Parameters of Non-Accommodation: Refining and Elaborating

Communication Accommodation Theory[1]

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Abstract

Within the framework of communication accommodation theory (CAT), this chapter draws on research in social cognition to develop conceptually and theoretically the construct of *non-accommodation*, defined as communicative behaviors that are inappropriately adjusted for the participants in an interaction. Drawing upon research on communication as an inference process, a specification and elaboration of the theory's definition of *communication* (the "C" in CAT) is proposed. We consider the cognitive processes by which non-accommodation is perceived and evaluated, proposing a model of how perceived intentionality and motive, perspective taking and initial orientation directly and indirectly influence our evaluations of non-accommodation and related interactional outcomes.

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Communication Accommodation Theory

Adjusting for others is a fundamental part of successful interaction. We do not speak to our colleagues in the same way we do our spouses, or our parents in the same way we do to our children; rather, we adapt our communication to our present circumstances. However, and unfortunately, the adjustments we make for each other are not always experienced as adequate or appropriate. Issues with communicative adjustment may take a number of forms across a variety of contexts, and have potentially serious consequences. The prospects for miscommunication are particularly rife when people breach intercultural and intergroup divides (e.g., Dubé-Simard, 1983; Hewstone & Giles, 1986). A lack of adjustment for communicative or behavioral norms in a given context, for example, could lead to speakers committing social or cultural faux pas, resulting in their being labeled as rude, offensive, or worse. More generally, when communicative adjustments are felt to be inappropriate, the interaction is often experienced as dissatisfying and/or problematic (e.g., Williams, 1996).

To avoid detrimental outcomes such as these, it is important to understand how poorly-adjusted communication occurs, as well as what determines individuals' responses to it. Within the framework of communication accommodation theory (CAT: Giles, 1973; Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005; Giles, Willemyns, Gallois, & Anderson, 2007), this chapter seeks to develop conceptually and theoretically the construct of *non-accommodation*, defined as communicative behaviors that are inappropriately adjusted for the participants in an interaction. With particular consideration for the nature of poorly adjusted communication, we ultimately propose a specification and elaboration of the theory's definition of *communication* (the "C" in CAT). We consider the processes by which non-accommodation is perceived and evaluated, proposing a

model of how perceived intentionality and motive, perspective taking and initial orientation directly and indirectly influence our evaluations of non-accommodation and related interactional outcomes.

Communication Accommodation and Non-Accommodation

CAT is premised on the assumption that communication mediates and maintains interpersonal *and* intergroup relationships (Gallois & Giles, 1998). As such, it seeks to explain speakers' linguistic and behavioral choices in interaction as they relate to communicative adjustment, and to model how others in the interaction perceive, evaluate, and react to these choices. In short, CAT suggests that speakers come to interactions with an initial orientation, which is informed by such factors as relevant interpersonal and intergroup histories, as well as the prevailing sociohistorical context. In interaction, speakers adjust their communicative behavior based on evaluations of their fellow interactants' communicative characteristics in context, as well as their desire to establish and maintain a positive personal and social identity (Gallois et al., 2005). Each speaker evaluates and makes attributions about the encounter as well as the other speaker on the basis of their perceptions of that other speaker's behavior (i.e., adjustments). These attributions and evaluations then affect the quality and nature of the present interaction between these speakers, as well as speakers' intent to engage in future interaction with each other (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 here

Theorizing on CAT has proposed two distinct functions for accommodation: first, managing social distance and related identity concerns ("affective function"), and second,

facilitating comprehension ("cognitive function"; see Street & Giles, 1982) (Gallois et al., 2005).

Within the first (social regulation) function, a number of more specific social effects of

accommodation have been put forward, among them identifying or appearing similar to others,

maintaining face, maintaining a relationship, and maintaining interpersonal control as it relates to

power or status differentials. Within the second (facilitating comprehension) function, in turn,

specific effects include the extent which speakers are understood, and relatedly, how discourse is

directed and managed (Gallois, et al., 2005).

　　　To fulfill these two functions, there are several different *adjustment strategies* we can

implement (Coupland, et al., 1988; Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery, & Smith, 2010). First, we may

adjust or verbal and nonverbal behavior to be more similar to or different from our

conversational partners' (*approximation strategies*). Recent work on mimicry (for an overview,

see Chartrand and van Baaren, 2009) has documented the myriad ways in which individuals

unconsciously synchronize their verbal and nonverbal behavior with each other when they

interact. Consistent with CAT, this research suggests that people regulate social distance through

these adjustments: mimicry (i.e. convergence) has been found to increase empathy, liking, and

rapport. Conversely, individuals mimic less when they feel neutral about or seek to (actively)

disaffiliate themselves with another (Babel, 2010).

　　　We may also adapt the manner in which information is presented with an eye to making it

comprehensible in terms of judgments about our audience's capacities (*interpretability*

strategies). Altering speech rate, the complexity of a message's lexicon or syntax, volume,

tempo, repetition, prosody, and/or content (topic choice) are all potential forms interpretability

strategies may take (Giles & Coupland, 1991). While most adjustments along the approximation

axis are primarily made non-consciously (e.g., Lineweaver, Hutman, Ketcham, & Bohannon, 2011), interpretability adjustments may also be made consciously.

Communicative behavior may also be adapted on a more macro level, as when we adjust our communication to guide the conversation in specific ways (*discourse management strategies*) through turn management, topic selection, topic sharing, and backchanneling (Cretchley et al., 2010; Shepard, Giles, & LePoire, 2001).

Finally, we may make adjustments to address the social dynamics at play in an encounter (*interpersonal control strategies*); for example, taking actions related to relative power or status differentials (e.g., acting deferential or assuming a leadership style), or behaving in ways associated with formal or institutional roles and their accompanying communicative expectations.

When communicative adjustments are made appropriately in the eyes of both interactants, the result is *accommodative* communication, which is usually (though not always) experienced as successful and positive. However, when they are not seen as crafted appropriately, *non-accommodation* is the result.

Unpacking Non-Accommodation

While some work using CAT chooses to consider actions and outcomes in terms of an accommodative versus non-accommodative dichotomy (e.g., Giles et al., 2007), "non-accommodation" may in fact describe a variety of perceived behaviors, including divergence, maintenance, overaccommodation, and underaccommodation. Divergence is defined as individuals altering their speech (or communication more generally) to move away and distance themselves from their conversational partners' communicative habits (e.g., Bourhis, Giles, Leyens, & Tajfel, 1979). Maintenance is the absence of accommodative adjustments by individuals, that is, maintaining their "default" way of communicating without taking into

account the characteristics of their fellow interactants. It can, however, be a strategic statement

about preserving one's social identity in certain intergroup contexts (Giles, Reid, & Harwood,

2010) and, as such, is an active statement about not wishing to accommodate (Bourhis, 1979).

Overaccommodation, in turn, is defined as the perception that a speaker is exceeding or

overshooting the level of a given communicative behavior necessary for a successful interaction.

Underaccommodation, finally, is the perception that a speaker is not doing enough to implement

a given communication behavior, relative to the level needed or desired by others in the

interaction (Coupland et al., 1988).

 To date, overaccommodation has been the primary focus of research on non-

accommodation. Variants of overaccommodation that have received considerable scholarly

attention include patronizing talk (Hummert & Ryan, 2001) and so-called "elderspeak", the use

of overly-simplified speech in interactions with older adults (for an overview of relevant studies,

see Giles & Gasiorek, 2011). Overaccommodation's counterpart, underaccommodation,

however, has not received comparable attention. However, and interestingly, there is some

evidence that underaccommodation is in fact more prevalent, at least for young adults in a

college setting, than a survey of the present CAT literature would suggest. In a recent study by

Gasiorek (2010) of American young adults' experiences of non-accommodation,

*under*accommodative experiences outnumbered experiences of overaccommodation by ratio of

more than nine to one. It is interesting to note that underaccommodation is generally evaluated

more negatively than overaccommodation in analogous situations (Gasiorek & Giles, in press;

Jones, Gallois, Barker, & Callan, 1994).

 A critical distinction between the types of non-accommodation outlined here is that of

subjectivity (Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). Divergence and maintenance are constructs

which came out of early CAT (then, speech accommodation theory) studies that were primarily concerned with dialect, accent, and related *speech* variables (see Giles, et al., 1991). As such, they are typically discussed and analyzed in relatively objective terms: past empirical studies have reliably measured variables like speech rate, pause length, and pitch. Over- and underaccommodation, in contrast, are inherently subjective phenomena. It is the recipient's *perception* of a behavior—not objective qualities of the behavior itself—that determine whether or not the behavior is considered over- or underaccommodative. Thus, there is the potential for overlap between these two types of non-accommodation: speech that is objectively divergent (in terms of qualities such as speed or pitch), for example, may also be experienced as a distancing (i.e., underaccommodating) move. However, under certain circumstances, it could instead be experienced as accommodative.

The subjective nature of these constructs has two important implications. First, as over- and underaccommodation are evaluations made by the recipient of the communication in question, a speaker's *actual* motive or intentions are not strictly relevant to labeling an action as over- or underaccommodative. Rather, it is a speaker's *perceived* motives that matter. Thus, communication that is intended to be appropriately adjusted may be perceived as non-accommodative and therefore problematic; similarly, talk intended to be non-accommodative (for example, to emphasize a particular social identity or disaffiliate with another) may be experienced as appropriate and, therefore, unproblematic for the speaker, as well as for other (ingroup) peers present.

The second main implication of the subjective nature of over- and underaccommodation is that these phenomena are ultimately social attributions (Ytsma & Giles, 1997), not objective behaviors or sets of communicative features per se (see Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995). Thus,

they can take a wide variety of forms depending on the situation in question, with the experiences and social roles of observers and interactants affecting perceptions of accommodation (Jones et al., 1994), and what one individual perceives as over- or underaccommodative may not be perceived as such by another interactant. A number of studies in the area of intergenerational communication studies have provided support for the subjective nature of non-accommodation and related evaluations. For example, Edwards and Noller (1993) found that overaccommodative interactions between an older adult and a caretaker were evaluated as less patronizing by the participants in the interactions, as compared to outside observers (nursing students or psychology students). Sachweh (1998) reported comparable findings in her study involving German nursing home residents. Of course, these subjective perceptions of appropriateness are generally guided by social norms (see Gallois & Callan, 1988) and, hence, there are many situations where certain communicative behaviors are predictably perceived as non-accommodative. For instance, it is normative to answer a direct question; under the vast majority of circumstances, failing to acknowledge or address a direct question in conversation would be perceived as underaccommodative.

Given the subjective and individual nature of the phenomenon, the next question of interest becomes, what influences our evaluations of non-accommodation, and by extension, our reactions to it?

Communication as an Inference Process

While early models of communication treated communication as a simple transmission of messages, more recent work has shown that it may better be understood as a joint effort in inferential problem solving by its interactants (e.g., Berger, 2001). In this conceptualization, the function of communication is to reach some form of shared understanding between those

communicating, particularly as individuals generally come to encounters with different

perspectives, past experiences, and expectations (an observation integral to CAT).

In interaction, we are typically working with incomplete information: we know what we

perceive, but not necessarily what our fellow interactants actually have in mind. To make sense

of others' behavior, we must make inferences about their mental states (e.g., Malle & Hodges,

2005). Conversation—i.e., interactive communication between people—essentially consists of

making inferences about what others are thinking on the basis of the verbal and nonverbal

signals that individuals send each other (Levinson 2006; Schober, 2005). It has even been

suggested that "all communication requires intentionality attributions because... formal coding

rules alone are not sufficient to determine a speaker's meaning" (Sillars, 1998, p. 85), and that

such intentionality attributions are so automatic that they are essentially experienced as

observations. This conceptualization of communication is consistent with Grice's (1957) classic

definition of *meaning* as a speaker's intended effect of an utterance on an audience through the

audience's recognition of that intention.

This notion of shared understanding as well as its centrality to communication also has

connections to Clark's concept of *grounding,* defined as working with fellow interactants to

reach the mutual belief that each party understands each other well enough for current purposes

(Clark & Brennan, 1991; Clark & Krych, 2004). Generally, in order to allow for interaction to

function, we presume that the concepts we hold match others' (the "presumption of

interpretability": Clark & Schober, 1992), and consider it the speaker's responsibility to clarify

or elaborate if they mean something other than what the recipient is likely to initially interpret or

understand. Attempting to reach this threshold of (perceived) shared understanding is one of the

major reason why we make adjustments for each other in social interaction using the strategies

outlined earlier (i.e., *approximation, interpretability, discourse management,* and *interpersonal control*).

However, it is clear that such shared understanding is not successfully achieved in all interactions. This failure of shared understanding is often labeled "misunderstanding" or "miscommunication" when it occurs at the content level; when it takes place on a social or cultural level, the outcome may be labeled as impoliteness, faux pas, or even social deviance (see Dorjee, Giles, & Barker, 2011). All of these are, arguably, instances of non-accommodation. As noted above, such labels are judgments or evaluations of a communicative experience; as such, they are inherently subjective.

Given the centrality of this conceptualization of communication to key CAT processes, the first refinement of CAT we propose is a more formal, elaborated definition of *communication* as part of the theory. While it has been made clear that CAT considers communication to be both a means of exchanging information (referential communication) and negotiating social category memberships (Giles & Ogay, 2006), how this is done is, at present, unspecified. We suggest that CAT conceptualize communication (referential or social) as an inference process, the goal of which is a mutual belief of shared understanding sufficient for the purposes of interaction.

In making such inferences to determine meaning, one is essentially trying to explain a speaker's behavior. Traditionally, and indeed within CAT's extant framework, this is considered *making attributions*, and the processes involved draw on a substantial body of literature in the area of attribution theory (e.g., Heider, 1958; Hewstone, 1983; Trope & Gaunt, 2003). However, recent theoretical and empirical work in social psychology (e.g., Malle, 1999; 2004; Reeder, 2009) has suggested alternative models for both behavior explanations and related trait

inferences. These new models provide a number of insights of particular interest to understanding how we react to non-accommodation.

Beyond Attribution Theory: Intentionality and Motives

Traditional attribution theory focuses on trait inferences; Heider (1958) assumed that understanding dispositions were perceivers' main interest when interpreting behavior, and as such emphasized distinguishing internal (person) from external (situational) causality (Reeder, 2009). However, such an approach does not readily address the issue of understanding the meaning of particular messages or behaviors in dynamic interaction. When seeking to understand others' communicative behavior, we are much more concerned with what they are thinking, planning and intending *at that moment*, and how it relates to the behavior we are observing and experiencing. In short, we are interested in intentionality and motives.

Generally, our first decision in interpreting behavior is determining intentionality writ large: is this behavior enacted purposefully, intentionally? Inferences about intentionality have been shown to be relatively automatic: people answer questions about intentionality more quickly than they answer questions about person or situational causality (Smith & Miller, 1983), suggesting that we may have a predisposition to process behavior in terms of intentionality, as opposed to reasoning about persons or situations. Malle's (1999, 2004) folk-conceptual theory of behavior explanations, as well as Reeder's (2009) multiple inference model, suggest that we engage in different cognitive processes of explanation when we perceive a behavior as unintentional or intentional.

When we see something as *unintentional*, Malle and Reeder propose, we consider the internal and external forces at play (*causes*, in Malle's terminology) in a given situation, as Heider's (1958) attribution theory suggests. (We then make dispositional inferences about actors

accordingly). Thus, when behavior is seen as unintentional, the context or situation speakers are in becomes the major focus for understanding why they did what they did and thus, by extension, what—if anything—was "meant" by it. However, when a behavior is perceived as *intentional*, then we look to actors' mental states to understand why they did what they did. Here, Malle (2004) proposes several different possible ways we can explain behavior: *reasons* (mental states: beliefs, desires, values), *causal history factors* (sources of reasons), and *enabling factors* (situational circumstances facilitating action). In all of these explanation modes, we then use both behavioral and situational information to make inferences about their motives; according to Reeder (2009) our evaluations of motives then influence our trait inferences.

These processes are entirely cognitive and, as such, risk being interpreted as passive or quiescent. However, interactions are (as their name suggests) interactive in nature and, therefore, dynamic. Individuals have the chance to seek information (directly or indirectly) in conversation, and talk through their understanding of what others are intending and doing in real time; as such, understandings of intentionality and motive are subject to negotiation. Such negotiation is particularly likely to occur if intentions are ambiguous or otherwise difficult to discern.

Motive is arguably a central consideration in social interaction: understanding individuals' motives not only allows us to explain their behavior—helping us comprehend the events taking place—but also allows us to predict future behavior, which potentially confers a survival advantage (Reeder & Trafimow, 2005). The inferences (attributions) and subsequent evaluations individuals make in dynamic interaction are central considerations of CAT: per the theory (see Figure 1), speakers' perceptions of each others' behavior lead to attributions and then evaluations. These evaluations both feed back into the ongoing interaction, affecting accommodative behavior in real time, and affect individuals' desire and intention to engage in future interactions.

However, at present, the role of intentionality and perceived motives in this process has not been fully elaborated.

Additional Considerations: Perspective taking and Initial Orientation

Research in the area of perspective taking (e.g., Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005) also has potentially interesting implications for outcomes associated with non-accommodation. Perspective taking is the experience of imagining the world from another person's point of view; when we engage in perspective taking, we are essentially seeing things through (what we imagine to be) others' eyes. As Bazarova and Hancock (2010) point out, when perceivers provide an explanation for another's behavior, they are engaging in perspective taking to make inferences about intentionality and motive. Galinsky and colleagues contend that attempting to take another's perspective increases the overlap in mental representations of the other and the self has been increasing the "psychological sense of similarity and a feeling of behavioral and mental connectedness" (p. 110) between individuals. This, in turn, facilitates behavioral coordination and therefore social bonding. Seeing more of themselves in others affects how people describe and evaluate each other: for example, overlap between the other and the self has been associated with decreased stereotyping (mediating the relationship between this outcome and perspective taking; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and feelings of "oneness" with helping and altruistic behavior (again, mediating the relationship between this outcome and perspective taking; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997). Aron, Aron, and Smollan's (1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self scale is often used as a measure of self-other overlap in research on perspective taking.

Clearly, these findings underscore the importance of the influence of our perceptions of what others are thinking have on our own thoughts and behaviors. However, research in this

area has focused primarily on outcomes and implications relating to prejudice, stereotypes, social

bias and social bonding (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1997; Galinsky et al, 2005; Galinsky & Moskowtiz,

2000). The consequences of perspective taking on interpersonal, as opposed to strictly

intergroup, relationships and related outcomes of interest, such as evaluation of an interaction, or

intent to engage in future interaction, has received less attention (although interestingly, Aron

and colleagues work on self-other overlap was originally situated in an interpersonal context).

Based on the aforementioned findings, it seems reasonable to suggest that perspective taking

should affect interpersonal relations as well, and in similar ways. We often interpret others'

words and actions in line with our own values (see e.g., Clark and Schober's [1992] presumption

of interpretability, above). When these do not align, perspective taking should, in theory, help

attenuate some of these differences. By engaging in perspective taking, we should be increasing

the perceived overlap between ourselves and others, which is associated with decreased

stereotyping (making an encounter less "us versus them" and more just "us") and increased

social bonding. By understanding where the other party is coming from, we have the

opportunity to perhaps reframe problematic behavior in more positive terms. If greater overlap

between conceptions of the self and the other facilitates bonding, this in turn should result in

greater perceived accommodation, more positive evaluations of an interaction and of the speaker,

and consequently a greater desire to engage in future interaction.

Finally, our initial orientation towards our interactional partner—which may be affected

by our goals for the interaction, psychological states, as well as past experiences with our fellow

interactants and their respective social group(s)—are likely to inform our interpretations of their

behavior, and by extension, our reactions to it (as evident in some theoretical models of language

attitudes; see Cargile, Giles, Ryan, and Bradac [2004]; Gluzsek and Dovidio [2010]; Giles and

Marlow [2011]). Broadly speaking, CAT considers both intergroup and interpersonal history to be part of the sociohistorical context that informs an interaction (see Figure 1 again). We propose that, more specifically, our initial orientation will influence our interpretation of others' motives and, by extension, of their behavior.

Considering interpersonal and intergroup history, it is logical to suggest that the better we know someone, the more likely we are to accurately gauge their goals and motives. Research by Ickes and colleagues on empathic accuracy—defined as an individual's "ability to accurately infer the specific content of another person's thoughts and feelings" (Ickes, 1993, p. 588)—has that the better participants know each other, the higher their empathic accuracy (with respect to each other); those who knew each other better were more accurate in their inferences of each others' thoughts than those who did not.

Interestingly, there is also evidence that the more familiar we are with someone, the more likely we are to explain behavior in terms of goals, needs, and other mediating factors (Idson & Mischel, 2001). For instance, if we saw a person we did not know interrupting another, we might think of them as rude or pushy (trait inference). However, if we were actually quite familiar with that person, we might instead explain the interruption as the speaker trying to make an important point (goal) and/or making sure everyone else was aware of a key piece of information (need). Generally, when interpreting negative or problematic behavior (as non-accommodation is experienced), explanations involving mediating factors are likely to result in less negative evaluations of a speaker than are explanations involving trait inferences (i.e., we would evaluate a speaker we see as trying to make an important point more positively than we would a speaker we see as having a rude disposition).

Past interpersonal and intergroup experiences—and associated emotions (Smith & Mackie, 2008)—may also color the lens through which we see and interpret the present. If we have been treated badly by someone (or a representative member of some group) in the past, we are likely to approach new encounters with our guard up, ready to see malfeasance and non-accommodation in any marginally suspicious move. However, positive past experiences may predispose us to experience others' behavior as more accommodative, and to read the best possible intentions in another's (or a representative member of another group's) behavior (as stereotypical young lovers might of each other; e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1997). Additionally, past experiences provide a basis for judging whether a given behavior is (idiosyncratically) normative—that is, whether the behavior is normal for that particular actor (cf. *covariation*; Kelley, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980). This, in turn, should affect our evaluations of and responses to that behavior: for example, if a couple we have just met speaks loudly and cut us off when we talk, we might think they are rude, and come away offended. However, if we get to know them better and see that they *always* speak loudly and cut off *everybody* that they talk with (including each other), we are less likely to be offended by the behavior. Thus, as outlined here, interpersonal and intergroup histories have the potential to influence not only evaluations of our interaction and fellow interactants—as CAT currently posits—but also our inferences about the content and nature of others' intentions, and therefore the meaning we draw from a given interaction.

In sum, when seeking to understand the meaning of others' behavior, we make inferences about intentionality and motive, and in doing so engage in perspective taking, and both these processes may be influenced by our perceived histories with the actor in question. Whatever

meaning that we ultimately attribute to our fellow interactants' behavior then becomes the basis for the evaluations we make of the interaction as well as its participants.

A Model for Interpreting Non-Accommodation

Although initial orientation has been a central construct in CAT for years, the constructs of intentionality, motive, and perspective taking are quite new to the theory. Building on an initial model put forward by Gasiorek and Giles (in press), we propose that perceived motive, as well as perspective taking, be formally incorporated into CAT's theoretical framework as factors directly and indirectly affecting participants' evaluations of encounters and speakers, and by extension, intent to engage in future interaction.

As outlined in Gasiorek and Giles (in press), accommodation is generally evaluated positively and non-accommodation negatively (e.g., Giles, 1973; Harwood, 2000; Jones et al., 1994). However, there is empirical work demonstrating that attributions influence these judgments (e.g., Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1976) such that when behavior is perceived as intentional and positively motivated, accommodative behavior was evaluated more positively than when it was seen as unintentional. Conversely, non-accommodative behavior was evaluated *less* negatively when perceived as unintentional.

Other language studies provide additional evidence for the importance of motive attributions in the evaluation of accommodative behavior: for example, polite forms of speech were viewed more positively when attributed to a speaker's desire to be sociable than when attributed to a speaker's desire to be authoritative (Bradac & Mulac, 1984). Brown, Giles, and Thakerar (1985), in turn, found in their experimental design that a slow speech rate—which has been found across many studies to be unfavorably construed—could be contextually attributed to a benevolent motive (attempting to explain unfamiliar material to a group of students). In

intergenerational encounters, patronizing talk that could attributed to caring motives (i.e., was construed as protective or parental, attempting to help) was seen as more polite and more appropriate than patronizing talk attributed to negative motives (i.e., disapproval, exerting authority) (Giles & Williams, 1994; Harwood & Giles, 1996). Relatedly, Williams (1996) found that young adults were more tolerant of underaccommodative conversations with older adults than with peers, likely because young adult participants perceived older adults as relatively well-meaning in their lack of accommodation.

In sum, these findings support the assertion that speakers' *perceived* intentionality and motives are an important factor in determining how we understand their behavior and, by extension, the valence and nature of our evaluation of that behavior. Taken together with theorizing on the factors influencing these inferences (as discussed above), we propose a model in which the relationship between perceived accommodation and evaluations of non-accommodation is mediated by recipients' perceptions of speakers' intentionality and motives, which are, in turn, informed by recipients' initial orientation and degree of perspective taking . Figure 2 illustrates these proposed relationships.

Insert Figure 2 here

Essentially, the model suggests that, confronted with non-accommodation of some kind, a recipient considers the intentionality of the speaker's behavior in context (Was it purposeful or not? If so, what motivated it?) and makes an inference about a speaker's motives accordingly. This inference, in turn, affects recipients' evaluation of the encounter and of the speaker they are interacting with, and these evaluations, in turn, affect their intent to engage in future interaction.

Generally, when non-accommodation is perceived as either unintentional or positively motivated, it should be viewed less negatively than if it is perceived as negatively motivated. Recipients' degree of perspective taking may affect both their initial perceptions of non-accommodative behavior (such that greater perspective taking is associated with lower levels of perceived non-accommodation) and their inferences about intentionality and motive (with perspective taking associated with less negative perceptions of motive). To the extent that it is related to perceived overlap between ourselves and others, perspective taking may also have direct effects on evaluations of the encounter and the other speaker. Finally, perceptions of non-accommodation, perspective taking, motive inference processes, and subsequent evaluations and intentions to engage in future interaction are all informed by the recipient's initial orientation. Greater familiarity between interactants and more positive past interpersonal and/or intergroup histories should increase the accuracy of motive inferences, as well as influence inference and evaluation processes and outcomes.

Part of this model has received empirical support in initial tests: in two studies, Gasiorek and Giles (in press) examined the effects of perceived intentionality and motive on evaluations of non-accommodative encounters and speakers. As the model predicts, inferring a negative motive for others' non-accommodation resulted in significantly less positive evaluations of both the interaction and the speaker than inferring either a positive motive or a lack of intentionality. As noted by Gasiorek and Giles (in press), this part of the model also helps explain why underaccommodation is evaluated more negatively than overaccommodation. Here, we may look to the nature of the two constructs in question to help determine motive: underaccommodation is, by definition, a *lack* of sufficient adjustment, from which a lack of caring (about the interaction or its participants—negative motive) might be inferred. Overaccommodation, in contrast, is

overcompensation in terms of interactional adjustment (e.g., being overly helpful—which could

be seen as a positive motive). While overaccommodation may be unpleasant, interactants may

still view it as an attempt to be helpful (positive motive)—albeit poorly executed,

interactionally—and, therefore, be more forgiving in their evaluation of it, and its source than

they would of underaccommodation.

As a final note, we would like to emphasize that as interaction is a dynamic experience,

the processes proposed in this model are neither singular nor static: they are repeated again and

again through the course of an encounter, and are interactive. To test our inferences about

intentionality and motive, for example, we may ask direct or indirect questions, or see what kind

of reaction a particular statement garners. The information we gather at each step of this

interactive process informs the evaluations we make on an ongoing basis, with our final

impression of an encounter (and its participants) as a function of the cumulative experience

across the entire interaction.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sought to elaborate the construct of non-accommodation within

the framework of CAT. We proposed two major refinements to the theory: first, a more precise

and definition of communication as part of its framework, and second, a model for how three key

factors—intentionality and motive, perspective taking, and initial orientation—influence our

evaluations of non-accommodation, non-accommodative speakers, and related interactional

outcomes. This model aims to provide a more specific set of guidelines predicting our

interpretations and responses to non-accommodation, and the potential impact that has on

interaction.

Specific, measureable and manipulable variables (initial orientation, perspective taking, perceived intentionality, perceived motive, evaluations of the encounter and of the speaker, intent to engage in future interaction) are outlined in the model; their proposed relationships should be the object of systematic empirical testing.   Whether the strength or pattern of these relationships is different for different types of non-accommodation (i.e., over- versus underaccommodation) is also an open—and interesting—empirical question. The application and testing of these issues in specific settings (for example, intercultural encounters, intergenerational encounters, situations involving law enforcement, educational contexts) is another exciting direction for work in this area. Although much work remains to be done, it is our hope that at the very least, the ideas elaborated here may both encourage and serve as a basis for future efforts to better understand non-accommodation and, by extension, problematic communication more generally.

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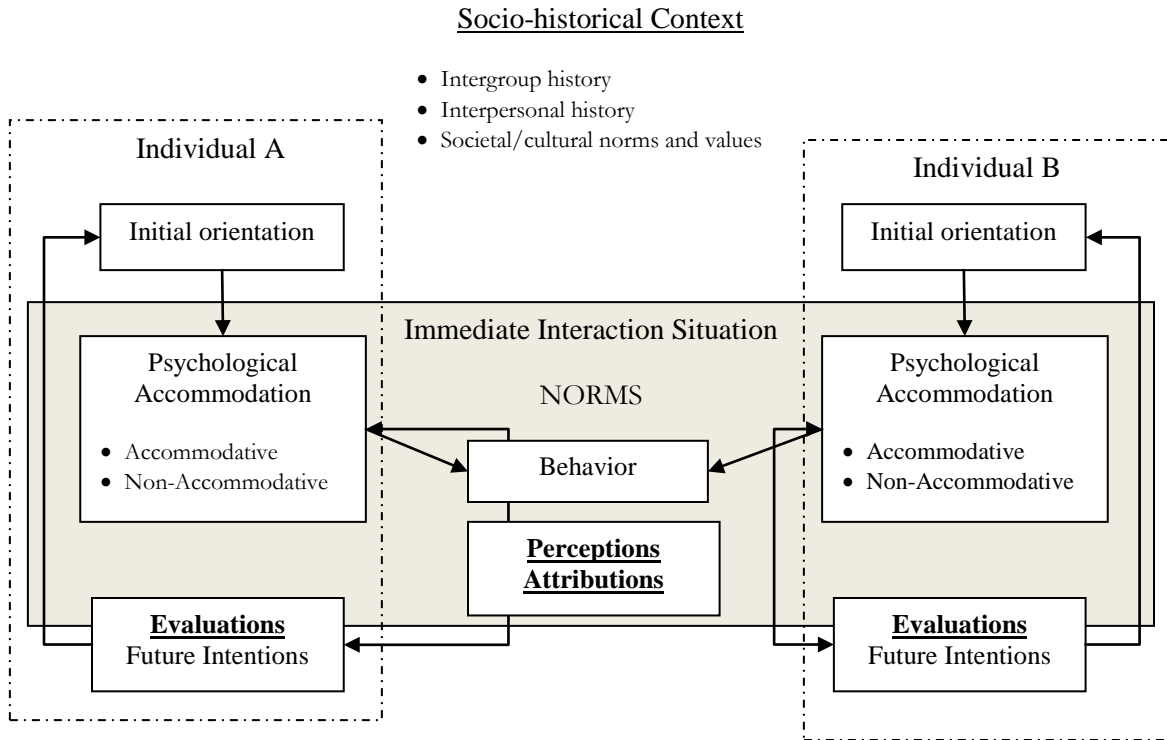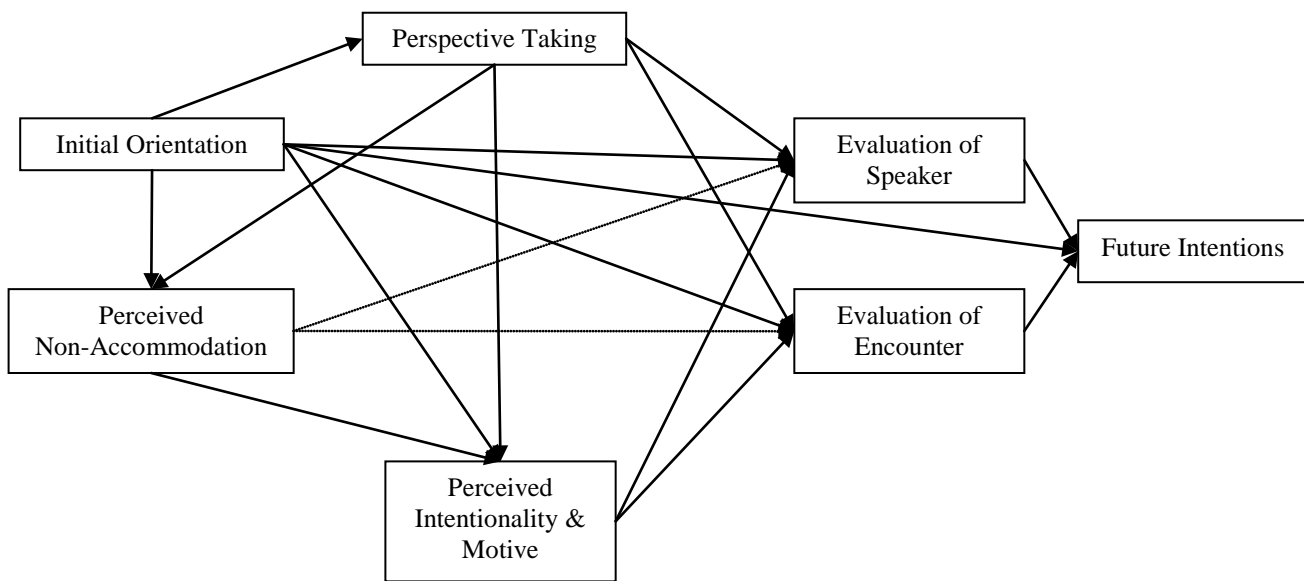
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Figure 1. *The communication accommodation theory model* (adapted from Giles et al., 2007, p.

139)

Figure 2. A proposed model for interpreting non-accommodation. Dotted lines indicate paths

predicted by the present framework of CAT (direct relationship between perceived

accommodation and evaluations).