# Communicator Style Measure

Norton (1978) conceptualized communicator style as "the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood" (p. 99). The Communicator Style Measure (CSM) consists of nine independent variables (Dominant, Dramatic, Contentious, Animated, Impression Leaving, Relaxed, Attentive, Open, and Friendly) and one dependent variable (Communicator Image). The independent variables are descriptive of one's style; the dependent variable is the evaluative consequence of the independent variables.

Dominant reflects a tendency to take charge in social situations. Dramatic refers to communicating in a way that highlights or understates content. Contentious represents communicating in a negative combative fashion. Animated refers to "physical, nonverbal cues" (Norton, 1978, p. 100). Impression Leaving defines a person who manifests a visible or memorable style of communicating. Relaxed refers to an absence of tension or anxiety. Attentive involves making sure others know that they are being listened to. Open is "being conversational, expansive, affable, convivial, gregarious, unreserved, unsecretive, somewhat frank, possibly outspoken, definitely extroverted, and obviously approachable" (Norton, 1978, p. 101). Friendly "ranges in meaning from being unhostile to deep intimacy" (Norton, 1978, p. 101). Precise refers to accuracy and correctness. Communicator Image, the dependent variable, refers to whether someone is a "good communicator."

The underlying clusters, dimensions, and predictors of the communicator style construct were investigated in a series of studies. Rather than employ traditional data reduction techniques such as factor analysis, Norton (1978) chose to employ smallest space analysis, which produced two continua. The first continuum was anchored by attentive and friendly (nondirective communication) at one end and by dominant and contentious (directive communicative) at the other end. The second was "anchored by communicative activity, dramatic and animated . . . at one end, and by communicative activity, relaxed" at the other (p. 109). Results of multiple regression analysis revealed that three variables (Animated, Contentious, and Dramatic) failed to predict communicator image. The remaining six vari-

*Profile by Elizabeth E. Graham.*

ables accounted for 53% of the total variance in communicator image. However, Dominant was the best predictor, accounting for over 30% of the variance by itself.

Participants are requested to assess their own communicator style by responding to 51 items using Likert scales that range from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4). The CSM-51 requires less than 10 minutes to complete. Initially, 102 Likert items comprise the CSM; however, through refinement Norton reduced the number of items in the measure to 51. An even shorter version of the CSM was proposed by Montgomery and Norton (1981). This version uses a four-sentence description of each variable and a 6-point scale for rating each style variable. Although Norton intended the CSM to be a self-report measure, other formats have also been successfully employed (Duran & Zakahi, 1987; Rubin & Feezel, 1986).

## RELIABILITY

Norton (1978) reported the following internal reliabilities for the CSM variables: Friendly, .37; Animated, .56; Attentive, .57; Contentious, .65; Dramatic, .68; Impression Leaving, .69; Open, .69; Relaxed, .71; Communicator Image, .72; and Dominant, .82. Various researchers have reported similar results (Duran & Zakahi, 1984, 1987; Hailey, Daly, & Hailey, 1984; Lamude & Daniels, 1984). In order to boost the reliability to .70, Norton suggested adding 15 parallel items to the friendly construct. The reliabilities of the animated and attentive subscales may also be improved by adding like items to the subscale. These items are available from Norton.

## VALIDITY

Norton (1978) provided evidence of content validity by specifying the domain of the communicator-style construct. As much as this is a difficult task with any construct, "the problem is aggravated since there is no established domain of communicator style similar to such heavily validated constructs as attraction, credibility, or empathy" (Norton, 1983, p. 57).

Various studies support the construct validity of the CSM. Communicator style has been positively associated with a host of communication behaviors and perceptions such as attractiveness (Brandt, 1979; Norton & Pettegrew, 1979), communication apprehension (Porter, 1982), communication competence (Eadie & Paulson, 1984), and relationship disengagement strategies (Hailey et al., 1984).

Criterion-related validity was provided by Duran and Zakahi (1987), who report that the CSM significantly discriminates between satisfied and

dissatisfied groups. Also, Tardy, Childs, and Hampton (1985) reported that Type A persons are more dominant, contentious, precise, animated, and dramatic communicators than are Type B personalities. And O'Hair, Cody, Goss, and Krayer (1988) concluded that a person's honesty could be predicted from communicator-style components of friendliness, attentiveness, and preciseness.

The CSM has been employed in a variety of contexts. For example, Buller and Buller (1987) and Buller and Street (1991) found that physicians' communicator style has an effect on patient satisfaction. Infante and Gorden (1989) reported that superiors were most satisfied with subordinates who expressed an affirming (friendly, relaxed, and attentive) communicator style. In the instructional environment, teachers' communicator style was positively associated with student learning (Nussbaum & Scott, 1979) as well as ratings of teaching effectiveness (Norton, 1983; Scott & Nussbaum, 1981).

There appears to be an interaction between style and gender. Montgomery and Norton (1981) indicated that men see themselves as more precise than women, whereas women see themselves as more animated than men. Various other researchers reported few differences in the self-reports of men and women (Gudykunst & Lim, 1985; Lamude & Daniels, 1984; Staley & Cohen, 1988).


## COMMENTS

The CSM has generated considerable research in the communication discipline as well as in related fields. However, there are some conceptual and methodological issues that have arisen since the introduction of the CSM. For example, Ganster, Petelle, Baker, Dallinger, and Backus (1981) reported a number of problems with the CSM including low nonuniform reliabilities for some of the subscales and multicollinearity among subscales. Most problematic is the failure to specify a nomological network for the style construct. In addition, Sypher (1980) questioned the validity of the CSM, as representative of self-report measures of behavior, noting that the CSM is memory based and therefore not a true indicator of actual behavior. Sypher called this problem "illusory correlation" because "our measures may be tapping semantic similarity rather than actual communication behavior" (p. 84). Furthermore, Sallinen-Kuparinen (1992) noted that the CSM needs to be more sensitive to how different cultures enact communicator style. Although the CSM has great heuristic value (as evidenced by its frequent use), the arguments waged against this measure have some substance. Future research should continue to investigate the reliability and the validity of the measure.

## LOCATION

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# Communicator Style Measure*

*Instructions:* You have impressions of yourself as a communicator. The impressions include your sense of the way you communicate. This measure focuses upon your sensitivity to the way you communicate, or what is called your communicator style. The questions are not designed to look at *what* is communicated; rather, they explore the way you communicate.

Because there is no such thing as a "correct" style of communication, none of the following items has a right or wrong answer. Please do not spend too much time on the items. Let your first inclination be your guide. Try to answer as honestly as possible. All responses will be strictly confidential.

Some questions will be difficult to answer because you honestly do not know. For these questions, however, please try to determine *which way you are leaning* and answer in the appropriate direction.

The following scale is used for each item:

YES! = strong agreement with the statement
yes  = agreement with the statement
?    = neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement
no   = disagreement with the statement
NO!  = strong disagreement with the statement

For example, if you agree with the following statement, "I dislike the cold-ness of winter," then you would circle the "yes" as indicated:

<div align="center">NO!    no    ?    yes    YES!</div>

[Editors' note: The above scale appears to the right of each item, as shown in Item 1.]

Some of the items will be similarly stated. But each item has a slightly different orientation. Try to answer each question as though it were the *only* question being asked. Finally, answer each item as it relates to a *general face-to-face* communication situation—namely, the type of communicator you are most often.

Thank you for helping out.

1.  I am comfortable with all varieties of people.      NO! no ? yes YES!
2.  I laugh easily.
3.  I readily express admiration for others.
4.  *What* I say *usually* leaves an impression on people.
5.  I leave people with an impression of me which they definitely tend to remember.
6.  To be friendly, I habitually acknowledge verbally other's contributions.
7.  I am a *very* good communicator.
8.  I have some nervous mannerisms in my speech.
9.  I am a very relaxed communicator.
10.  When I disagree with somebody I am very quick to challenge them.
11.  I can always repeat back to a person *exactly* what was meant.
12.  The sound of my voice is *very easy* to recognize.
13.  I am a very precise communicator.
14.  I leave a *definite* impression on people.
15.  The rhythm or flow of my speech is sometimes affected by my ner-vousness.
16.  Under pressure I come across as a relaxed speaker.
17.  My eyes reflect *exactly* what I am feeling when I communicate.
18.  I dramatize a lot.
19.  I always find it *very easy* to communicate on a one-to-one basis with strangers.
20.  Usually, I *deliberately react* in such a way that people *know* that I am listening to them.
21.  Usually I do not tell people much about myself until I get to know them well.
22.  *Regularly* I tell jokes, anecdotes and stories when I communicate.
23.  I tend to *constantly* gesture when I communicate.
24.  I am an *extremely* open communicator.
25.  I am vocally a loud communicator.

26. In a small group of strangers I am a *very good* communicator.
27. In arguments I insist upon very precise definitions.
28. In most social situations I generally speak very frequently.
29. I find it extremely easy to maintain a conversation with a member of the opposite sex *whom I have just met*.
30. I like to be strictly accurate when I communicate.
31. Because I have a loud voice I can easily break into a conversation.
32. *Often* I physically and vocally act out what I want to communicate.
33. I have an assertive voice.
34. I readily reveal personal things about myself.
35. I am dominant in social situations.
36. I am very argumentative.
37. Once I get wound up in a heated discussion I have a hard time stopping myself.
38. I am always an *extremely* friendly communicator.
39. I really *like* to listen *very carefully* to people.
40. Very often I insist that other people document or present some kind of proof for what they are arguing.
41. I try to take charge of things when I am with people.
42. It bothers me to drop an argument that is not resolved.
43. In most social situations I tend to come on strong.
44. I am very expressive nonverbally in social situations.
45. The *way* I say something *usually* leaves an impression on people.
46. Whenever I communicate, I tend to be very encouraging to people.
47. I actively use *a lot* of facial expressions when I communicate.
48. I *very frequently* verbally exaggerate to emphasize a point.
49. I am an *extremely attentive* communicator.
50. As a rule, I openly express my feelings and emotions.

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51. Out of a random group of six people, including myself, I would probably have a better communicator style than (circle one choice):

| 5 of them | 4 of them | 3 of them | 2 of them | 1 of them | None of them |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|

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*Note.* Only 45 items are scored. Ten subconstructs with four items per subconstruct can be treated as independent variables. One subconstruct, communicator image, can be treated as a dependent variable. Items 1, 2, 12, 25, 31, and 33 are filler items and should be ignored.

It is advisable, although not necessary, to convert all scores for the respective items to z scores and then average them for the subconstruct.

Use the following weights for the responses: YES! = 5; yes = 4; ? = 3; no = 2; NO! = 1. Reverse-coding for items indicated by $R$.
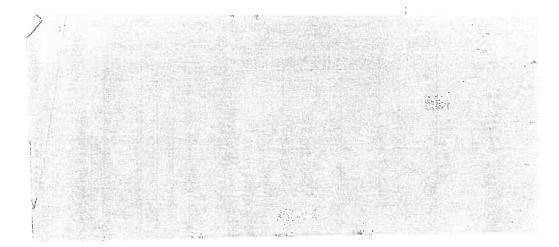
| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Friendly | 3 | 6 | 38 | 46 |
| Impression Leaving | 4 | 5 | 14 | 45 |
| Relaxed | 8R | 9 | 15R | 16 |
| Contentious/Argumentative | 10 | 36 | 37 | 42 |
| Attentive | 11 | 20 | 39 | 49 |
| Precise | 13 | 27 | 30 | 40 |
| Animated/Expressive | 17 | 23 | 44 | 47 |
| Dramatic | 18 | 22 | 32 | 48 |
| Open | 21R | 24 | 34 | 50 |
| Dominant | 28 | 35 | 41 | 43 |
| Communicator Image | 7 | 19 | 26 | 29 | 51 |

# Communication
# Research Measures
## A SOURCEBOOK

*Editors*

**Rebecca B. Rubin**
**Philip Palmgreen**
**Howard E. Sypher**

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