



Individual Differences or Social Pragmatics?

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The "constructivist paradigm" in communication has inspired nearly 500 conference papers, dissertations, and publications. Although some early concepts, like the listener-adapted model of message construction, have been discarded, constructivist research has maintained a thorough commitment to a developmental logic. More specifically, constructivist researchers have focused on explicating the developmental differences in interpretive and communication practices that are in line with Werner's (1957) Orthogenetic Principle that: "Whenever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation and hierarchic integration" (p. 126).

Constructivist researchers have characterized their approach to communication development as one that "emphasizes the reciprocal creation of meaning in communication as a joint product of a socially shared code for the expression of thought and the individual interpretive processes involved in the interpretation and control of language and social contexts within sociocultural and situationally emergent constraints" (Delia & O'Keefe, 1979, p. 181). Operationally, however, constructivism has operated as an individual differences paradigm. Constructivist research has demonstrated that people differ in the degree to which they develop complexity in social cognition and communication practices, but the presence of significant differences in social cognitive and communication development raises the question of why individual differences in development persist in adulthood. If person-centered communication and perception (PCCP) practices are advantageous, why doesn't everyone develop them? The very concept of development implies that these differences offer functional advantages.

One could hypothesize that PCCP differences are rooted in innate individual differences in ability or capacity (e.g., some people have fast reflexes and other people have slow reflexes). However, constructivist researchers have held that PCCP development is driven by experience and not by biology. Development is held to be domain specific and not general (Burlison, 1987). For instance, if a person exhibits interpersonal cognitive complexity, it does not follow that the person will also exhibit complexity in construing books or cars (Burlison, Applegate & Neuwirth, 1981).

We still face the question of what drives PCCP development. If these developmental differences among adults offer advantages, why doesn't everyone master them if they do not reflect innate biological differences? One possibility is that these developmental differences are much more advantageous to some people than others depending on the kinds of social environments they face. In some social environments, person-centered communication and perception (PCCP) may offer decisive benefits, but in other social environments, they may offer marginal benefits or even be counterproductive. We argue that the developmental differences in social cognition and communication practice, so pervasively documented by constructivist researchers, are not *merely individual developmental differences*, but reflect fundamentally

different *social practices* or pragmatics in how people enact social life.

Specifically, we argue that constructivist researchers have tapped into qualitatively different social pragmatics. Kenneth Gergen (1985) observed that, "Forms of discourse emerge, for one, as a response to certain practical problems encountered in human relationships" (p. 117). Across history and culture, "differing vocabularies and grammars may be required to solve various problems of human community" (p. 117). We consider a social pragmatic to be a broad mode of adaptation to one's social environment that constitutes a way of enacting social life. A social pragmatic is a set of social practices that incorporates preferred types of selves, relationships, communication values, communication practices, and implicit theories of persons and social structure. The prevailing social pragmatic in one's social world constitutes the background against which social cognitive and communication development occurs. In short, the more complex the social pragmatic that one encounters in one's primary social environments, the more likely it is that the individual will develop complex social cognitive and communication practices that help her accommodate to and master that social pragmatic.

The Case for Multiple Social Pragmatics

This section of the paper summarizes the case for positing the existence of qualitatively different social pragmatics. Our first argument is that the PCCP differences are comprehensive enough and deep enough to constitute qualitatively different approaches to enacting social life. Our second argument is that most people prefer to be matched with others close to their own skill levels, rather than to be associated with persons who are most advanced in their perception and communication skills. This suggests that people prefer to communicate with people who share their communication practices (a shared pragmatic), rather than to communicate with the people who are most skilled at person-centered communication. Our final argument in favor of the social pragmatic perspective is that institutional contexts differ in the degree to which they "select" for person-centered communication development. Some institutional contexts, in fact, may select against the PCCP complex or social pragmatic.

The Person-Centered Communication and Perception Complex

The correlations between social cognitive development and indices of person-centered communication are sufficiently broad and robust to infer that they capture qualitatively different modes of adaptation to the social world. Constructivist research has repeatedly demonstrated that complex social cognitive structures (interpersonal cognitive complexity) are positively associated with person-centered communication indices across a variety of communication functions (e.g., persuasive tasks, regulative tasks, referential tasks, and communication tasks). Moreover, person-centered message design is highly correlated both within and across these functional domains. In addition, person-centered perception and message design is also associated with skills and facilitating values that one would expect in a coherent social pragmatic. Constructivist research has been criticized for identifying bivariate correlations without specifying underlying processes between cognition and message design (e.g., Gastil, 1995). However, this strategy has established that the PCCP complex is very broad in its scope. This strongly suggests that researchers have tapped into systematic differences in the ways that people approach sociality. Person-centered communication is less about individual differences than it is about different ways of doing social life.

Early constructivist research investigated how persuasive skills develop in childhood and early adolescence. An early study by Clark and Delia (1976) served as a heuristic prototype for later studies. The study also had respondents construct persuasive messages in response to hypothetical situations. Respondents also were asked to explain what they were thinking and doing with their messages. The sample messages and message rationales were then coded using hierarchical rationales for the degree to which they were considered to reflect "listener adaptation." Clark and Delia (1976) found that older children used more persuasive strategies, used a greater variety of persuasive strategies, and used higher level listener-adaptation in their message strategies.

This study served as a prototype for later studies, not only of persuasion, but also for other contexts and functional communication tasks. The "listener-adapted" feature of the coding systems rationale was soon discarded and replaced with the concept of "person-centered communication." "Listener-adaptation" presumed an untenable model of message design, (O'Keefe & Delia, 1982). However, the developmental

logic and hierarchical message coding schemes employed in this study became a standard feature of constructivist inquiry. Researchers figured out what would count as person-centered communication in a given context and adapted hierarchically ordered coding systems to tap message variation in that particular context. Researchers then typically sought to determine how the variation of messages along these dimensions could be related to age (in the case of children) and interpersonal construct development (typically indexed by the Role Category Questionnaire, RCQ).

In 25 years of subsequent research, the RCQ derived measure of cognitive differentiation was shown to account for about 20% of the variation in listener adaptation level or "person-centeredness of the persuasive strategy" (Applegate, 1982; Applegate, Coyle, Seibert, & Church, 1989; Clark & Delia, 1977; Delia & Clark, 1977; Delia, Kline, & Burleson, 1979; O'Keefe & Delia 1979; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987; O'Keefe, et al, 1989; Reardon, 1982; Ritter, 1979; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1989; Sypher, Witt, & Sypher, 1986; Woods, 1996). Cognitive differentiation also was positively correlated with message rationales that exhibit an awareness of the multiple contingencies involved in persuasive tasks (Applegate, Coyle, Seibert, & Church, 1989; Burke & Clark, 1982; Burleson, 1982; Delia, Kline, & Burleson, 1979).

The early focus on persuasive tasks was soon expanded to examine other functional communication tasks in a variety of populations and contexts. Studies have investigated the relationships between construct differentiation and hierarchical codings of the person-centeredness of communication in: 1) informational interviews (Kline & Ceropski, 1984); 2) regulative tasks (Applegate & Delia, 1980); 3) comforting tasks (Burleson, 1983); 4) descriptive or referential tasks (Hale, 1980, 1982); 5) accounting for conversational deviation (Reardon, 1982); 6) refusing requests (Kline & Floyd, 1990); and 7) willingness to provide face support to targets in both regulative and persuasive situations (Applegate & Woods, 1991; Kline, 1984; Leichy & Applegate, 1991).

The concept of "person-centered communication" originated in Basil Bernstein's (1974) constructs of the restricted code and the elaborated code. The restricted code was characterized as "position-centered" in the way it constructed the listener, whereas the elaborated code was more person-centered in treating the addressee as an autonomous individual. Applegate and Delia (1980) noted that person-centered communication consisted of two related but distinct capabilities: 1) the ability to construct messages that convey all that is necessary for an anonymous listener who lacks special background knowledge and 2) the ability to adapt messages strategically to particular listeners' feelings and perspectives.

Several studies of referential communication have shown that cognitive complexity is related to one's ability to provide explicit knowledge to an anonymous listener. Hale (1980, 1982) found that highly differentiated persons were able to convey information more effectively in an experimental assembly task. This superior performance was apparently related to how they provided and sought information during the experimental task. Hale (1980) reported that complex subjects offered more orientation statements and engaged in more confirmation seeking (i.e., active listening).

A number of investigations also examined the relations between construct differentiation and person-centered communication in regulative situations (i.e., regulating a target person's behavior). In a regulative context, a person-centered message appeals to the listener's values and reasoning processes to generate cognitive and moral acceptance of the proposal, not mere compliance (Kelman, 1958). In these investigations, interpersonal cognitive differentiation accounted for 10 to 20% of the variation in the regulative message's level of person-centeredness (Applegate, 1980a, 1980b; Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991; Applegate et al., 1985; Applegate et al., 1992; Hale, 1986; Kline, 1991; Kline, 1988; Kline & Ceropski, 1984; Ritter, 1979). Several studies of regulative communication employing "Reprid" derived measures of construct abstractness (an alternate measure of cognitive complexity) have found that this measure accounts for approximately 25% of the variance in person-centered communication (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate et al., 1985; Kline & Ceropski, 1984), as well as about 20% of a person's awareness of relationship and mutual identity goals in message rationales.

Constructivist researchers also investigated the "person-centered" features of comforting communication: messages designed to alleviate another person's emotional distress (Applegate, 1980a, 1980b; Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991; Applegate et al., 1985; Burleson, 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1984; Samter & Burleson; 1984; Kline & Ceropski, 1984; Kline, Pelias & Delia, 1991; Winters & Waltman, 1997; Zimmermann & Applegate, 1992). Although several studies found nonsignificant relationships

between cognitive differentiation and person-centered comforting (e.g., Applegate et al., 1985; Zimmermann & Applegate, 1992), interpersonal cognitive differentiation typically accounted for about 20% of the variance in person-centered comforting. Other studies utilizing the Reptest measure of abstractness found that construct abstractness accounted for about one-third of the variance in person-centered communication and 20% of the variance in rationales (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate et al., 1985; Burleson, 1983, 1984).

A fourth line of constructivist work has inquired as to whether there are individual differences in the extent to which people use politeness strategies in meeting the face needs of addressees (Applegate & Woods, 1991; Coyle, Seibert, & Applegate, 1988; Kline, 1984; Leichthy & Applegate, 1991; Willihnganz, 1987). Several investigations have shown moderate correlations between construct differentiation and the use of positive and negative face strategies (Applegate & Woods, 1991; Kline, 1984), but some significant situation by differentiation interactions were also identified (Coyle, Seibert, & Applegate, 1988; Kline, 1984; Leichthy & Applegate, 1991; Willihnganz, 1987).

Constructivist researchers consistently found positive correlations between cognitive differentiation and the number of discrete message strategies elicited on communication tasks, in a variety of functional domains. Construct differentiation typically accounted for: 1) about 30% of the variance in the number of persuasive strategies elicited (Applegate, 1982; Delia & Clark, 1977; O'Keefe & Delia, 1979; Sypher, Witt, & Sypher, 1986; Sypher & Zorn, 1986); 2) about 20% of the number of regulative strategies (Kline, 1984, 1988); and 3) more than 10% of the variation in the number of request refusal strategies (Kline & Floyd, 1990).

Constructivist studies also indicated a substantial relationship between the quantity of arguments generated and argument quality. The number of message strategies a person generates typically shares about 25% of the variance with the highest level persuasive strategy recorded (Applegate, 1982; O'Keefe & Delia, 1979; Kline & Floyd, 1990; Sypher, Witt, & Sypher, 1986). Related research (Kline, 1988) showed that people who make more arguments also conceive of a problem situation in a more complex manner and propose solutions that address the concerns of both message encoder and message target. Cognitive differentiation and construct abstractness have also correlated positively with the sensitivity of the message rationales in persuasive tasks (Applegate et al., 1989; Burke & Clark, 1982), regulative tasks (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991), comforting tasks (Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991; Burleson, 1982), and request refusals (Kline & Floyd, 1990). As in some of the other areas, construct system development indices typically account for around 20% of the variation in rationale quality. In parallel, message rationales and message quality codings typically share about 50% of the variance (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991; Applegate et al., 1989; Kline & Floyd, 1990).

Burleson, Delia, and Applegate (1995) argued that there is considerable intraindividual consistency in the degree to which people construct "person-centered" messages across communication tasks. For instance, Applegate et al. (1985) found high internal consistencies across five regulative messages ($\alpha=.90$). In addition, when a person encodes high level person-centered regulative strategies, s/he also tends to encode high level comforting strategies with the correlations ranging from .47-.82 (Applegate, 1980; Applegate et al., 1985; Applegate, Kline, & Delia, 1991). These studies may overstate the degree of consistency because the response tasks utilized in most constructivist research share a common feature of situational complexity (O'Keefe, 1988). Communication in real world contexts will likely demonstrate that person-centered message features are utilized in varied and contextually appropriate ways (e.g., Wilson, Whipple, & Grau, 1996). However, the strong and consistent correlations among message indices are an important but relatively unappreciated finding of constructivist research.

Person-centered communication and perception should also be connected with better nonverbal decoding skills as processing such feedback is an important component of accurate perspective-taking and impression formation. Although there are a limited number of investigations in this area, several studies confirm this connection (Denton, 1990; Rubin & Henzel, 1984; Woods, 1996; Woods & Applegate, 1995). In an investigation of marital communication, Denton (1990) found that highly complex individuals were better able to perceive the intentions of their spouses. Woods (1996) found nonverbal decoding skills were significantly correlated with both cognitive complexity and person-centered verbal communication in a persuasive interaction. Similarly, Rubin and Henzel (1984) found that high complex individuals were more likely to recognize that a message recipient did not understand their message in an instructional setting, indicating their greater sensitivity to nonverbal feedback. This sensitivity is undoubtedly involved in the

robust positive correlations researchers have found between cognitive differentiation and perspective-taking ability (Hale & Delia, 1976; Clark & Delia, 1977; Burlleson, 1982a; Reardon, 1982; Sypher & Zorn, 1986; Kline, Pelias & Delia, 1991).

Person-centered communication indices are also positively correlated with heightened nonverbal encoding skills (Giles, 1998; Rubin & Henzel, 1984; Woods, 1998; Woods & Applegate, 1995). Drawing from Burgoon's work (e.g., Burgoon, Buller, Hale & deTurk, 1984), Woods and Applegate (1995) argued that indicators of immediacy and allocentrism (i.e., forward lean, eye contact, gaze, head-nodding, and body orientation) should be related to "person-centered communication." In one investigation, Woods and Applegate (1995) found a positive correlation between the nonverbal composite and verbal interaction scores in a dyadic discussion task where both parties disagreed. In particular, they found that the two nonverbal indicators of eye contact and head nodding predicted about 25% of the variance in person-centered communication. Person-centered communication appears to involve high levels of nonverbal engagement with the conversational partner, especially by maintaining eye contact.

The social domain indexed by constructivist researchers also is related to a tendency to code a broad spectrum of social events in an elaborated verbal format (Carlston, 1992). Cognitive differentiation is also associated with: (1) self-differentiation (Kline, 1984; Sypher, Witt, & Sypher, 1986; Zorn, McKinney, & Moran, 1993), (2) relational differentiation (Martin, 1991), (3) role differentiation (Kline & Ceropski, 1984; Zimmermann, 1994), (4) conversational complexity (Daly, Bell, Glen & Lawrence, 1985; Stacks & Murphy, 1993), (5) memory for person-information in conversation (Neulip & Hazleton, 1986), (6) several types of listening ability (Sypher, Bostrom & Seibert, 1989) and, (7) androgynous sex roles (Stevens, 1983; but see also Winters & Waltman, 1997). Semantic elaboration in one social domain (interpersonal constructs) accompanies parallel elaborations of semantic memory in related but conceptually distinct domains.

There is also evidence that the PCCP complex is associated with values and practices that reinforce the use of such perception and communication skills. Barbara O'Keefe (1988) identified the standards of good communication that inform three different implicit theories of communication (i.e., expressive, conventional and rhetorical). The concept of message design logic is important because it provides one important basis for postulating developmentally ordered but qualitatively different social pragmatics. Separate social pragmatics would be organized by fundamental beliefs about what communication does and is good for, just as fundamental beliefs about reality organize discourse in a number of domains (e.g., Fiske & Tetlock, 1997).

Shepherd and Trank (1992) found that highly differentiated individuals evaluate communication events along dimensions relevant to identity, relational, and instrumental goals, whereas moderate and low differentiated individuals evaluate communication in a more unidimensional or global fashion. Burlleson and Samter (1990) found that differentiated individuals rated affectively oriented skills, such as ego-support, comforting, and conflict management abilities, as more important than noncomplex individuals. In contrast, low-differentiated individuals rated nonaffectively oriented skills, such as persuasive and narrative abilities, as more important than high-differentiated individuals, although all groups rated affectively oriented skills (e.g., comforting, regulation) highly.

Persons with high PCCP also develop attitudes and cultural practices that show that they place a high priority on understanding the subjectivity of others. Giving and receiving self-disclosure should have greater priority for these individuals. Delia (1974) found that both construct abstractness and cognitive integration were positively and moderately correlated with positive attitudes toward self-disclosure. Delia, Clark, and Switzer (1979) found that this attitude was demonstrated in behavior. High-differentiated individuals focused a greater amount of talk on themselves and the other individual. Nondifferentiated individuals, in contrast, focused a higher proportion of talk on topics in the external situation. This effect also has been partially replicated in a study comparing intercultural dyadic interactions with intracultural dyadic interactions (Chen, 1996). In a similar fashion, Jensen (1994) found that a communicator's message design logic was positively associated with the degree of verbal immediacy that a communicator provided in a naturalistic conversation. Indeed, highly differentiated individuals appear to enjoy conversations and feel more confirmed when the topic of a get acquainted conversation is focused on a relational level rather than a content level (Yanda, 1984).

Persistence in inquiring into the other person's perspective also is connected with IPC indices. In a problem-oriented discussion, Kline and Hennen-Floyd & Farrel (1990) found that highly differentiated individuals took a more proactive approach to achieving interpersonal understanding in a conversation. They used more open-ended questions and more edifications and fewer mind-reading statements than less differentiated individuals. In other words, they sought to get elaborations and corroborations of the other person's point of view.

In the same vein, high and low differentiated individuals may appear to differ in what they seek in personal relationships. Even though they did not differ in how they rated the intimacy of the relationship, or in their relational satisfaction, Leichthy (1989a) found that low differentiated individuals defined their close friendships as centering around shared activities, whereas high differentiated individuals indicated that their friendships centered around self-disclosure, ego-support, and the unique positive attributes of the other person or the relationship. In parallel, Gibbons and Bradac (1987) found that high-differentiated individuals placed more importance on achieving solidarity and self-disclosure than low differentiated individuals. Likewise, Delia and Murphy (1983) found that college students high in cognitive complexity were likely to engage their friends in more interpersonal and conflict-focused communication, but these differences were unrelated to leisure activities and work-focused communication. For individuals high in PCCP, interpersonal closeness and solidarity are communication accomplishments that are centered around talk.

In summary, constructivist research has documented a massive complex of interrelated attributes (i.e., social cognition, person-centered communication indices, related skills, values, and social practices) that fit into a coherent pattern. These relationships are broad enough, deep enough, and profound enough to constitute fundamentally different social pragmatics.

Personal Relationships and Social Pragmatics

In peer-oriented relationships based on mutuality and relative equality, similarities in social perception and communication development are associated with interpersonal attraction and relationship maintenance. This fact may seem unremarkable, but in fact it provides good evidence for the existence of different social pragmatics. If one takes the point of view that more sophisticated and developed communication skills are "better," then people should be more attracted to others who are high in these skills. Skills are different than attitudes and beliefs in that similarity on skills should not elicit the kind of social validation that similarity of attitudes, beliefs, and values provides (Duck & Barnes, 1992). On measures of social attraction, at least, people with the highest PCCP skills should be the most attractive and the relationship satisfaction of their partners should be enhanced by their superior communication skills. People may still match up with people that are of similar social and communication skills, but this would probably occur because people with lower social skills have fewer people to associate with. People who rank low in communication skills may relate to each other out of necessity, but their interpersonal relationships would be expected to be of inferior quality.

Burleson and Samter (1994) contrast two models for accounting for interpersonal relationship maintenance. A main-effects model would posit that persons with higher-level skills would have better interpersonal relationships. Alternately, they propose a social-skills model in which similarity of communication skills and values fosters relationship satisfaction. We agree with Burleson and Samter's critique of the "main effects" model, but we prefer the construct of a "shared social pragmatic" to that of "social skills." The latter gives little insight as to why partners with "low social skills" would prefer each other's company.

In a later publication, Burleson and Samter (1996) used a "rewards of interaction" explanation for why similarity of social perception and communication skills should contribute to relationship formation, maintenance, and satisfaction. We would add that it is the shared social pragmatic that makes similarity on these indices attractive. If a social pragmatic consists of a coherent set of: a) beliefs about social structure, b) expectations about communication, and c) perceptual and communication skills that match these expectations, sharing a social pragmatic with another person should facilitate speech accommodation (Giles, Mulac, Bradac & Johnson, 1987) and conversational synchronization in most settings. Communication should become less effortful and more enjoyable. Conversational stimulation and enjoyment appear to be among the most important stimulants of relationship growth (Hays, 1989).

To argue that a social pragmatic perspective better accounts for the relationship between the interpersonal skills and attraction, one would need to establish most of the following conditions: 1) people with the highest PCCP skills are not necessarily the most attractive, 2) neither people with PCCP skills nor their partners necessarily have happier relationships, 3) a reliable pattern of matching occurs in personal social relationships, 4) low and high skill dyads do not differ in their levels of relationship satisfaction, and 5) similarity of PCCP skills is related to interpersonal attraction and relationship satisfaction (or dissimilarity in skills is related to greater dissatisfaction).

There is evidence that possessing person-centered skills is related to peer acceptance among children (Applegate et al., 1985; Applegate, Burleson, & Delia, 1992; Burleson, Applegate, Burke, Clark, Delia & Kline, 1986; Burleson, Delia & Applegate, 1992; Burleson & Waltman, 1987). In particular, the PCCP complex is negatively related to the likelihood that a child will be rejected (Burleson, et al., 1986). Cognitive complexity is also found to be positively associated with the likelihood that a child will be nominated as a sensitive "peer counselor" (Burleson & Waltman, 1987). However, there is also evidence that children tend to match up with and are attracted to children who have social cognitive and communication skills similar to their own, especially as it relates to a child's affective skills (Burleson, 1994). Burleson (1994) concluded, "Where the current results are especially interesting is in showing that those with comparatively good affect management skills are not necessarily the most popular or the best liked" (p. 385). Among children at least, both the main effects model and the skills matching perspective have supporting evidence. Perhaps more developed person-centered communication skills primarily lessen a child's rejection.

There is also evidence that the possession of person-centered communication skills does not necessarily correlate with greater satisfaction of one's relational partners. Samter (1992; 1994) found that although a lonely person's friendship circle was also composed of other people who were lonely, students whose friends exhibited more sophisticated conflict management and ego support skills were also less well liked and experienced greater loneliness. A recent study of marital satisfaction also found quite complex relations between communication skills and marital satisfaction. In particular, skills and satisfaction were positively associated among nondistressed couples, but were negatively associated among distressed couples (Burleson & Denton, 1997). As an example, Burleson and Denton found that a wife's cognitive complexity was positively associated with a husband's positive feelings toward his wife in nondistressed relationships ($r=.54$), but the wife's cognitive complexity was negatively correlated with a husband's positive feelings toward her in distressed marriages ($r=-.36$). Burleson and Denton (1997) conclude: "there are many reasons for communication problems, only some of which have to do with deficiencies in communication skills. So-called communication problems may also result from a variety of other factors, including negative intentions, motivations and feelings" (p. 899).

There is ample evidence of skills-matching with respect to the PCCP complex in close relationships. Early research in personal construct theory established the importance of construct similarity in interpersonal relationships. Friendship pairs routinely evidenced more construct similarity than nominal pairs in cross sectional studies (Duck, 1972, 1973) and in longitudinal studies (Duck & Allison, 1978). Moreover, similarity at the level of more abstract psychological constructs is important in determining interpersonal attraction in long-term relationships than it is in short-term ones (Duck & Spencer, 1972). These results have typically been interpreted as being supportive of the filter hypothesis of interpersonal attraction (e.g., different kinds of information and similarities are important at different relationship stages, Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988).

With constructivist measures specifically in mind, there is evidence that interpersonal differentiation is most strongly correlated in marital relationships (Burleson & Denton, 1992), particularly with respect to differentiation of liked others (Adams-Webber, 2001). This pattern also appears among young adults who share similar levels of cognitive complexity and affective skills of their most liked nominees as well as with their actual friends (Burleson & Samter, 1996; Leichthy, 1989b). Matching by cognitive complexity for friendship also occurs within organizational settings, although matching on other variables such as proximity and tenure is more pronounced (Leichthy, Willihnganz, & Hart, 1994a). Burleson, Samter, and Luchetti (1992) used a sample of declared same sex friends and found moderate correlations in the degree that they rated affective skills as being important. Similarity on listener adapted communication, social perspective-taking, and affective perspective-taking also have been found to match at moderate levels among a sample of reciprocal friends among children (Burleson, 1994).

Research also showed that partners in "low-skill" dyads are not less satisfied with their relationships than people in "high-skill" dyads. This could be taken as evidence that the sets of dyads have systematically different expectations for what they count on from communication in their personal relationships. In one investigation, Burleson and Denton (1992) performed median splits on four skill variables, including cognitive complexity, and compared marital satisfaction and happiness scores between dyads where both partners had similar skill levels. Although the mean satisfaction scores of the high skill dyads were a bit higher for cognitive complexity, they did not approach statistical significance. Burleson and Samter (1996) conducted a similar test of young adult friendships using an affective communication skill index to construct the comparison groups. In this case, the researchers found virtually the same loneliness scores for the low skill and high skill dyads. These findings suggest that the partners in "low-skill" relationships do not perceive a deficit within their relationships.

However, showing that matching skill levels actually contribute to relationship satisfaction would make the strongest case for different social pragmatics. Burleson and Denton (1992) compared the levels of skill similarity between distressed and nondistressed marital couples. Although the correlation among partners' cognitive complexity was greater among the nondistressed couples ($r=.55$) than among distressed couples ($r=.38$), the differences were not statistically significant, perhaps because of the relatively low statistical power of the comparison. A study of dating pairs, however, found that persons with similar levels of cognitive complexity had more intellectual attraction for their partners than pairs that were dissimilar in their levels of cognitive complexity (Burleson, Kunkel, & Szolwinski, 1997).

Studies of interpersonal attraction and friendship offer stronger support for a skills-matching attraction connection. In an experimental manipulation, Burleson, Kunkel, and Szolwinski (1997) had participants read interpersonal impressions reflecting low and high levels of cognitive complexity. As expected, high complexity subjects indicated more attraction toward the high complexity targets than the low complexity targets. In addition, although low complexity individuals were more attracted to the high complexity target than the low, they indicated more attraction to the low complexity target than did high complexity individuals. Mitchell (1990) also found that similarity in cognitive differentiation was positively related to interpersonal attraction. In the context of established friendships, Burleson & Samter (1996) found that mixed-skill friendship dyads experienced more loneliness than similar-skill dyads. Similarity of preferred communication skills also was found to be related to attraction and satisfaction in long-term romantic relationships (Burleson, Kunkel, & Birch, 1994).

One might also predict that conversationalists will have some difficulty achieving conversational synchrony when they are mismatched in their levels of cognitive complexity or possess different social pragmatics. Indirect evidence of this comes in the finding that high complexity individuals form more differentiated and more highly organized impressions when they interact with highly differentiated perceivers than when they interact with less differentiated perceivers (Samter, Burleson, & Basden-Murphy, 1989; Williams, 1992). O'Keefe and Shepherd (1989) compared impression formation in heterogeneous dyads with impression formation in homogeneous dyads engaged in a persuasive task. There was a modest correlation between the perceiver's construct differentiation and situated impression differentiation for the heterogeneous dyads ($r=.37$), but a very strong correlation in the homogeneous dyads ($r=.85$). In addition, the level of impression organization was lower in high perceiver-low target condition, than it was in the low perceiver-low target dyads resulting in a negative correlation between cognitive differentiation and impression integration in the heterogeneous dyads ($r=-.53$). In contrast, there was a modest positive correlation in the homogeneous dyads.

The apparent frustration of the conversationalists in the heterogeneous dyads is illustrated by the fact that they made more negative character analytic judgements about each other than individuals in the homogeneous dyads. The social information abilities of high differentiated individuals may be thwarted when they are matched with less complex individuals. These interactions may require additional effort to achieve conversational synchrony and communication accommodation. It may also reduce either one's capacity or motivation to engage in complex processing (Woike, 1994).

Two recent articles on a study of persuasive interactions validated this expectation. After participating in a discussion to persuade their partner on a controversial issue, participants rated their partners on measures of opinion change, perceived persuasiveness, social attractiveness, and perceived competence. Persons who used high level person-centered persuasive tactics were rated as more persuasive, but person-centeredness

was unrelated to either the person's perceived competence or social attractiveness (Waldron & Applegate, 1998a). However, a later publication showed that tactical similarity between partners was positively related to both social attractiveness and a person's perceived competence (Waldron & Applegate, 1998b).

A person's social pragmatic may also influence the kind of social network a person develops. Differences in PCCP skills may also influence the structure of one's personal network. In one study, Leichty (1989a) speculated that highly differentiated perceivers would have more densely interconnected networks than less differentiated perceivers. He reasoned that more segmented networks allow a person greater freedom in self-presentation and altercasting (Goffman, 1959). Furthermore, highly differentiated persons can have more varied behavioral intentions than less differentiated perceivers (Burke & Springer, 1981; O'Keefe & Delia, 1981). Similarity of values and attitudes may be a less important criterion for high-differentiated individuals than low differentiated individuals. Although the magnitude of the relationship was relatively small, Leichty (1989a) found that more differentiated individuals perceived that their friendship networks were interconnected.

Sharing a social pragmatic with significant others in one's social network may augment the degree to which that social pragmatic is enacted (Gergen, 1985). Leichty (1989b) had friends fill out parallel measures of perceived social support, cognitive differentiation, and person-centered comforting communication. Leichty (1989b) found that the friend's level of cognitive differentiation predicted an additional 7% of the variance of a person's comforting communication level beyond that which the target person's differentiation accounted for. Sharing a social pragmatic with one's personal network may facilitate further development and use of that social pragmatic.

In summary, the evidence that we have reviewed suggests that similarities in communication skills are attractive in personal relationships oriented around mutuality and relative equality. Relationship satisfaction for both self and partner is related to PCCP skills in complex ways. There is clear evidence of matching on PCCP skills in close personal relationships. There is little evidence that low-skill PCCP dyads are more dissatisfied with their relationships than high-skill PCCP dyads. Moreover, dissimilarity in PCCP skills is related to relationship dissatisfaction. This overall pattern of results strongly supports the proposition that different social pragmatics organize communication in close relationships.

Institutions Select For and Against Social Pragmatics

Institutional settings sometimes "select" for person-centered communication skills, sometimes they appear to "select" against person-centered communication skills. By "select" we mean that over time, members of the same cohort and the same social level will demonstrate less variation in their person-centeredness than when they came to the setting. In this view "selection" consists of any mechanism (i.e., recruitment, socialization, reinforcement patterns, voluntary and involuntary attrition) that maintains or increases the degree homogeneity of communication skills and practices within a setting. If person-centered communication skills are usually beneficial, one would expect PCCP skills to be "selected for" or rewarded on a very wide scale.

Several studies have found that highly differentiated individuals tend to be more charismatic, effective, and flexible leaders (Crawford, 1998; Husband, 1981; Zorn, 1991).

Hence, it is not surprising that some studies show that cognitive differentiation and person-centered communication skills are positively associated with job level and upward mobility in some organizational contexts (Haas & Sypher, 1991; Sypher & Applegate, 1988; Sypher, Bostrom, & Seibert, 1989; Sypher & Zorn, 1986). It should be noted, however, that these studies were done in organizations where person-centered communication skills were valued (e.g., Sypher & Zorn, 1986). A recent systematic comparison by Zorn & Violante (1996) suggests that organizational culture mediates the strength of these relationships. In their review of data from five organizations, Zorn and Violante (1996) found that cognitive differentiation accounted for approximately four times as much variance in indicators of individual success in organizations where communication was "valued" than in organizations where "good communication" was not a salient management value. These data showed that some institutional settings actively select for person-centered construal and communication by the way they dispense rewards and by the way individuals advanced within that setting.

Evidence that institutions select "against" person-centered construal and communication is tentative, but suggestive. At the micro-level, it has been demonstrated that the content of interpersonal construct systems often differs with the amount of time that a person has been with an organization (Coopman, Hart, Allen, & Haas, 1997; O'Keefe, 1984). In such cases, the content of person descriptions is increasingly dominated by constructs that are relevant to the specific tasks or roles in the organization.

Additional evidence that some institutional contexts select against person-centered construal and communication comes from several cross-sectional studies.

Meyer and Sypher (1993) found that tenure in a day-care setting was negatively correlated with cognitive differentiation. Moreover, Zimmermann and Applegate (1992) found that merely participating in a hospice-training program depressed a person's use of person-centered comforting ($r = -.41$). However, the most suggestive results come from a study of person-centered communication practices among police officers (Applegate et al., 1989). The authors found that tenure on the police force was negatively correlated with construct abstractness ($r = -.58$) and the degree of person-centeredness in a persuasive message ($r = -.51$).

Although suggestive, the findings of the latter study are not conclusive. For instance, a police officer's social construal and communication practices may come to be suppressed in this particular context but remain robust in other contexts (e.g., personal relationship network). The negative correlations with tenure might also be attributed to: 1) a suppression of officers' PCCP skills, 2) an attrition of people with higher person-centered skills due to promotion and voluntary or involuntary turnover, or 3) a cohort effect. Although the first two explanations both count as selection against the person-centered complex, the last possibility does not.

In summary, there is evidence that organizations differ in the extent to which they "select for" the person-centered communication complex. The evidence that some institutions also "select against" the person-centered complex is suggestive, but not conclusive. Further research is needed to fully substantiate the hypothesis that one social pragmatic often dominates discourse in a given institutional environment.

Hypothesized Social Pragmatics

Arguing for the existence of different social pragmatics leaves open the question of how many exist. Drawing from existing models of cultural difference, there are theoretical reasons positing three to five social pragmatics.

One might start by examining family typologies, since the family can be regarded as the primary context for PCCP development (Burlinson, Delia, & Applegate 1995). Recent research has shown that families can be reliably classified along the two communication dimensions of conformity orientation and conversation orientation (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Conformity orientation refers to the degree to which families strive to maintain a homogeneity of official attitudes and beliefs, and a conversation orientation exists when family members are encouraged to participate at high levels conversation on a wide variety of matters (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Consensual families are high on both conformity orientation and conversational orientation and map closely with Fitzpatrick's (1988) marital type of "traditional." Protective families are high on conformity orientation, but low on conversation orientation and seem to match with Fitzpatrick's "separate" marital type. Laissez-faire families orient low on both communication orientation and conformity orientation. Finally, families that map low on conformity orientation and high on conversation orientation are characterized as being pluralistic. Marital couples heading this family type are likely to be "independents" (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

We suspect that communication development along the dimensions of "person-centeredness" is least likely to occur in laissez-faire and protected families. As both are low on conversation orientation, they both give a low priority to communication. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (1997) found that low conversation orientation was associated with high conflict avoidance and relatively little seeking of social support. In addition, high conformity orientation was positively correlated with conflict avoidance and venting feelings. We believe that consensual families are likely to develop moderate levels of "person-centeredness." Their high

conversation orientation favors the development of knowledge about communication, but their high conformity orientation discourages the deployment of truly individuated perspectives. In contrast, the pluralistic environment should be best suited to the development of a kind of person-centered sociality.

Alan Fiske's (1991) theory of relational forms offers another framework for positing multiple social pragmatics. Working from anthropological data, Fiske (1991) argued that all given relationships are developed off of four cognitive relationship templates that are a part of the human cognitive endowment. Fiske's typology is germane because the relational models are ordered developmentally in terms of the level of measurement that is embedded in each relational model. The egalitarian communal sharing model only requires differentiation between members of a group and outsiders -- nominal level measurement. In contrast, the hierarchical model of authority ranking requires ordinal measurement in order to define social system ranks. In turn, equality matching requires interval level measurement to keep track of the relationship reciprocity. Market pricing, the highest level model, requires ratio level measurement to calculate the appropriate reward/investment ratios for each party. Social exchange theories presume that most relationships derive from a market pricing model.

Fiske (1991) noted that the relational models emerge sequentially in individual development (communal sharing, authority ranking, equality-matching, market pricing). Market pricing matures sometime in early adolescence. Fiske argued that the elementary relationship models provide a template or guiding logic for all human relationships and social institutions. Actual relationships can involve a complex combination of relational logics, but in most situated activities, one model predominates. For instance, group decision-making by consensus is modeled on communal sharing, executive decision-making on authority ranking, one-person-one-vote on equality matching, and shareholder voting on market pricing. We predict that person-centered communication will be more likely to develop in context where the market-pricing relational model predominates.

In relationships that are predominantly structured by communal sharing, all members of a social category are considered to be equivalent. Similarity of perspective is assumed among group members. Projection serves adequately enough among those who truly share common substance (e.g., identical twins). Authority ranking adds complexity because it assumes different perspectives among people according to their social ranking. One can estimate the perspective of the other by using role information or social stereotypes (i.e., position-centered social perception). Equality matching requires careful calibration of reciprocity so as to prevent imbalances that threaten both the relationship and the autonomy of each party. Only with market pricing does one develop a full-blown need to construe the subjectivity of the other person in interaction. Moreover, recent work has shown that three ideological models of this hierarchy are widely used in organizational attribution and decision-making (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997).

Turning to constructivist theory, there are good theoretical reasons to posit that three social pragmatics exist. The most used coding schemes for assessing person-centered communication typically involved three major developmental levels (i.e., Applegate & Delia, 1980). Barbara O'Keefe's (1988) message design typology also identified three developmentally ordered implicit communication theories or message design logics. According to O'Keefe, these three different theories index beliefs about what one can and should use communication for. The expressive message design logic represents the simplest model of communication, the conventional logic represents an intermediate level of communication development, and the rhetorical design logic reflects the most sophisticated theory of message design.

O'Keefe (1988) presented three different implicit theories of communication, but it is clear that each theory also connects with a different understanding of social situations and social structure. O'Keefe's typology was developed to account for how message production creates message variation. We prefer to avoid questions about the mechanics of message design, but we assume that a message design logic is an essential component of a social pragmatic. Hence, we follow O'Keefe's (1988) terminology and label our three social pragmatics: the expressive pragmatic, the conventional pragmatic, and the rhetorical pragmatic.

We assume that the social pragmatics are developmentally ordered in terms of the complexity of the sociality that they imply. The expressive pragmatic is the simplest in terms of the kind of sociality it envisions; the conventional pragmatic is of intermediate complexity; and the rhetorical pragmatic is the most complex. The following paragraphs identify the values and implicit theories about people and social structure that are implied in constructivist coding systems.

The kind of intersubjectivity that each social pragmatic embodies is the most important differentiating characteristic between the social pragmatics. Gergen (1985) noted that reference to mental states and dispositions, as is characteristic of the rhetorical pragmatic, provides for great flexibility in negotiating social accounts. He described several studies that showed that individuals can easily account for the existence of any mental state by reference to any other mental trait. Gergen (1985) argued that because of such accounting procedures, "In principle, one's social identity can never be fixed, it possess the potential of always being other than what is apparent" (p. 123).

The expressive pragmatic projects a type of mechanical solidarity centered around shared sentiments and beliefs (Durkheim, (1964). Collins (1985) described this context as a relatively small and undifferentiated group that establishes clear boundaries between itself and outside groups. He noted that "Under these conditions, moral beliefs were highly concrete rather than abstract and generalized. The formalities of correct ritual observance were more important than subjective belief (p. 145). This social context in which situational and role distinctions are relatively unelaborated corresponds with Fiske's (1991) communal sharing relational model. The shared values and beliefs may be so taken for granted that they seldom enter conversation as topics of discussion. Simply sharing time and space together can accomplish "intimacy." If individual subjectivities are massively redundant achieving mutual understanding via communication is usually unproblematic. There is relatively little need for extensive communication about the subjectivity of the "other". Projecting one's mental processes onto others usually works.

In contrast, the conventional pragmatic projects a complex but static social structure. It provides differentiated social roles and clearly structured situations. This pragmatic assumes that shared understandings exist with respect to knowledge of social structure, but it also expects differences in subjective experience as a function of differences in the social roles that people play. Achieving intersubjectivity largely consists of finding appropriate scripts to coordinate social roles. This pragmatic extols the virtues of order, conventionality, and low uncertainty. In this pragmatic, even personal relationships are organized by generalized role expectations. The conventional pragmatic focuses on situational features and roles that are relevant to coordinating social action. Self-monitoring skills are important within this pragmatic. Success in communication depends upon one's ability to read the language game that is being played and access appropriate scripts (e.g., Argyle, Furnham & Graham, 1981).

The rhetorical social pragmatic projects a multidimensional social structure that is differentiated but quite malleable. This pragmatic assumes that reality is socially constructed via communication. People operating with this social pragmatic are more strategic (i.e., future and goal-oriented). They use language to define situations, selves, and relationships. The future is a collaborative project. Situations and roles exist, but they are as much products of and resources for interaction as they are constraints upon it. This social pragmatic values individual autonomy and the individual's perspective. The rhetorical pragmatic assumes that personal constructs really must be taken into account (i.e., as opposed to assuming that one can primarily rely on shared cultural assumptions or knowledge of social roles and stereotypes). More importantly, the grounds of intersubjectivity must be negotiated. The socially defined repertoire of situations and roles only provide a point of departure for negotiating roles with other people. These rough templates often need to be refined and renegotiated to find the best working arrangement. Achieving intersubjectivity depends upon one's ability to integrate one's own projects with those around him or her. This is necessarily an overtly verbal process. Social cognitive and communication competencies are critical because they expand the range of selves and social realities that can be negotiated into existence (Gergen, 1985).

What Difference Does This Make?

We believe that the "social pragmatic" construct offers several important benefits. The construct should help researchers see wholes as well as the parts. Figuring out the mechanisms of message production has merit (e.g., Waldron & Applegate, 1994), but it is also important to investigate how each social pragmatic functions in different social worlds. We need to examine the interplay between communication pragmatics and social context to understand the real significance of constructivist research (Coopman, 1999).

The concept of a social pragmatic grounds communication differences in social life. It raises questions such

as the following. What social and environmental factors facilitate the development of higher order social pragmatics for the individual? What factors retard the development of more complex social pragmatics? What does the individual experience when she finds that her social pragmatic does not match with the pragmatic that predominates in an important environment? What advantages and disadvantages does each pragmatic confer in specific social contexts? What ideological commitments are embedded within each social pragmatic (Lannamann, 1991)?

Most constructivist research has implicitly equated the rhetorical social pragmatic with communication competence (Applegate, 1990). Developmentally advanced modes of communication are typically portrayed as enabling greater flexibility and adaptability on the part of the individual (O'Keefe & Delia, 1982). If educators really believe that a rhetorical pragmatic offers great rewards for individuals, families, and social institutions, then we have a pedagogical responsibility to help people master the rhetorical pragmatic. On the other hand, there are reasons to be cautious. We do not yet know what kinds of adaptive costs that a rhetorical pragmatic has in some contexts and relationships.

For instance, message recipients may often not prefer verbally elaborated "person-centered" messages. Clark and Delia (1997) obtained respondents' ratings for how their friends should provide support in six distressing situations. They found that most individuals preferred that the friend not mention the distressing event in five of the six situations. They preferred that a friend initiate a conversation in a noncommittal way. This allowed the distressed individual to bring up the topic if they chose to do so. Some actions like suggesting a diverting activity may often be more appropriate than comforting strategies that rank much higher in their person-centeredness. Clark and Delia (1997) concluded that "There is a need to rethink the implicit (and occasionally explicit assumption) that individuals want to talk about their problems" (p. 117).

It is also possible that the individual with a rhetorical pragmatic feels cramped and constrained in situations where he is discouraged from communicating in his accustomed way. Achieving intersubjectivity may be difficult on some tasks when the other person does not share the person's rhetorical orientation (O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1989). Moreover, persons with a more advanced pragmatic can be rather critical of messages that fail to include expected person-centered elements (Adams & Shepherd, 1996; Gilotti, 1996; Harrington, 1992; Waldron & Applegate, 1998a). Such persons may have high expectations about communication that are often not met. Cognitively differentiated individuals are sometimes less satisfied with social support (Leichty, 1989b) and with communication in organizational settings (Zimmermann, 1994). In addition, one recent study found that negative evaluations of work-group relations significantly reduced on individual's organizational communication satisfaction for high differentiated but not low differentiated respondents (Leichty, Willihnganz, & Hart, 1994b). Having a rhetorical pragmatic probably does not make one "happier."

Individuals with a rhetorical pragmatic may experience greater uncertainty in some situations. Although one study registered a significant negative correlation between construct differentiation and communication social anxiety (Neuliep & Hazleton, 1985), a more extensive investigation found these constructs to be unrelated to each other (Shepherd & Condra, 1988). Crockett (1965) reported that cognitively complex individuals tend to assume that others have rather different perspectives than they do. When perspective differences are profound, as is in the case of intercultural encounters, cognitively complex individuals rate themselves as *less competent* than their less cognitively complex counterparts (Wiseman & Abe, 1986). Because they are more aware of and responsive to discrepant conversational feedback (e.g., Reardon, 1982), cognitively complex individuals may become hesitant and find it difficult to formulate coherent plans. People with fewer skills may experience less anxiety and forge ahead.

Possessing a rhetorical social pragmatic may lead a person to underestimate the need to use legitimate power in some situations. Person-centered regulative messages, may not be particularly appropriate when severe breaches of social norms occur such as sexual harassment (Bingham & Burlison, 1989). Competent use of person-centered regulative strategies probably combines person-centeredness strategies with power-asserting strategies. In their study of parental reflection-enhancing communication, Wilson, Whipple and Grau (1996) concluded, that the construct of parental competence, "needs to include flexible use of a range of discipline techniques and appropriate sequencing rather than only general use of reflection-enhancement" (p. 567).

There may also be contexts in which a match of social pragmatics creates interpersonal difficulties. In

organizational contexts, it may be preferable for superiors and subordinates to have different message design logics (MDL). Peterson and Albrecht (1996) found that when staff nurses and their supervisors shared the same MDL, the nurses felt greater burn-out and less social support from their nurse manager. The best combination for perceived social support occurred when only one person in the superior-subordinate dyad had a rhetorical message design. In a mixed-status relationship, a heightened mutual awareness of a "strategic orientation" may undermine the asymmetries on which mixed status relationships are based (i.e., deference) and create a climate of mutual wariness. More research is certainly needed on this point.

In the end, whether one thinks the rhetorical social pragmatic is "good", depends on the values that one identifies with. The rhetorical pragmatic probably provides access to greater social resources in contemporary societies. Parks (1994) argues that: "competent communicators are people who exert control in ways that are both adaptive and collaborative" (p. 611). In this light, mastery of the rhetorical pragmatic is an important part of communication competence in postmodern societies. Communication pedagogy can contribute to individual autonomy and empowerment by helping individuals master the rhetorical pragmatic. However, if this is done, it should not also blindly endorse the values of strategic planning, competitiveness and class-consciousness that are implicitly embedded in the rhetorical pragmatic. Strategic awareness and control may also be bought at the expense of an increased detachment or alienation from conversation. Each cultural configuration appears to have both social pathologies and social attractions (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990). Awareness of the tradeoffs that PCCP development entails may create some ambivalence for educators and communicators, but it might at least serve as an antidote against complacency and arrogance.

Conclusion

Each social pragmatic embodies a particular approach to social life. This proposition has significant implications for the kinds of questions that we ask. It contextualizes our understanding of communication development. It directs communication researchers and educators to consider how social cognitive and communication skills function in the social ecology. By altering our questions we should achieve a deeper understanding of how social cognitive and communication practices contribute to the maintenance, reproduction, and transformation of cultural forms (Burlinson, Delia, & Applegate, 1995). Research should specify the outcomes associated with using a particular pragmatic in specific kinds of social networks and institutions. This will contribute to our understanding of constructivist research findings by eliciting greater "cognitive complexity" in terms of how we think about communication development.

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