GROWTH AND PRESERVATION-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOUR

Stuart H. Surlin and George Costaris
University of Windsor and Canadian Consulate, Detroit

"Growth-oriented" people are low alienated, low rigid, and internally-controlled. "Preservation-oriented" people exhibit opposite personality characteristics. "Growth-oriented" people are found to be more interpersonally and less entertainment, television-oriented in their communication behaviour.

Les personnes dites "orientées vers leur croissance" sont peu aliéncées, habituellement souples et maîtrisées d'elles-mêmes. Par opposition, les gens "orientés vers leur conservation" font preuve de caractéristiques personnelles inverses. Les premières sont plus enclines à nourrir des contacts plutôt qu'à se soucier de divertissements ou à regarder la télévision de leurs comportement de communication.

Maslow's humanistic theory of self-actualization (1954) is a cognitively-based theory which states that we are purposively attempting to reach our maximum levels of achievement, i.e., be the best that we can be. The question arises as to how one goes about reaching one's greatest potential of self-actualization through communication behaviour.

This study conceptualizes one's self-actualization process as progressing along a continuum with bipolar labels of "growth" and "preservation." For the most part, people tend to align themselves close to one of the two poles. One "approach to life" is usually dominant. At a given point in time, we should be able to measure one's overall alignment, or approach. Communication behaviour is divided into three main categories or contexts: interpersonal, intrapersonal, and mass communication. An attempt will be made to equate one's "growth-preservation" alignment with communication behaviour. Does a "growth-orientation" result in greater use of one communication context, while a "preservation-orientation" results in greater use of another context?
DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS

Each of the three communication contexts each encompass this conceptualization of "communication": the process of transferring symbolic information through the use of significant symbols. Each context defines the setting within which the process of communication is occurring.

"Interpersonal communication" occurs when there is direct communication between two or more people in physical proximity so that all senses can be potentially utilized and immediate feedback is present. Direct face-to-face communication enhances our ability to perceive ourselves and others in a realistic manner. A rules perspective-symbolic interactionist approach suggests that interpersonal communication leads to negotiation so that a common perspective concerning thoughts, feelings and acts can result (Faules and Alexander, 1978; Cushman and Whiting, 1972).

Thus, we live in concert with others, i.e., live as part of a social group. We are able to fulfill social roles and change roles for continued success in social relations. This role adoption and change results in "growth" experiences.

"Intrapersonal communication" is a communication transaction that takes place within the individual. In simple terms, it occurs when we think to ourselves. "Thinking takes place when a communicator initiates a symbol and responds to it in a way that is parallel to the adjustment response anticipated from others" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1982, 122).

Not only do we become an object to ourselves by role-playing the reaction of others to us, but we actively stimulate specific psychoneural imprints in our brain when we think. Thus, there is a biosocial definition to intrapersonal communication. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach describe this biosocial, intrapersonal process as "...the beginning point of the act of human communication. Specifically, dynamic traces operating under selective psychotropic influences of brain bio-chemistry generate a pattern of recorded experience into the awareness of the communicator" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1982, 127). This intrapersonal process could also be described as the end-point of the act of human communication.

"Mass communication" epitomized through our use of the most popular context-television, is defined as symbolic information disseminated through a mediated channel usually needing an organization of people to act as the source, and intended for a large mass of anonymous receivers. The conditions under which these messages are received usually lead to: a lack of immediate feedback, or lacking any responsibility of feedback from the receiver; low physical and/or cognitive involvement; little expenditure of mental energy; little, if any, control over message transmission; a lack of relevance to one's reality
and one's immediate environment; information that is presented in a generally uniform, ritualistic, or predictable manner.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal communication functions to connect one to oneself, to others, and to the immediate environment. This communication is predicated on the assumption that there is a "reality" which can be successfully approximated through one's attempt to "honesty" perceive one's environment. Much "mass communication" behaviour falls into another category.

The context of mass communication contains a supernatural, ritualistic, and non-reality based connection to oneself, others, and the environment (Mitchell, 1977). Throughout history, song, dance (Ellefeldt, 1976), storytelling (Grainger, 1974), sports events (Bryant, et. al., 1977; Prisuta, 1979; Real, 1975), and religious services (Cazeneuve, 1974; Furman, 1981) have earmarked this context of communication. Tankard and Harris (1980) found that nonviewers of television perceive themselves as more religious than viewers of television, but on the other hand are less likely to attend religious services. Modern-day technology has elevated the participation and dissemination of this communication context to a mass, and almost universal, level of participation. Nevertheless, the context and its functional use remain constant irrespective of the technological innovations affecting its structure (Goethals, 1981; Granzberg, 1982; Granzberg, Steinbring, and Homer, 1977).

Within the mass communication context we become observers of ritualistic behaviour. Because the ritual is derived from other people's concepts of needed content, pacing, pattern, etc.; the message is externally produced and presented without self-initiated thought or action. Little, if any, responsibility is placed on the message receiver to respond. Receivers are not encouraged to use physical or mental energy in the interaction, i.e., a generally passive experience. The external nature and control of this context is quite unique from the communication occurring in the other two contexts.

**DEFINITION OF GROWTH-PRESERVATION**

An integral part of the self-actualization process is our ability to alternate between periods of "growth" and "preservation." Growth emerges as the dominant principle of life, as we progress through our various stages of mental, physical, and emotional development. However, there must be periods of retrograde preservation which provide the frame for growth experiences (McGuire, 1974; McLeod, 1967). The communication contexts can be used, in any proportion, to meet one's needs during these periods of life.

Although any combination of communication contexts may exist, there is an hypothesized tendency for particular contexts to be more or less dominant in each of these "preservation-growth" periods. Inter-
personal and intrapersonal contexts are uniquely qualified to lead to "growth" experiences. These experiences assist the individual in personally dealing with, and being affected by, new information, people, places, events, emotion, etc. This has a direct effect on an individual's cognitive and affective system.

Mass communication, especially television the dominant mass medium, is more attuned to "preservation-oriented" experiences. The individual is usually not psychologically involved in an intense manner. Distortions of reality are easily used to shield the individual from difficult real-life experiences. In some instances, one may not realize that more direct (interpersonal and intrapersonal) experiences would probably lead to more effective self-actualization. In needed instances a preservation-orientation, such as vicarious, passive observation of problem solving before action is taken, is conducive to future growth, and eventual self-actualization. However, too many individuals may develop a habitual pattern of "preserving" themselves by enveloping themselves within a mass communication context as a means of alleviating cognitive/affective discomfort. For example, viewers of television have been found to be less happy with life and more socially alienated (Tankard and Harris, 1980).

This hypothesis is proposed as the basis of this study:

H₁: "Growth-oriented" individuals will be more apt to participate in interpersonal/intrapersonal communication contexts; while "preservation-oriented" individuals will be more apt to choose a mass communication context, e.g., television viewing.

METHOD

During September and October 1981, a self-administered questionnaire was completed by one hundred and fifty-one (N=151) adults residing in, or living in close proximity to, Windsor, Ontario. In this judgmental, non-randomized sample selection process, the respondents were personally chosen by an author. This choice was based on personal knowledge of each potential respondent or through recommendations by others. A quota-sample technique was used to elicit responses from an equal number of males and females and from a wide range of occupational status levels.

A random sample of the population was not considered a priority in this initial test of the hypothesis since we are not attempting to generalize communication context choice to the population as a whole. The focus here is to cite between group communication context differences for respondents classified as exhibiting a dominant "growth" or "preservation" orientation. It is assumed that individuals classified as being "growth" or "preservation" oriented will be so classified irrespective of whether they were chosen judgmentally or randomly.
Questionnaires were filled-in at various physical locations, either singularly or two to three respondents at a time. Respondents averaged ten minutes in responding to the complete questionnaire of which this study is a part. An author always remained physically present while each questionnaire was being filled-in.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS

"Growth-preservation" Index

A "preservation-oriented" individual is conceptualized as being in a frame of mind and philosophic approach to life which is defensive and shielding. Preservation of the known, and avoidance of the unknown becomes the principle of life. This person is more likely to be alienated from his or her environment, rigid in this thinking, and of the belief that life is being controlled by external, as opposed to internal, forces. The individual in a "growth-orientation" is seen to be at the other end of these same continua: non-alienated, non-rigid in one's thinking, and determining one's own destiny through self-motivated and controlled actions.

Standardized scales tapping alienation, rigidity, and internal-external locus of control were used to tap these concepts. The alienation scale contains five statements which tap one of five types of alienation: powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, social estrangement, and work estrangement (Seeman, 1959). Each item includes an "agree-disagree" response format, with agreement indicating alienation. Examples of items include: "There is not much I can do about most of the important problems that we face today," and "Things have become so complicated in the world that I really don't understand what is going on." Because a variety of attitudes were being tapped close to two-thirds of the inter-item correlations were not significant at the .05 level. However, each item was significantly correlated with the overall index.

Seven of the highest loading items on Rotter's (1966) internal-external locus of control scale, from twenty-three original items, were used in this study. An individual exhibits internal locus of control when perceiving one's actions, abilities, and characteristics as being the basis for positive rewards during one's life. If luck, chance, fate, someone else or outside forces are perceived to control one's rewards in life then this individual exhibits an external locus of control. The respondent indicates the degree of similarity to one's own point of view for seven pairs of statements. For example, "In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck" (the internal response), or, "Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin" (the external response). Only three of the twenty-one inter-item correlations are not significant at the .05 level. Each item is significantly correlated with the overall index.
Rigidity refers to the need for a stable, orderly, predictable environment. Six of the 89 true-false items developed by Rehfisch (1958) were used to measure "preservative tendencies." Items in this index include: "I don't like things to be uncertain and unpredictable," or, "It bothers me when something unexpected interrupts my daily routine." A "true" response is indicative of rigidity. Only two of the fifteen inter-item correlations were not significant at the alpha level of .05. All items significantly correlated with the overall index.

The three socio-psychological indices are predictably interrelated. High alienated individuals are significantly more externally-oriented and rigid ($r = .47$, $df = 149$, $p = .001$ and $r = .36$, $df = 149$, $p = .001$, respectively). Likewise, highly rigid people exhibit a more externally-oriented locus of control ($r = .19$, $df = 149$, $p = .008$).

The top, middle and bottom third group of scores were generated for each index. Respondents with index scores denoting "low rigidity", "low alienation", and "high internal" were scored as "1" in each instance. Middle index levels were scored as "2" in each instance. Extreme scores at the opposite end of the index ("high rigidity", "high alienation", and "high external") were scored as "3" in each instance. Each person could then be placed on a range of three to nine on the "growth-preservation" index. Individuals scoring "3 or 4" were classified as "growth-oriented"; scores "5, 6, 7" were considered a combination of both orientations; and "8 or 9" scores classified individuals as being "preservation-oriented."

In other words, an individual would have to exhibit extreme directionally-similar scores on at least two of the three scales to be classified as either "growth" or "preservation" oriented. Individuals not exhibiting a clear pattern of responses, or moderate responses on all three scales, were not considered in data analysis.

Three Contexts of Communication

The three communication contexts are operationalized in the following manner:

"Mass Communication" -- "On an average day of an average week, how much time do you spend watching television." An eight-interval response scale ranging from "less than one hour" to "seven or more hours" of viewing on an average day was used as the operational measure of television viewing.

"Interpersonal" -- "On an average day of an average week, how much time do you spend talking to people, face-to-face." Same response scale as "Mass Communication."
"Intrapersonal" -- "On an average day of an average week, how much time do you spend thinking to yourself." Again, the same response scale was used.

Thus, we received a rudimentary measure of the respondents' "average" amount of claimed participation in each of the three contexts. Particularly problematic is the rating of intrapersonal communication. Until better measures are developed self-report methods of tapping intrapersonal communication offer the only alternative. Future research in this area would hopefully involve more detailed measures of each context, and more sophisticated methods of data collection (Bernard and Killworth, 1977).

Television Content Index

Television program content may be effectively classified into communication-oriented contexts. Thus, not only is television a mass communication context of communication, but specific content may be more "in-tune" or consonant with the context within which it appears. Other content may be less consonant with a mass communication-orientation, or more "in-tune" with either an interpersonal/intrapersonal-orientation.

Therefore, two more hypotheses are suggested:

H₂: Growth-oriented viewers will be more apt to view "growth-oriented" television content than will preservation-oriented viewers.

H₃: Preservation-oriented viewers will be more apt to view "preservation-oriented" television content than will growth-oriented viewers.

The television program categories rated include: crime and adventure, movies, situation comedies, sports, soap operas, variety shows, religious shows, national news broadcasts, local news broadcasts, documentaries, and talk shows. Each respondent rated the frequency of viewing each program genre on the scale of "often, sometimes, seldom, never."

The television program categories that seem to be the most intellectually and personally involving, in at least, an intrapersonal manner are: national news broadcasts, local news broadcasts, and documentaries. Because of this contextual-orientation the grouped responses to these program categories are labelled "growth-oriented" programs. The viewing of these programs is believed to consistently invoke more complex, and greater amounts of, mental energy and information-processing than when viewing programs of other content.

The overall range for the "growth-oriented program" index is three to twelve. The top, middle, and lowest third of respondent scores were
used as the categories for analysis. The low viewers of news and documentaries scored 3 - 8 on the index and are placed in the "low growth-oriented viewing" group. Respondents scoring 9 and 10 are placed in the "moderate" group. Respondents scoring 11 and 12 are heavy viewers of news and documentaries and are placed in the "high growth-oriented viewing" group.

Similarly, viewing scores for the program categories crime and adventure, movies, situation comedies, sports, soap operas, and religious shows, were summed. These scores comprise the "preservation-oriented" program viewing index. These programs are conceptualized as being least likely to stimulate inter- and intrapersonal experiences, while exhibiting the most dominant characteristics of a mass communication experience. The overall range for this index is six to twenty-four. This range is larger than the "growth-oriented" index because more programs are included in the development of this index.

Using the same trichotomizing procedure as above, respondents scoring between 6 to 14 on the index are low viewers of these programs and are classified as "low preservation-oriented viewers." Respondents scoring 15 to 16 are "moderate preservation-oriented viewers"; and, respondents scoring between 17 and 24 are "high preservation-oriented viewers."

RESULTS

Results reported in Table One reveal that growth-oriented individuals are significantly more apt to claim interpersonal communication participation than preservation-oriented individuals ($X^2 = 7.85$, df = 2, $p = .02$). Close to half of the "growth-oriented" respondents spend six or more hours in the interpersonal context of communication while a little over half of the "preservation-oriented" respondents spend only three hours or less in this context. These results lend support to the first half of the primary hypothesis which states that "growth-oriented" individuals will be more apt to participate in interpersonal communication contexts.

Participation in intrapersonal communication does not statistically differ between "growth- and preservation-oriented" respondents. Overall, 27% of the respondents are in an interpersonal context "four or more hours" a day; 28% for two to four hours; and, 45% for two or less hours. Thus, the part of the first hypothesis which states that "growth-oriented" individuals will be more apt to participate in an intrapersonal communication context is not supported.

Results relating to the second half of the first hypothesis indicate that "preservation-oriented" individuals are significantly more apt to view television ($X^2 = 11.81$, df = 2, $p = .005$). This clearly supports this portion of the hypothesis. (See Table Two). Over half of the "preservation-oriented" respondents watch "three or more hours" of television per day, while 60% of the "growth-oriented" respondents watch "two hours or less" per day.
When isolating the degree to which "growth-oriented television content" is viewed, no significant differences are noted. (See Table Three). Growth-oriented respondents were more likely to view "growth-oriented" television content as predicted; however, the results are not strong enough to support the second hypothesis.

Conversely, results clearly indicate that "preservation-oriented" individuals are significantly more apt to view "preservation-oriented" television content ($X^2 = 8.50$, $df = 2$, $p = .02$). Close to half of the "growth oriented" respondents are in the lowest category of viewing,

| TABLE ONE |
| Interpersonal Communication Crosstabulated with Growth-Preservation Index |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Communication (per day)</th>
<th>Growth-Preservation Index (Column Percent)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 + hours (6+ hours)</td>
<td>16 (43%)</td>
<td>10 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 6 hours (3 to 6 hours)</td>
<td>13 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 hours or less (3 hours or less)</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>17 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37 (54%)</td>
<td>32 (46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($X^2 = 7.85$, $df = 2$, $p = .02$)
TABLE TWO

Television Viewing Crosstabulated with Growth/Preservation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Television Viewing (per day)</th>
<th>Growth/Preservation Index (Column Percent)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 + hours</td>
<td>(27%)</td>
<td>(53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13%)</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or less</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(54%)</td>
<td>(46%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( (X^2 = 11.81, df = 2, p = .005) \)
TABLE THREE

Growth-Oriented Television Content Viewed Crosstabulated with Growth/Preservation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth-oriented Television Content Viewed</th>
<th>Growth/Preservation Index (Column Percent)</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Preservation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>17 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
<td>16 (50%)</td>
<td>28 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15 (41%)</td>
<td>9 (28%)</td>
<td>24 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37 (54%)</td>
<td>32 (46%)</td>
<td>N = 69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( (X^2 = 2.24, \text{ df } = 2, \text{ n.s.} ) \)
### TABLE FOUR

Preservation-Oriented Television Content Viewed Crosstabulated with Growth/Preservation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservation-Oriented Television Content Viewed</th>
<th>Growth/Preservation Index (Column Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>18 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 8.50, \text{df} = 2, p = .02 \]

\[ N = 69 \]
in this category. On the other hand, half of the "preservation-oriented" respondents are in the highest viewing category (See Table Four). This result clearly supports the third hypothesis.

Correlation analysis indicates an affinity between interpersonal and intrapersonal communication ($r = .19$, $df = 149$, $p = .01$). This relationship is indicative of the theoretic linkage made between interpersonal and intrapersonal communication behaviour. On the other hand, interpersonal communication is negatively correlated with television viewing (mass communication) ($r = -.14$, $df = 149$, $p = .04$). This again is indicative of the theoretic differences existing between television viewing and interpersonal communication. Television viewing is neither positively nor negatively correlated with intrapersonal communication behaviour.

**DISCUSSION**

"Growth-oriented" individuals are more apt to enter into an interpersonal communication context, less apt to view television, and, when viewing, less apt to watch "preservation-oriented" (mass entertainment) content than "preservation-oriented" individuals. Increased interpersonal activity also entails greater usage of the intrapersonal context. These contexts are coordinated for achieving self-actualization.

Interpersonal communication is seemingly used to achieve "growth-oriented" goals. The "preservation-oriented" individual chooses television viewing to a greater degree and may be overly dependent on this context to achieve goals that in the long run may not be effectively attained, thus, reinforcing the preservation-orientation beyond the point where it may serve a useful purpose.

Daily intrapersonal activity is not differentiated by one's "growth-preservation" orientation. Perhaps we all have fairly similar requirements for intrapersonal communication and it is the quality and not the quantity of intrapersonal behaviour that truly differentiates people. Or, perhaps asking people to gauge their intrapersonal behaviour is too difficult a task, therefore, equally proportioned "guesses" are made by people in all subgroups.

Although "preservation-oriented" individuals are more exposed to "preservation" content within a "preservation" context, they may be aware of their behaviour but unable to change. They may not know how to inhibit their television viewing activity and enhance their interpersonal/intrapersonal activities. On the other hand, they may not be aware of their communication patterns, or they may be aware and not willing to change. Future research should delve into this area.

Research needs to further clarify the "rules" used to select communication contexts, especially mass communication usage "rules" (Lull, 1982). What are the physical situations, personality and demographic characteristics, and social pressures which affect communica-
tion context choice? Likewise, what are the immediate and long-term implications or effects of communication context choices? Does continued mass communication exposure lead to a "preservation-oriented" personality profile, or is the exposure a result of personality differences? How can the "rules" be changed, and what are the results occurring from rule changes? Also, what proportion of the population is "growth" or "preservation" oriented? How often, and under what conditions, do each of us move from one orientation to another? On the other hand, is there a middle-orientation which better serves our long-term needs for self-actualization? Much needs to be done to further explicate theoretic notions in this area of thought.

There are several methodological issues on which this study can be criticized. A larger respondent group could have been surveyed, and they could have been randomly selected. A more direct method of measuring one's participation in each communication context could have been used. Also, a single item measure of each communication context may have led to unreliable results. Future studies should rectify these methodological shortcomings.

Irrespective of these limitations the results are clear. There is a link between the conceptualized classification of people into a "growth" or "preservation" mode of existence, and the use of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and television viewing (mass communication) contexts.

FOOTNOTE

1An earlier version of this article was presented to the Canadian Communication Association Conference, 1982. It is based, in part, on Mr. Costaris' Masters Thesis conducted under the supervision of Dr. Surlin.

REFERENCES


Stuart H. Surlin (Ph.D., 1974, Michigan State University) is Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor. His research interests include communication theory development, value system analysis of audiences and of content in domestic and cross-cultural media.

George Costaris (M.A., 1982, University of Windsor) is Public Affairs Officer, Canadian Consulate, Detroit, Michigan. His research interests are in coverage of Canadian affairs in United States media and communication theory development.