

A Critical Review of the Primary/Secondary Goal Framework

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Abstract

This paper attempts to critically review the primary/secondary goals framework. In the first section, the theoretical constructs of primary/secondary goals are introduced, focusing on the definitions of primary/secondary goals and the goal-planning-action model of message production. After the theoretical review, empirical research assessing the primary/secondary goals framework is reviewed, which includes goal types and goal structures in influence situations, primary/secondary goals in contexts other than influence situations, and primary/secondary goals research across cultures. The final part evaluates the primary/secondary goals framework and discusses developments needed in the future.

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A Critical Review of the Primary/Secondary Goal Framework

In the middle of 1980s, persuasive message production research changed focus from strategy selection/construction to the construct of goals. Scholars from both the “compliance-gaining” (Cody, Canary, & Smith, 1994; Dillard 1990a; Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989) and “constructivist” (B. O’Keefe, 1988; B. O’Keefe & Delia, 1982) traditions have explored interpersonal influence message production from a goal perspective. Among these perspectives, Dillard (1990a) developed a goal-driven model of interpersonal influence, the Goals-Plans-Action (GPA) model, which provides a theoretical framework for the study of interpersonal influence. This model has been developed into Goals-Plans-Action (GPA) theory (Dillard, 2008). The GPA theory distinguishes primary goals, which define and drive an interaction, from secondary goals, which shape and constrain message production options. Primary and secondary goals are two distinct but mutually interdependent types of goals in interpersonal influence situations. The primary/secondary goal framework builds upon a number of previous works with conceptually similar themes (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Cody, Greene, Marston, O’Hair, Baaske, & Schneider, 1986; Hample&Dallinger, 1987;Marwell& Schmitt, 1967). It also has prompted subsequent theoretical and empirical investigations on the goal-driven process of message production (e.g., Dillard, 1990b; Liu, 2011, Sabee, 2002; Samp& Solomon; 1999; Schrader, 1999; Schrader & Dillard, 1998; Wang, Fink, &Cai, 2012; Wilson, 1997, 2002; Wilson, Aleman, &Leatham, 1998).

This critical literature review attempts to appraise the primary/secondary goal framework. The paper is composed of three major sections. Section one delineates the theoretical constructs of the primary/secondary goals by defining primary/secondary goals as well as their functions in Dillard’s GPA theory. Section two reviews empirical research assesses the primary/secondary goals

framework. Section three evaluates the primary/secondary goals framework using criteria for evaluating social-scientific theories. Through this review, I explore what communication scholars can learn from the primary/secondary goal perspective of message production and how they might expand the primary/secondary goals framework in the future.

Theoretical Constructs

Defining Primary/Secondary Goals

Defining primary/secondary goals in influence situations. The original definitions of primary/secondary goals provided by Dillard et al. (1989) were concerned with influence situations. They emerged as part of an attempt to provide theoretical explanation for why individuals said what they did when trying to influence others, in order to respond to criticisms that earlier studies of compliance gaining were atheoretical (D. O'Keefe, 1990; Seibold, Cantrill, & Meyers, 1985). Given that scholars at the time were emphasizing that communication is goal oriented (e.g., Craig, 1986; Tracy, 1984) and individuals often pursue multiple goals in influence attempts (e.g., Clark & Delia, 1979; Greene, 1984), it is not surprising that Dillard et al. turned their attention to goals.

During conversations involving influence, such as when a message source seeks a target person's assistance or gives the target advice, the source's primary goal is defined as the desire to alter the target's behavior. Therefore, primary goals are what stimulate the message source to seek a target person's compliance; they exert a "push" force that motivates the source to speak. Because of this, primary goals frame what the source believes is going on in the situation. As Dillard et al. (1989) remark, "the influence goal brackets the situation. It helps segment the flow of behavior into a meaningful unit; it says

what the interaction is about” (p. 21). This definition could be taken to imply that primary goals must be influence goals, a point discussed below.

Rather than defining and driving the interaction, secondary goals set boundaries on behavior options available to the message source. In influence situations, secondary goals perform as a counterforce to the influence condition and as a set of dynamics that help to shape planning and message output (Dillard, 1990a). They exert a “pull” force that shapes and constrains how the message source seeks compliance in different situations and from different relations (Wilson, 1997). For example, when a speaker asks a favor from a target, he/she might drop the request upon encountering resistance to avoid damaging the relationship with the target. In this sense, the pursuit of primary goals leads to the consideration of secondary goals.

In a series of studies, Dillard et al. (1989) identified five types of secondary goals. Identity goals relate to the self-concept or people’s desire to act consistently with their internal standards for behavior. Interaction goals concern the social appropriateness of messages, and therefore the public identities for both parties. Relational resource goals are relevant to maintaining desired relationships. Personal resource goals involve concerns about not spending too much effort or too many material resources to gain compliance. Finally arousal management goals involve desires to maintain comfortable arousal states by not feeling too much anxiety.

Different from primary goals which are context specific, secondary goals are cross situational. In most situations, there are desires to take care of identities, maintain relationships, and manage arousal levels. However, not every secondary goal will emerge as equally salient or important in any situation. As will be noted below, different primary goals tend to be associated with different set of secondary goals (Wilson et al., 1998).

Dillard and colleagues note that when secondary goals are particularly salient they may overpower the primary goals, in which case the message source may avoid or stop seeking compliance (Schrader & Dillard, 1998). This result is in accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1987) argument in politeness theory. These authors propose five super strategies with the last one being "don't do face-threatening acts (FTA)". Message sources might choose not to do the FTA when they consider face maintenance (interaction goals) to be very important.

The fluid nature of primary/secondary goals.

The primary/secondary goals framework originally was developed for the purpose of illuminating influence attempts. The literal definition as stated in the previous section may lead to the conclusion that influence always is primary. More recently, however, Schrader and Dillard (1998) have argued that the primary goal is not necessarily an influence goal; the framework can be applied to any sort of interaction. In any interaction, the primary goal motivates planning and action, and also defines what the actor believes is occurring. Schrader and Dillard offer the following example: When one spouse suggests to the other the need to discuss their relationship, a relational resources goal might be considered primary. In other words, one or both spouses may understand the conversation, at that moment, to be about assessing their relationship rather than about an attempt to induce a specific behavior change. If one party begins to advocate that the other perform some specific behavior (e.g., calling more frequently), influence momentarily may be the primary goal. Therefore, what initially was understood as the primary goal of a conversation may become secondary or even unrelated to the subsequent direction of the conversation. It is not the substance of a goal that determine its status as primary or secondary, but rather its role in defining the interaction. This point is precisely phrased by Wilson (2002): "Influence goals are primary only in the sense that, for a point

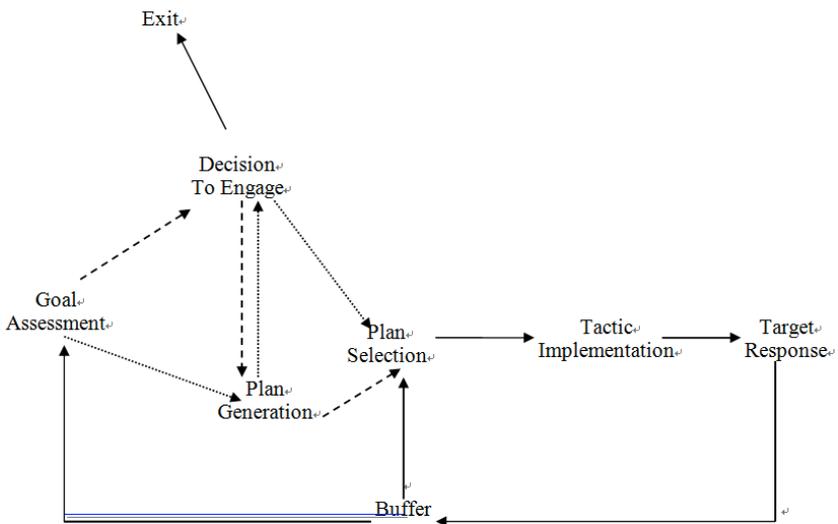
in time, they may frame what an interaction is about and energize the actors” (p.139).

The Goal-Driven Model of Message Production

Dillard (1990a) developed a larger goal driven model of message production in which the functions and relationships of the primary/secondary goals are exemplified. This Goal-Plans-Action framework later has been developed to the Goal-Plans-Action theory (Dillard, 2008).

Explication of the GPA theory.

The GPA theory emphasizes that goals provide the original forces for plans, which in turn lead to actions. It is in this theory that primary and secondary goals are differentiated and their mutual interdependence is specified. The original model is shown in Figure 1.



Note: The dashed lines show one of two possible pathways to plan selection while the dotted lines indicate the alternative. Solid lines show noncontingent, sequenced stages in the model.

Figure 1. The Goals-Plans-Action Model of Message Production (Dillard, 2008).

The conceptual underpinnings of the theory are goals, plans, and action sequences. According to Dillard, goals are defined as future states of affairs which an individual desires to attain or maintain. Goals serve different functions, including facilitating comprehension of an action, allowing people to segment the stream of behavior into meaningful units, and determining what aspects of behavior are attended to, encoded, and retrieved. Plans, which follow from goals, specify the set of actions necessary to achieve a goal. Action is the result of plans that have been put into effect.

Other key terms in the GPA theory also must be defined. Goal assessment refers to a message source evaluating the importance of primary and secondary goals when facing a concrete situation. Given the rapid nature of face-to-face interaction, such assessments often must occur out of awareness. Depending on the relative importance of multiple goals, the source may engage the message target for a particular purpose. The primary goal constitutes the major approach dynamic. Secondary goals function to inhibit the approach force. When the primary goal overpowers secondary goals, the source chooses to engage. This decision leads to plan generation and selection. Plan generation includes all of those processes that underlie the retrieval and creation of a tactic plan. Dillard defines a tactic plan as “a representation of a set of verbal and nonverbal actions that might modify the behavior of the target” (1990a, p. 48). Dillard argues that plan selection is driven by primary and secondary goals, and that the force of secondary goals varies as a joint function of situational and individual difference variables such as benefits to self and other, argumentativeness, and interpersonal orientation. When the source chooses a tactic plan, then he/she attempts to put the plan into action, which is tactic implementation. The final step in the GPA theory is monitoring of the target’s response, which provides continuous feedback for ongoing goals assessment.

Depending on the relative importance of the primary versus secondary goals, three paths may be followed. First, when the primary goal (approach) forces greatly outweigh the secondary goals (avoidance) dynamics, the decision to engage – plan generation sequence should take place. Second, when secondary goals as a set are far more important, they may overpower the primary goal. In such cases, the source may choose not to engage the target, or, if the attempt is in progress, may choose to exit the interaction. Third, when the approach and avoidance dynamics are weighted more equally, the decision of whether to engage may depend on whether a means can be found for pursuing the primary goal in a way that minimizes the avoidance factors. In these situations, plan generation will likely precede the decision to engage.

The primary/secondary goals distinction plays an essential role in the GPA theory, from goal assessment to target response. The relationships between the primary/secondary goals and their functions are specified in the GPA theory; moreover, the theory can be applied to conversations beyond those involving influence (Schrader & Dillard, 1998). To illustrate these points, it is necessary to review research stimulated by the primary/secondary goal framework.

Research Assessing the Primary/Secondary Goals Framework

The conceptual distinction of primary and secondary goals has helped frame and guide empirical research, including studies of: (a) common types of primary goals involving influence, (b) goal structures, or relationships between primary and secondary goals, (c) primary/secondary goals beyond influence, and (d) primary/secondary goals research across cultures. Given that others have reviewed studies on specific types of primary goals in detail before (see Schrader & Dillard, 1998; Wilson, 2002), I will review research here regarding the other three issues.

Goal Structures

Goal structures refer to the relationship between primary and secondary goals (Schrader & Dillard, 1998). A primary goal and secondary goals together comprise the goal structure of a specific communication episode. Schrader and Dillard contend that knowledge about goal structures is important for two reasons. First, it contributes to detailed understanding of all subsequent activity in the GPA sequence. Second, it provides evidence that secondary goals shape the form and content of messages (Dillard et al., 1989; Schrader, 1999). Two studies illustrate examples of goal structures in influence situations.

Wilson et al. (1998) revised politeness theory by arguing that multiple face threats existed in compliance gaining situations, and these threats varied depending on the specific influence (primary) goal. They explored the three influence goals of giving advice, asking a favor, and enforcing an unfulfilled obligation. Twelve hypothetical scenarios were used with four scenarios representing each of the three influence goals. 303 students enrolled in communication courses read a hypothetical compliance-gaining scenario, wrote what they would say to the target, and reported whether they actually would confront the target and persist if the target resisted. They then completed closed-ended measures of their interaction goals as well as of perceived threats to both parties' face. Messages were coded for degree of reason giving, approval, and pressure. Results revealed that the three different primary goals each were associated with a particular set of secondary goals. For example, participants who asked favors or gave advice displayed greater concern about maintaining their own positive face -- because they didn't want to appear "lazy" when asking a favor or and "nosy" when giving advice -- than did those who enforced an unfulfilled obligation (because the target should have complied already, and hence the focus was on the target's rather than the sources' face). Participants who asked favors or give advice also provided more reasons and

expressed greater approval of the target than did those who enforcing an obligation. Several findings were replicated in a subsequent study where participants recalled actual advice or favor episodes from their own lives (Wilson & Kunkel, 2000).

Schrader and Dillard (1998) assessed the perceived importance of 15 primary and 5 secondary goals. Different primary goals were drawn from previous literature (e.g., Cody, Canary, & Marston, 1994); examples included wanting to give advice to a friend or one's parent, initiate or intensify a romantic relationship, or enforce an unfulfilled obligation with a roommate. Secondary goals came from the Dillard et al. (1989) typology. 714 undergraduates recalled a situation involving one of the 15 primary goal types, and then rated the importance of that primary goal and the secondary goals in that situation. The authors found that primary goals varied in importance and were differentially associated with sets of secondary goals. They also found that the original set of influence goals could be reduced to a smaller set of meaningful and interpretable clusters depending on goal complexity (i.e., the total number of goals that are important). These clusters were labeled maintenance, special issues, problem-solving, and high stakes episodes. Maintenance episodes are recurrent issues of relatively limited importance that occurred in close relationships, such as asking a friend to do something on the weekend. Special issues episodes also occur in close relationships, but are involve more important primary goals and more goal complexity. Examples included gaining assistance from parents or acquaintance and changing a friend's political orientation. In the problem solving episodes, the message source faces some predicament that must be resolved in a more distant relationship, such as enforcing an unfulfilled obligation with a classmate. High stakes episodes involve even more distant relationships and were characterized by high primary goal importance, considerable risk, and high goal complexity.

Examples included initiating a romantic relationship or making a request that a bureaucrat might refuse without explanation.

Primary/Secondary Goals Beyond Influence Situations

Primary goals and grade conflicts. Primary/secondary goals are apparent in contexts beyond influence situations. Sabee (2002) examined the process of student-teacher grade conflicts by applying Weiner's attribution theory, Dweck's implicit theories of intelligence, and Dillard's primary/secondary model of interaction goals. Sabee identified three primary goals based on her literature review. A performance goal refers to an interaction in which the student wanted to get a low grade changed to the grade that he/she feels is deserved. A learning goal refers to interaction in which the student wanted to know how to understand course concepts and thus do assignments better in the future. A fighting goal means that the students wanted to vent anger and frustration by attacking the teacher's face in some way. Aside from these three categories, an identity primary goal emerged from the data, indicating that students in some cases thought an interaction was about convincing the instructor that they were "good" students. 269 undergraduate students were asked to complete an online questionnaire in which they recalled a discussion about a disappointing grade with an instructor and then completed measures of their implicit theory of intelligence, attributions, and interaction goals. Primary goals were identified by having students listing all of their goals, and then asking them which goal best described what the interaction really was about. 66% of students indicated that their primary goals were performance goals, 12% of them indicated that identity was the primary goal, 9% reported that learning was the primary goals, and 8% said that fight was the primary goal. Findings also revealed an association between the attributions that respondents made for the receipt of a negative grade and the primary goals that they held for a conversation about that negative grade.

Primary goals and the focal center of a message in problematic events.

Samp and Solomon (1999) examined how characteristics of goals influence linguistic features in response to problematic events in close relationships. Relevant to primary goals, the authors examined how primary goals influence the focal center of a message in this context. Problematic events refer to situations in which an actor behaves abnormally and consequently perceives that others may see him/her less favorably. These events may include mistakes, accidents, faux pas, infidelity, and regrettable messages such as lies, blunders, or inappropriate disclosures. According to the authors, the focal center of a message is revealed by the information to which a speaker attends, as indicated by repeated reference to a topic, event, or person throughout a message. It refers to more than the primary content of a message; rather, focal center is indicated by the grammatical subject phrase of an utterance.

The authors conducted two studies. They employed the seven distinct primary goals that might frame interactions about problematic events proposed in Samp and Solomon (1998): 1) maintain the relationship, 2) accept fault for the event, 3) manage positive face, 4) avoid addressing the event, 5) manage the conversation, 6) manage emotion, and 7) restore negative face. In study 1, 286 students were asked to describe a problematic event experienced with a close friend or dating partner. They were asked to describe both what they said and what their partner or friend said, and to report the intentions of their message. After participants described the conversation, they were asked to rate the severity of the problematic events. Primary goals were identified by coding the open-ended description of message intentions using the typology described above. The authors predicted that the primary goal would be associated with the focal center of a message in responses to problematic events. This hypothesis was supported. Specifically, the goal to maintain the relationship was associated with a higher proportion of relationship-focused clauses and a lower proportion of self-focused clauses. On the other hand, the goal to accept fault for the event

was associated with a higher proportion of self-focused clauses and a lower proportion of relationship-focused clauses.

In Study 2, 145 individuals from the same population described in Study 1 were asked to consider a hypothetical problematic event scenario, adopt a particular primary goal, and leave a telephone message for their partner. The message that participant left on the answering machine were transcribed and unitized by clause to examine the embellishment and focus of each message. Hypothesis 1 posited that focal center reflects an individual's primary goal. Consistent with Study 1, primary goal had a significant impact on the proportion of clauses that focused on the self. This study supported the conclusion that the goal to accept fault for the event was associated with a higher proportion of self-focused clauses, however none of the other results from Study 1 was replicated. Taken together, the studies provide some support for the claim that primary goals influence the focal center of messages.

Primary/Secondary Goals Research Across Cultures.

Several empirical studies explore primary/secondary goals across different cultures (Cai & Wilson, 2000; Kim, 1994; Kim & Bresnahan, 1994, 1996; Kim & Sharkey, 1995; Kim & Wilson, 1994). Given that others have reviewed the series of Kim and colleagues' studies in detail (see Wilson, 2002), I assess only the Cai and Wilson study in detail here.

Cai and Wilson (2000) examined how college students from Japan and the U. S. simultaneously manage influence and face goals in compliance-gaining situations defined by two types of primary goals (requesting assistance and enforcing obligations) and involving two types of relationships (same-sex friends and same-sex acquaintances). Specifically, the authors studied how message sources give reasons, express approval, and exert pressure as ways of managing face in these situations. They also examined individualism-

collectivism and in-group/out-group membership as sources of difference in goals and messages. 535 students in introductory level communication classes from the U. S. and a university in Tokyo, Japan were asked to read eight scenarios, write what they would say to the target, and report whether they would actually confront the target and whether they would persist if the target did not initially comply. After that, participants completed closed-ended items measuring the importance of influence and interaction goals in the situation. Participants' written responses were coded for the three message qualities. Overall, influence goals explained substantial variation in goals and message features for participants from both cultures. Culture moderated the strength but not the direction of effect for influence goals on secondary goals and message features. Their study suggests that across cultures people associate similar potential face threats with the influence goals of asking a favor and enforcing an unfulfilled obligation, and vary their secondary goals and message qualities in similar fashion across situations defined by these two goals.

In a series of studies, Kim and her colleagues have investigated similarities and differences in conversational constraints within the United States (an individualistic culture), South Korea (a collectivistic culture), and Hawaii (a culture with both individualist and collectivist values). Conversational constraints, or criteria that shape how a message is formulated, are similar to secondary goals. All these studies reveal that similar conversational constraints exist between individualist and collectivist cultures. Individualist and collectivist cultures differ significantly, however, in viewing which specific strategies are effective and in the importance they attribute to various secondary goals.

These studies highlight the applicability of the primary/secondary goals framework across cultures even though the conceptualization originated from a Western culture. However, these studies have been limited to only a few

cultures, including the U.S. and two Asian cultures, so this conclusion should be accepted with caution. Having reviewed current research, the next section presents a critical evaluation of the primary/secondary goals framework.

Evaluation of the Primary/Secondary Goals Framework

In this section, a set of social scientific theory criteria is employed to evaluate the primary/secondary framework. Readers might wonder whether the primary/secondary goal framework is a theory, and hence whether it is appropriate to evaluate it using criteria for a “good” theory. Dillard and Schrader (1998) mention that by developing the GPA model and making the distinction of primary/secondary goals, they are doing theory building work to fill a gap in the influence literature. Yet, readers may ask, “Is primary/secondary goals a theory or a framework?” Through out the primary/secondary literature, the key constructs are not formally labeled as a theory; rather, scholars (e.g., Sabee, 2002; Wilson, 2002) call them a model or a framework. Thus, it is necessary to clarify whether the primary/secondary goals framework has the potentiality of being a theory and therefore consider whether theory evaluation criteria can be used to evaluate the primary/secondary goals framework.

Is the Primary/Secondary Goals Framework a Theory?

If we want to know whether certain constructs constitute a theory, we need to define “theory.” Kerlinger (1986) defines a theory as “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena” (p. 51). This definition highlights two major functions of a theory: explanation and prediction. Babrow and Mattson (2003) define theory as a consciously elaborated, justified, and uncertain understanding. They further explain, “a theory is an elaborated

understanding involving a number of concepts and suppositions about their interrelationships” (p. 36). In this paper, theory is a systematic set of interrelated ideas that provide explanations, predictions, and a sense of understanding.

If we use these definitions of a theory to evaluate the primary/secondary framework, we can find that the framework has key features of a theory. First, the primary/secondary framework has a set of interrelated concepts. As in the GPA model, primary/secondary goals are at the beginning of a message production process, followed by plans and planning (plan generation, plan selection) and action (tactic implementation). Second, the primary/secondary goals framework makes predictions. Dillard et al. (1989) predict that the importance of the primary goal would determine how motivated participants were to seek compliance (i.e., planning and effort), whereas secondary goals would predict how participants actually went about seeking compliance (i.e., explicitness, positivity, and argument).

The primary/secondary goals framework also functions to explain message production processes. In the GPA theory, people may choose three different paths in message production (to engage in the target and then generate plan, to exit, or to generate plan first and then decide to engage). Dillard argues that primary/secondary goals help explain why people choose different paths. Empirical studies (e.g., Trost, Langan, & Kellar-Guenther, 1999) have referred to primary/secondary goals post hoc to explain findings, such as why adolescents sometimes fail to resist drug offers even though they'd prefer not to accept the offer.

Through the above explication, I argue it is appropriate to use a set of social scientific theory evaluation criteria to assess the primary/secondary goals framework.

Social Scientific Theory Evaluation Criteria

A set of seven theory evaluation criteria is developed based on previous literature (Chaffee & Berger, 1987; Littlejohn, 2002; Reynolds, 1971). The first is *predictive power* which assesses theoretical adequacy by measuring the theory's ability to predict events. It is possible for theories to be able to predict but not be able to provide plausible explanations. The second criterion is *explanatory power*, which concerns the theory's ability to provide plausible explanations for the phenomena it was constructed to explain. Also considered here is the range of phenomena that the theory explains; the greater the range, the more powerful the theory, which is also referred as theoretical scope. The third criterion is *parsimony*, which means simple theories are preferred to more complex ones assuming both predict and explain equally well. The fourth one is *internal consistency*, which involves assessing the internal logic of a theory independently of empirical tests. It is believed that theoretical propositions should be consistent with each other. If they are not, empirical findings may be difficult to interpret within the theory. The fifth is *heuristic value*, meaning that good theories generate new hypotheses that expand the range of potential knowledge. The sixth criterion is *organizing power* which refers to the idea that useful theories not only generate new knowledge, but also they are able to organize extant knowledge. Finally, theories can be judged according to their *openness*. This means that a theory is open to other possibilities. It is tentative, contextual, and qualified. It acknowledges its own incompleteness.

Primary/Secondary Goal Framework Evaluation

Predictive power. Looking back at the literature on primary/secondary goals research, empirically, there are at least three different set of predictions generated. First, individuals share understandings of common primary goals. Consistent with this, studies that have developed typologies of primary goals involving influence contain considerable overlap (e.g., Cody et al., 1994;

Dillard, 1989; Rule, et al., 1985; Yukl, Guinan, & Sottolano, 1995). Second, the framework predicts relationships between primary and secondary goals. Studies attest that different primary goals are associated with different sets of secondary goals (e.g., Schrader & Dillard, 1998; Wilson, et al., 1998). Third, variations in the importance of primary and secondary goals can predict message qualities (e.g., Cai & Wilson, 2000; Dillard et al., 1989; Samp & Solomon, 1999) including number of reasons given, level of approval expressed, degree of pressure exerted, and focal center of a message. However, it should be noted that most of the studies were conducted in influence situations. Future empirical work should expand to other situations to test the predictive power of the framework.

If we take the notion that primary goals are evanescent seriously, and that the importance of primary and secondary goals can change rapidly, then this raises questions about whether the framework can make clear, falsifiable predictions regarding more dynamic elements of goals. This highlights the need to move away from hypothetical scenarios to methods that can capture shifts in goals over time. For example, Waldron (1997) reported an unpublished study using a cued-recall method to document changing of interpersonal (secondary) goals in conversation. Specifically, participants' conversations were video taped for 8 minutes. Then they were asked to recall their thoughts or feelings and rate the importance of secondary goals at 30 seconds interval while watching the videotape. The findings showed that 30% of the 30-second intervals involved a significant shift in goal importance. About 55% of these intervals involved shifts in multiple goals. Future research is needed to better understand dynamic changes in primary/secondary goals. The results could both expand and challenge the framework's predictive power.

Explanatory power.

Explanatory power refers to a theory's ability to provide plausible explanations for a range of phenomena, in other words, its theoretical scope. I need to examine the existing research and criticisms to assess the explanatory power of the primary/secondary goals framework.

If examining the existing empirical research about primary/secondary goals, it is not difficult to find that the framework provides plausible explanations for the phenomena it was constructed to explain (see section two of this paper). However, we need to be aware that primary/secondary goals research is limited across time, space, contexts and participants. It has been 15 years since the distinction between primary/secondary goals was proposed. Although existing research in other cultures shows promising cross-cultural explanation, until now very few studies in other cultures have been conducted. Moreover, most research has been conducted in influence contexts. Finally, a majority of research participants have been college undergraduate students; hence, the applicability of the framework to other age cohorts and across levels of social economic status also is uncertain.

Beyond these problems, the constructs of primary/secondary goals themselves have been criticized. I put these criticisms under explanatory power because they relate to the theoretical scope of the framework. Commenting on the framework, Shepherd (1998) points out problems in conceptualizing human communication as a goal driven processes. He writes:

Communication need not be conceptualized in so instrumental a way. It need not be viewed primarily as a means to individual ends, but rather as a social accomplishment in and of itself. In other words, communication might be seen not as a product of individuals and their goals, but as a creation of social interaction. (p. 295) We can acknowledge that while individual human beings

might be purposeful, their particular purposes, desires, or goals are neither personal nor psychologically located, but rather public, born in association with others. (p. 296)

Rather than considering message production as an individual process, Shepherd calls for looking at how goals are socialized and socially constituted through talk. His criticisms challenge the explanatory scope of the framework from its origin, that is, whether we can explain human beings communication behavior from an individual's psychological perspective. In responding to the criticism, Dillard and Schrader (1998) make two counter arguments. One is that individuals are responsive to the cues and comments of others (see the feedback loop in Figure 1). This responsive process entails social interaction. Second, they argue that studying the psychological processes underlying communication is one (albeit not the only) way to characterize interaction, and that the framework has offered important insights about communication.

Beyond these counter arguments, if we view primary goals as “frames”, then we can begin to ask more “social” questions about primary and secondary goals. For example, how do two individuals negotiate a shared reality when they come to an interaction with different understandings of what is going on (i.e., different primary goals)? Sabee's (2002) study of primary goals in grading conflicts is an example in which students and their instructors may come with different ideas about what their interaction “should be” about, and hence have to negotiate a shared understanding of what the interaction really “is” about. When the instructor and student come from different cultural backgrounds, and hence have different understandings of the rights and obligations associated with the roles of “instructor” and “student,” then the process of negotiating a shared understanding of what the interaction is (or should be) about may be even more complicated and important to understand.

Parsimony.

The primary/secondary goals framework offers a clear, and relatively simple way of classifying general interaction concerns. Many concerns can serve the function of momentarily framing the interaction (primary goals) or constraining and shaping message production (secondary goals). The GPA theory also explains message production processes with a limited set of concerns (see Figure 1). Over time, it has become apparent that the model outlined in Figure 1 is too “simple.” Terms such as “plan generation” or “action implementation” gloss over a host of psychological processes operating at multiple levels of abstraction, often in parallel (see Berger, 1997; Greene, 2000). The concepts of primary and secondary goals themselves, however, still are compatible with newer models of message production.

Internal consistency.

Over the years, several conceptual confusions have arisen about primary and secondary goals. Dillard and Schrader (1998) and Wilson (2002) have attempted to clarify key concepts, which may have improved the internal consistency of the framework.

In the criticism of primary/secondary goals distinction, Shepherd (1998) highlights research results from Schrader and Dillard (1998) showing that: “one or more of the secondary goals were typically viewed as more important than the primary goal” (p. 289). Shepherd argues that if certain secondary goals are more important than the primary goal, then why not label these situations as identity, interaction, or relational resource goals rather than insisting that they are situation in which an influence goal is primary? By arguing this, Shepherd equates the concept of primary goals with goal importance.

To be fair, Dillard has been somewhat unclear about whether primary goals are necessarily the most important goals in an interaction. He has

maintained that message sources may interpret episodes to be about influence even when they rate other goals as more important (Schrader & Dillard, 1998). However, Dillard et al.(1989) claim that the primary goal is “the chief purpose of an interaction that distinguishes that communication event from other areas of inquiry” (p. 21). Calling them the “chief” purpose could imply that primary goals are the most important concerns. To distinguish between primary goals and goal importance, Wilson argues that “primary and secondary refer to the functions and directional forces of goals rather than their importance” (p. 139). The primary goal reflects what participants believe to be the underlying purpose of their conversation at the moment, regardless of whether this is their most important concern. If we say to a friend, “let’s go get something to eat at Jakes” (a local restaurant), we likely to understand the conversation to be about finding a place to eat (primary goal) even though we might, if asked, rate “maintaining our friendship” as a more important goal than getting our way about where to eat. Disentangling the primary/secondary goal distinction from goal importance should enhance the framework’s internal consistent.

Heuristic value.

Heuristic value refers to whether a theory can generate new hypothesis and new theories which expand the range of potential knowledge. The number of current empirical studies of primary/secondary goals is not large, but these studies are generating a number of hypotheses with regard to the function and relationships of primary and secondary goals. For example, although most work evaluating Wilson et al.’s revision of politeness theory has focused on the goals of asking favors, giving advice, and enforcing obligations (Cai& Wilson, 2000; Wilson, et al., 1998; Wilson & Kunkel, 2000), the framework recently has been applied to understand transitions in romantic relationships (Kunkel, Wilson, Olufowote, & Robson, 2003) as well as upward influence in the workplace (Wilson, 2002). There are also studies using the primary/goal framework post

hoc to explain research results. In the field of communication, I found studies on health communication (e.g., Mattson & Roberts, 2001), intercultural communication (e.g., Lindsley, 1999), organizational communication (e.g., Lee, 1995), and computer-mediated communication (e.g., Wilson&Zigurs, 2001) that make reference to the primary/secondary goal framework. There are also studies on psychology (e.g., Imai, 1991; Yun, 1998) using the primary/secondary goals framework to explain research results.

Organizing power.

This criterion addresses whether a theory can organize the extant knowledge. The organizing power of the primary/secondary goals framework is good. As stated in the introduction, the distinction of the primary/secondary goals subsumes a number of previously work with conceptually similar themes, such as Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory, Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) suggestion of two general types of goals in compliance-gaining attempts, and Cody et al.'s (1986) claim that persuasive strategy used is based on twin criteria of the desire to be effective and the desire to conform to the particular situational constraints. If we review the secondary goals research, it is also clear that secondary goals can encompass Hample and Dallinger's (1987) cognitive editing standards in message production, Kellermann and Shea's (1996) conversational constraints of social appropriateness and efficiency and Kim's (1994) conversational constraints of concern for clarity, concern for avoiding hurting the other's feelings, concern for avoiding negative evaluation by the target ad concern for minimizing imposition (see Wilson, 2002). The primary/secondary goals framework organizes a number of similar concepts and shows how they are interrelated.

Openness.

Openness means a theory is open to other possibilities. I evaluate the openness of the primary/secondary goals construct by looking at responses to criticisms of the framework. The primary/secondary goals framework presumes that “goals exist at the headwaters of the sequence from which behavior flows. Goals provide the impetus for planning which in turn makes action possible” (Schrader & Dillard, 1998, p. 277). Shepherd (1998) criticizes the primary/secondary goals framework for treating goals as the initiation of communication rather than as an accomplishment; it is too psychological rather than social. In responding, Dillard and Schrader (1998) say that “there is a great potential promise in thinking of goals as entities that arise from interaction rather than the reverse” (p. 301). And they argue that the GPA model, which shows the functions and relationships of the primary/secondary goals does not prohibits thinking of goals as accomplishment.

Thesethoughtsare well connected with Tracy’s (1991) idea of linking goals to discourse. Meanings are created out of our communicative practices rather than residing in any outside, objective, or independent reality.Face-to-face situations do not all come with easily prescribed goal packages, instead,meanings are negotiated through talk. In fact, if we read the most recent work on primary/secondary goals (e.g., Wilson, 2002), we can find the conceptualization of a primary goal encompassesa more “social”meaning. A primary goal is the goal that frames the interaction for the moment. The framing function and evanescent nature indicate a close connection between a primary goal (i.e., a participants’ understanding of the point of conversation) and the discourse in which the goal is being defined and pursued. These developments demonstrate openness in the primary/secondary goals framework.

Future Development of the Primary/Secondary Goal Framework

I use social scientific theory criteria to evaluate the primary/secondary goals framework and find the framework has potential to be formulated as a theory. It has interrelated ideas with predictive and explanatory powers; it is parsimonious and has organizing power; it has heuristic value as well. However, the framework needs greater conceptual and methodological development, cross-cultural analysis, and practical application.

Current primary/secondary goals research focuses largely on the formulation of goals – whether people have primary/secondary goals when they communicate, what they are, and the relationship between primary/secondary goals. By moving toward a more social oriented process and considering primary/secondary goals as a discursive practice by which interactants negotiate realities through talk, I could find how primary/secondary goals change over time and study how the ability to “define reality” (i.e., have one’s understanding of the purpose of the interactions accepted by others) is affected by various sociological factors such as power and social distance. This conceptual development may lead us to study primary/secondary goals more from a communication perspective rather than a psychological perspective. In accordance, the methods to obtain this epistemological knowledge will require change from the current heavy reliance on hypothetical scenarios. We need to develop systems for coding changes in the underlying or understood purpose of talk. We can use cued-recall to ask participants about their thoughts and feelings during conversations, and to validate coding by outside observers.

Beyond conceptual and methodology developments, we need to investigate whether different cultures share similar understandings of primary/secondary goals, what the possible variations are and why these variations occur. Current intercultural communication studies often is limited by its reliance on broad, invalid generalizations. As I noted in the section on

explanatory power, cultural understandings of roles (e.g., instructor/student) and related practices (e.g., grades) may determine whether a primary goal (e.g., performance, learning) can be seen as a plausible or appropriate explanation for what is “going on” in an interaction, and hence what is motivating message production. Indigenous studies might help find both variations and similarities in when and how people pursue primary/secondary goals across cultures.

Theory application is a major concern in communication studies. Future research needs to explore how the primary/secondary goals framework can help people understand problems of real social concern. For example, studies of drug resistance (e.g., Trost et al., 1999) refer to primary/secondary goals post hoc, but adolescents’ goals have yet to be directly assessed. In sum, conceptual and methodological developments, cultural comparisons, and practical applications represent areas of opportunity for future research on primary/secondary goals.

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