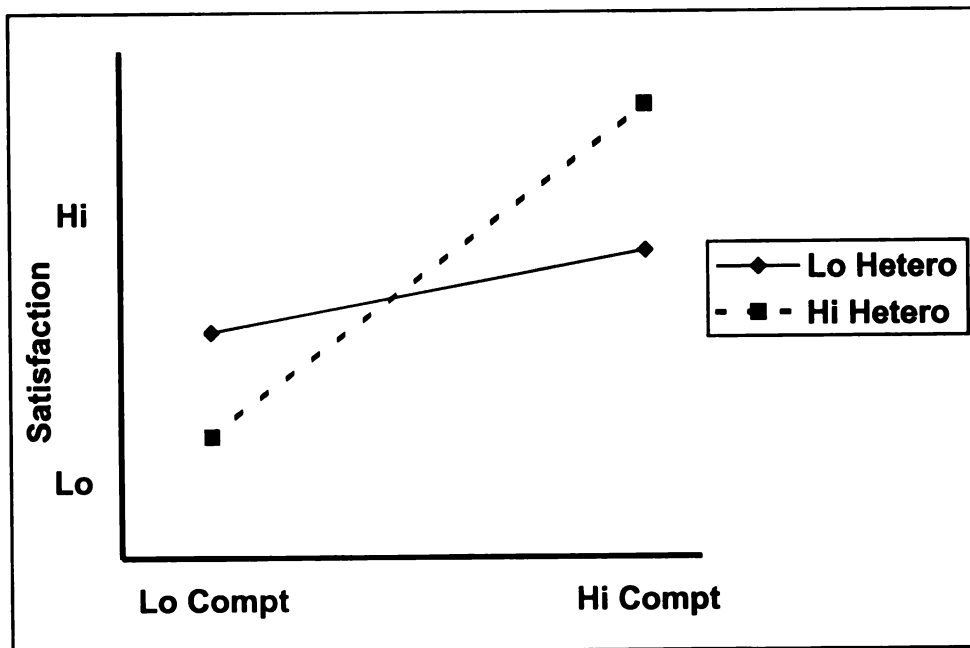


Table 1. Predicted competence by heterophily interaction

	Low Interpersonal Competence	High Interpersonal Competence
Low Heterophily	Moderate conversational satisfaction (less than high competence/low heterophily)	Moderate conversational satisfaction (greater than low competence/low heterophily)
High Heterophily	Lowest conversational satisfaction	Greatest conversational satisfaction

Table 2. Correlations between competence, homophily, length of relationship and satisfaction

Correlations Between Competence, Homophily, Length of Relationship and Satisfaction

	Self Perceived Competence	Homophily	Length of Relationship	Conversational Satisfaction
Self Perceived Competence				
Homophily	.16			
Length of Relationship	.31	.18		
Conversational Satisfaction	.86**	.11	.59*	

*p<.05. **p<.001

Table 3. Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variable predicting satisfaction

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variable Predicting Satisfaction
(N=13)

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Step 1			
Competence	32.53	6.14	.87*
Homophily	-.05	.25	-.03
Step 2			
Competence	75.30	33.13	2.00
Homophily	6.77	5.20	4.35
Comptence X Homophily	-1.47	1.12	-4.70

Note. $R^2 = .86$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .02$ for Step 2, n.s.

* $p < .01$.

